

# Esther Schipper

Karolina Jabłońska

**How to be invisible**

February 2 – March 7, 2024



Karolina Jabłońska, **The crowd**, 2023 Image © Szymon Sokółowski

Esther Schipper is pleased to present **How to be invisible**, Karolina Jabłońska's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Premiering a new suite of paintings, **How to be invisible** brings together a significant body of work that foregrounds the relationship between visibility and invisibility. Taking a song by singer-songwriter Kate Bush as a point of departure, Jabłońska's paintings delve into the complex desire for invisibility, a sentiment often born from challenging personal circumstances or significant political events. The exhibition explores both the longing to disappear from view and the countering desire to be seen and recognized, a dilemma of particular poignancy for an artist. Drawing inspiration from a diverse array of literary and art historical sources, among them books by the writers Lidia Yuknavitch and Deborah Levy and the lives and work of pioneering female artists such as Maria Lassnig, Jabłońska firmly roots the new paintings in the particularities of female experience, even if her personal observations resonate with much wider significance for society at large.

In seeking to explore how these two opposing sentiments manifest, the artist populates her large-scale canvases with motifs that play on the tension between visibility and invisibility. The new works feature Karolina Jabłońska's recurring protagonist - a generalized self-portrait with identifiable features, captivating facial expression, expressive eyes, and prominent bushy eyebrows. In these paintings, the figure is depicted in various scenes of daily life, moving between interior domestic spaces and outdoor landscapes. At the core of each composition is the notion of concealment—whether it's hiding beneath a cascade of leaves, finding refuge in the confines of a wardrobe, or donning neutral-colored clothes to seamlessly merge into a crowd. In Jabłońska's images, clothing, objects, and natural elements become tools to shield from being seen. Paradoxically, by attempting to hide, the figure's presence only becomes more pronounced.

A number of new works depicting domestic settings, among them **Red Preserves** and **Fridge**, continue to explore a central theme in the artist's practice, namely the traditional role assigned to women. **Red Preserves**, for example, which presents a severed head apparently stored in a jar alongside other pickled fruits and vegetables, suggests an allegory for the entrapment of women, and by implication the existential threat to their bodies and restrictions imposed by political realities. Yet, whilst the work addresses the confinement of women within the domestic sphere, it also draws attention to the ways food can serve as a source of comfort. Inscribing multiple layers of meaning, Jabłońska unveils the complexities of navigating female experience.

Having been an important recurring motif since the start of her practice, Jabłońska's self-portrait acts as a tool to explore multiple identities and emotional states. Her presentation of figures braving dreary weather conditions set in the Polish countryside, such as **Head in the Grass** and **Misty Woods**, suggest analogies between weather conditions and mental and physical states. Appearing as desolate landscapes, in turn drenched, muddy or icy, her forest scenes emerge as sites for exploring personal feelings, all the while fully aware of the deceptive straightforwardness of such analogy —and wittily embracing the long history of employing landscape motifs as atmospheric markers.

Jabłońska's compositions often suggest strong emotions that evoke a visceral response in the viewer. We feel the freezing cold, even if her pictorial alter ego, hiding in a fridge or with her head in the wet grass, appears not to mind. Everyday situations—such as putting on a pair of tights or taking a stroll in the outdoors—take on a suggestive power in their monumental size. By pairing dramatically distorted points of view and expressive color, Jabłońska skillfully manipulates her medium to forge fictional narratives that explore the interiority of women, their desires, and ideas concerning sociability.

Karolina Jabłońska was born in 1991 in Niedomice, Poland, and currently lives and works in Kraków. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. Residencies and fellowships include Scholarship in Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze UMPRUM (2014-2015), LIA Programme Residency, Spinnerei Leipzig (2018), Fern Residency, Brussels (2021), Fores Project Residency, London (2022).

Jabłońska's works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally. Notable institutional exhibitions include: **Dinner**, Piana Gallery, Kraków (2023); **The Discomfort of Evening**, Zachęta National Gallery of Art (2022); **Mainly for Women**, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2021); **Sensation: Closer to the people**, Kunstverein Schattendorf (2019); **Paint also known as Blood**, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2019).

In the spring of 2024, Jabłońska's work will be presented in a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Sopot, and a group exhibition at the Dallas Contemporary Art Museum. A monograph is forthcoming in May 2024.

For press inquiries please contact David Ulrichs. Tel: +49 (0) 176 50 33 01 35 or [david@davidulrichs.com](mailto:david@davidulrichs.com)