

# The approach

Helene Appel  
*Waves*

24<sup>th</sup> February – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Preview: Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017, 6 – 9 pm

Helene Appel applies a forensic gaze to familiar objects from an aerial view: the full-to-the-brim kitchen sink, uncooked pasta, a puddle of spilled water, a pollock fillet. The discarded, the incidental and the domestic are represented objectively and yet, the very act of painting these motifs admits tender attention. The German artist's forthcoming solo exhibition of new paintings at The Approach attest to her precision and diligence, and asserts a quiet defiance to the cliché of the 'intuitive' gesture of the genius painter.

Appel's new series of seashore paintings differ to the discrete objects that she places on a table in her studio to paint at actual size. The paintings of the shoreline bear a relationship to photography in their cropped composition, which does not aim to represent the vista or the landscape from a panoptical position. Instead, the one-to-one scale and perspective of looking down at the beach from eye level represent the experience of the subject in the environment. The installation in the gallery further emphasises scale, by creating stark contrasts between the vast sea paintings and a miniature canvas that can accommodate only a single piece of farfalle.

The sandy shore in the seawater paintings is in fact not painted at all. The inherent texture of the grainy brown canvas only comes to represent the wet sand as it is overflowed by incoming seawater topped with foamy crowns. Appel's interest in the representation of transparency and surface is consistent between the seashore pictures and other motifs: a water spill is adeptly rendered with only a few strokes of translucent white where the light hits the curved edge of the liquid. Appel has coated the carefully rendered scabs of food that float at the bottom of the basin with diluted paint, that has solidified to appear more like a layer of water than paint.

The viewer's haptic gaze gauges the fleshy wetness of two fish fillets. Rendered in oil and encaustic, the objects' density is emphasised to contrast with the motifs of translucence. Appel trains our vision in some of her pictures to permeate a clear surface, and in others to dissect an object, such as the fish cuts.

The tidal sea is, of course, a symbol of perpetual flow. The moment in time and the current state of an object for which transformation is imminent, are implicit throughout *Waves*: the spilled puddle will be mopped up any minute now, the dishwater will drain, the raw fish will be thrown into a hot pan or onto crushed ice, and the pasta is headed for boiling water.

Helene Appel was born in Karlsruhe, Germany (1976). She studied in Hamburg and London and now lives and works in Berlin. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Washing Up*, P420, Bologna (2016); James Cohan Gallery, New York (2014); The Approach, London (2013); *Kaiserringstipendium*, Kunstmuseum Goslar, Germany (2011). Recent group exhibitions include: *Kettle's Yard at The Hepworth Wakefield*, cur. Anthea Hamilton, The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield, UK; *QUEENSIZE*, Museum Arnhem, Arnhem, NL; *I Prefer Life*, The Weserburg, Bremen; *CORALE*, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Frigoriferi Milanesi, Milan; *Is this living?*, The Approach, London (all 2016); *Painting Show - Part One*, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; *Tutta l'Italia e silenziosa*, cur. Davide Ferri, Reale Accademia di Spagna, Rome; *Salondergegenwart*, Hamburg; *Helene Appel, Olga Balema, Simon Logan*, Galerie Luis Campaña, Berlin (all 2015); *QUEENSIZE - Female Artists from the Olbricht Collection*, me Collections Room, Berlin (2014-2015); *SOME / THINGS*, Proyecto Monclova, Mexico City (2014); *Luce, Giorno: Helene Appel, Antonio Calderara*, P420, Bologna; *A Scene of Painting Today*, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato (2013).

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