



Katherina Olschbaur. *The Piano Player*, 2025. 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 x 1 7/8 inches. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

KATHERINA OLSCHBAUR

I SPEND ALL DAY WAITING FOR THE NIGHT

October 30 - December 20, 2025

Perrotin is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Austrian-born and New York-based artist Katherina Olschbaur, which marks her first presentation with the gallery in New York. Pushing the boundaries between representation and abstraction, she creates distinct viewpoints on light, color, and form for which her painting practice is recognized. Her work deals with systems of chaos and order, creation and destruction, and the relationship between obsession, devotion, and the collective and individual unconscious.

Katherina Olschbaur's painting practice explores the inseparable qualities between body and space through the interplay of color and light. Exploring diverse themes from historical painting to the culture of nightlife, her influences abound and scatter throughout each work, sliding in and out of meaning as they are detached from their origin. Allegorical in their compositions, Olschbaur's works do not rely on a singular narrative but rather on nonlinear time, developing from an ongoing process centered in disorder and intuition.

Olschbaur's paintings begin with an accumulation of quick gestures derived from her drawings that are then expressed in thin layers of paint. Treating the canvas as a palimpsest, she spends months on a single painting, reworking it over time by sanding, beating, and erasing the canvas. This exhaustive process frames her complex relationship to grappling with our current historical moment. Although the body is always central to her work, stylistically, her process is more influenced by abstract painters than figurative ones. Using the body as a vessel for history, her work is a vision of distorted reality.

The monumentality of the canvases evokes the power of mythmaking on a grand scale. In *The Piano Player* and *Transfiguration*, giants walk among tiny figures, distorting scale and

perspective. This fluctuation recalls Hieronymus Bosch's ability to create worlds within worlds. In *Transfiguration*, a miniature of *The Sleeping Hermaphrodite* is found glowing, wrapped in yellow light, surrounded by a gathering of giant reclining nudes. The mystery and beauty of this figure allude to the vulnerability, potentiality, and transitional nature of the body. The warm hues surrounding the sensual nudes invite an atmosphere of desire and yearning for connection. Olschbaur's process of world-building considers how the infrastructures and atmospheres of nightlife become a site of reprieve by fostering various forms of queer social care.

Birds, creatures, and monsters appear throughout the paintings as signs or omens. Their presence relies not on their symbolic meaning, but rather on how a language is formed through Olschbaur's stream of consciousness visions. In the foreground of *The Piano Player*, a small pianist plays on an icy blue lake before an apocalyptic horizon. A bat-like owl reminiscent of the one in Francisco de Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* flies by a giant who, unperturbed, stomps on a group of humans below. The owl serves as an allegorical nod to the role that distraction, irrational thought, and power play in the rise of fascism.

However, Olschbaur's world does not rest in melancholic cynicism alone. In *I Spend All Day Waiting for the Night (Strobes)*, colors are both bright and saturated, natural and artificial, emphasizing the blurry distinction between fantasy and reality. The figures share fleeting glances with one another and the viewer, caught in a moment of fervent exchange. Strobe lights refract and crisscross across the canvas, illuminating the dancers. Their voluminous, metallic bodies blend into one another. Here, opacity becomes a tool for expressing the fluidity of sexuality as a form of resistance to authoritarian discourses on sex and gender. In this way, *(Strobes)* celebrates the unrestrained pleasures of the dance floor.

– Allyson Unzicker