

Raphaela Simon

Nighthawks

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

27 April – 10 June 2023

Opening: Thursday, 27 April, 6 – 8 pm

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to present *Nighthawks*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by **Raphaela Simon** at Goethestraße 2/3, in Berlin. This is the artist's fifth solo presentation with the gallery.

On view for the first time, the presented works testify to Simon's interest in the relationship between physicality and the psyche. In contrast to the subtle minimalism of her early work and the simplified everyday objects which have dominated much of the artist's oeuvre, *Nighthawks* suggests a new engagement with more existential themes. In these compositions, Simon paints personages and objects which are at once otherworldly and familiar, human and mechanoid. Wide-eyed and alert, these nocturnal totems embody countless contradictions.

Set against monochromatic backdrops and pushed to the front of the picture plane, the *Nighthawks* probe formal and symbolic boundaries. They are anonymised and 'desocialised', in Simon's words, prompting a comparison with Hopper's famous painting of 1942. Pale tones of grey, purple, and blue dominate, evoking an icy mood which is mirrored in the uncanny subject matter. These creatures are endowed with sculptural volume; they stand erect, solid, and monumental. Like ancient Mesopotamian votive figures, the *Nighthawks* seem to resist the comfort of sleep. Their eyes – which Simon paints both as white glowing orbs and deep black voids – suggest a state of eternal insomnia.

Here, the night constitutes a site of rest and potential violence. In *Bett*, (Bed), a figure lies muffled beneath a geometric blanket. Elsewhere, polka dots conjure the distant innocence of childhood pyjamas. In *Eiswürfel* (Ice cube), a severed head is frozen inside a block of ice, while a set of teeth in the aptly titled *Biss* (Bite) warn of potential injury. The morosely titled *Besserungsanstalt* (Correctional facility) depicts three figures trapped behind a steel door, suggesting the failure of humane rehabilitation.

Simon's interest in materiality is similarly evident in this new body of work. Tubular and padded, the subjects blur the boundary between skin and fabric, between the cold solidity of ice and the soft wadding of a duvet. 'What does it mean to be too close?' Simon asks the viewer. 'If something swells up too much, it can burst', she notes. 'There is an underlying violence that becomes palpable.'¹ In *Nighthawks*, Simon



Raphaela Simon, *Vic*, 2023, photo: def image

¹ In conversation with Chloe Stead, in *Raphaela Simon: Paintings and Sculptures 2012 – 2022* (Berlin / New York / Los Angeles: Galerie Max Hetzler / Michael Werner Gallery, Hannah Hoffman Gallery, 2022), p. 151.

renegotiates the contradictions between innocence and brutality, escape and imprisonment, form and function.

Raphaela Simon (*1986, Villingen) lives and works in Berlin. Simon studied under Peter Doig at the Düsseldorf Art Academy and was part of Günther Förg's class at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. She has been exhibiting regularly with Galerie Max Hetzler since 2016. The artist's work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2022); Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn (2022); Daimler Contemporary, Berlin (2021); Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles (2021 and 2016); Michael Werner Gallery, London (2019); and TRAMPS and Michael Werner Gallery, New York (2017). Simon's work will be the subject of a solo presentation at Fondazione Giuliani, Rome, from May to July 2023.

Further exhibitions and events

Berlin:

17 March – 30 April 2023

Katharina Grosse

Spectrum without Traces

Potsdamer Straße 77–87, 10785 27 April – 10 June 2023

27 April – 10 June 2023

In Defense of Symbolic Value: Artistic Procedures in the Resort

Merlin Carpenter, Jutta Koether, Valentina Liernur, Kerry James Marshall, Albert Oehlen, Adam Pendleton, Avery Singer, SoIL Thornton, Rosemarie Trockel

Soundtrack: Jens-Uwe Beyer

Curated by Isabelle Graw

Bleibtreustraße 46 & 15/16, 10623

9 June – 19 August 2023

Bridget Riley

Wall Works 1983–2023

Potsdamer Straße 77–87, 10785

Paris:

22 April – 3 June 2023

Walton Ford

A Very Rare Sight

46 & 57 rue du Temple, 75004

London:

25 April – 27 May 2023

Surface Works

Ida Ekblad, Günther Förg, Joan Mitchell, Albert Oehlen,
Rebecca Warren
41 Dover Street, W1S 4NS

Marfa:

4 May – 10 December 2023

Grace Weaver

Indoor Paintings

1976 Antelope Hills Road, TX 79843

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