

For her fourth exhibition in Cologne with Galerie Gisela Capitain, Laura Owens has made a wide range of new works that often translate one medium into another—embroideries into woodblock prints, drawings into videos, a book into painting. These disparate techniques and dissimilar motifs are frequently combined in a single work. Many of the paintings and works on paper feature frames that are an integral part of the work.

The frames were made in the artist's Los Angeles studio using a variety of unconventional materials including hand-glazed ceramics, milled aluminum, painted resin and embroidery. Owens previously made artist's frames for the 2021 exhibition *Laura Owens & Vincent Van Gogh* at Fondation Vincent Van Gogh Arles.

Some of the recurring motifs throughout the show include 19th- and early-20th century embroideries she photographed at Fondazione Antonio Ratti in Como, Italy; embroideries by the artist's grandmother; and Owens's own earlier paintings and artist's books. Many of the works were inspired by prosaic moments in the artist's personal life—finding a scrap of paper she had saved from high school, conversations with her children, the wildlife she passes while walking around her neighborhood.

Like the video that plays on an intermittent loop, some paintings in the show feature sporadic movements that catch the viewer off-guard through their use of chance. These works were inspired by the "clock" paintings featured in Owens last show at Galerie Gisela Capitain, works that also featured movements with random variables that made them unpredictable. The video and these new paintings are also a continuation of ideas Owens developed for the books and tables she has shown in Los Angeles and Arles over the last few years, which likewise moved in unexpected ways and incorporated an element of chance. And like some of the books displayed on those tables, these works were inspired by children's pop-up books and advent calendars Owens has collected over the years.

The show includes four large blue paintings that were made by taking a past project as the starting point for new work. Owens painted in oil on test panels from the site-specific mural she made in 2019 for the ceiling of Sant'Andrea de Scaphis, a deconsecrated church in Rome. The mural subverted the patriarchal ideology of Catholicism by exclusively depicting female saints, such as the Virgin Mary, and pre-Christian goddesses such as Artemis and Ceres. These works also incorporate a range of screen-printed imagery based on Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel Fresco, drawings of constellations by Galileo Galilei, a vintage wallpaper's floral pattern, and, in another revisiting of past work, Owens's own 2006 painting of a leopard. The frames for these works have been CNC-carved with designs based on the graphic borders on maps of the United States that the artist inherited from her late grandfather.

Owens, who has been working in video since 2016, presents her most complex videos made to date in Cologne. Two of these videos are based on artist's books—*Attention Cream Puff Makers*, 2019 and *Baby Elephant Watching Baby Elephant*, 2021. The book *Attention Cream Puff Makers* was inspired by a mimeograph handed out by the French teacher at Owens's high school in 1987. Taking this scrap of paper as a starting point, Owens created a pop-up book that imagined the assignment, which she doesn't remember participating in, as it may have happened at Norwalk High School in the late 1980s. Owens began to create a video based on this book for her website booksandtables.com, but

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quickly found it expanding beyond the scope of the online project. In the process of adapting her drawings into 2D and 3D animations, she discovered a variety of new visual and narrative possibilities that recontextualized elements of the original pop-up book. The video is projected on a window in the gallery at discontinuous intervals.

Baby Elephant Watching Baby Elephant 2 creates a narrative using a Youtube video, a paper-mache elephant made by Owens and a changing pastel drawing, also made by Owens at the direction of Nova Bryan, and is based on an improvised dialogue recorded by mother and child. The third video, *Crows*, is also based on dialogue Bryan wrote (with much added improvisation done during the recording). These conversations between mother and child were then performed by puppets filmed alongside the crows living near their Los Angeles home.

Interweaving mediums and recurring motifs propels this new work forward, while casual moments from Owens's personal life—finding an old mimeograph that was meant to be discarded, taking snapshots of the crows that inhabit the park near her home, or the conversations she has with her children on car rides—often serve as the starting point for the question: how to make this unplanned encounter into an artwork.