

**STANDARD (OSLO)  
PRESS RELEASE**

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**MARI SLAATTELID  
"UNLIKE A SYMBOL"**

**02.03.-31.03.2018 / Preview: 02.03.2018 / 19.00-21.00**

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**STANDARD (OSLO) is proud to present a solo exhibition of new works by Mari Slaattelid. The show, entitled "Unlike a Symbol", gathers a group of new paintings that may vary in terms of formal point of departure but repeatedly return to an interest in the basic structures of language and how language categories limit and determine cognitive categories.**

The brass disc in the floor marks the spot. From there one can see the dome rising - tall, ribbed and coffered - converging with the crown and the windows facing the skies above Rome. Looking up, it appears as a crack to the bottom of a cup turned upside down with sunlight seeping in. But unlike its more renowned neighbour Pantheon, the sun has never moved along the interior of the dome in Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola in Campo Marzio. Ever since 1685 it has stayed the same and kept on shining with the same luminosity. It would be a miracle of nature if it was not a construction of culture. A dramatic conceit, so to speak.

"Finta Cupola" reads the bold white letters, aligned in the lower left corner of the painting by Mari Slaattelid. The rushed brushstrokes in diluted grey run the entire width of the painting. "Fake Dome", as it translates into English, so flat out reveals what you may not detect when positioned on top of that brass disc looking up. Consecrated in 1626, the church erected in honour of the newly sainted Ignazio di Loyola had ended up in a dispute with the original donors, and the lack of funds had resulted in an undecorated ceiling and prevented the completion of the planned dome. To cover up this bare and dull reality another layer of flatness was added. A seventeen meter wide painting - executed by Andrea Pozzo, a lay brother of the same Jesuit church - was installed to offer a trompe-l'oeil dome. Such was the realism of the painting - skilfully making use of linear perspective, foreshortening, light, and shade - that it was almost impossible to distinguish between the actual architecture and the impression or extension of it. The illusion, however, required that you were standing in this one particular spot. The disruption of illusion, or an "exposure" as it is known when the methods of a magician is revealed, only required a few steps to the side or a few words whispered. The words "Finta Cupola" suggest what the painting by Mari Slaattelid confirms; the intimately scaled work wilfully made flat by brushstrokes that collapse any notions of space. Only the top right corner is uncovered by the grey paint, a colour not commonly associated with much of a material or spiritual quality. If anything, grey is the colour of indecision.

Exposure turns to double exposure with the series of paintings entitled "Figured". Similar to an analogue camera, where the film may be wound back to the previous frame after exposure, these paintings are mechanical acts of a superimposition. A letter is forced on top of another. An "I" is raised to the power of "O". Enlarged, centred and set in Times New Roman (that dreary, default choice of typeface) the circle above the "I" takes the same shape and size as the circle that is the "O". Ever so slightly connecting, the two circles circumstantially shape the number 8. Tilted and resting uneasily as neither a number nor a word, but as mutation or a tumour. As if applying the logic of algebra, Slaattelid's "Figured" paintings leave us with quantities that are unknown or may take on many values. Letters are flexed, inverted and interfered. Letters oppose each other, play off each other, morph into each other, generate an aggregation of wills and ways to communicate. As it happens to be, the word algebra stems from the Arabic الجبر or al-jabr, translating into "the reunion of broken parts". The Persian mathematician and astronomer Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi was the one who coined the term within mathematics; it originally referred to the surgical procedure of setting broken or dislocated bones. And while language here is broken down in smallest units, Slaattelid's concern is not to relocate what is dislocated. Rather, these paintings seem to focus on the space between the letters, the many fleeting relationships they may have and an invention by tension. The "I" with the double "O" (or an "8") serves as "prototypography"; an attempt at formalising, materialising and evaluating what does not exist yet. The act of painting appearing to be a proof of concept, trying to lay bare its feasibility in terms of communication. The aim of the painting attempting to investigate if our thinking is conditioned by the structure of our language, and if so then how would a new structure could result in new thinking.

"We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language", as stated by the American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf. When doing research of native American languages and that of the Hopi tribe in particular, he came to a key difference to Western languages in terms of how the structure of Hopi language affects its speakers' world view: "Every language contains terms that have come to attain cosmic scope of reference, that crystallize in themselves the basic postulates of an unformulated philosophy, in which is couched the thought of a people, a culture, a civilization, even of an era. Such are our words reality, substance, matter, cause, and as we have seen space, time, past, present, future. Such a term in Hopi is the word most often translated hope - tunatya - it is in the action of hoping, it hopes, it is hoped for, it thinks or is thought of with hope, etc. Most metaphysical words in Hopi are verbs, not nouns as in European languages." Returning to the title for this exhibition, "Unlike a Symbol", it suggests a greater concern with the activity of the verb rather than the stability of the noun. The majority of works in the last of the three gallery spaces stem from a series of framed watercolour paintings employing the same title as the exhibition. Uneven in formats they all render the flowers "Aquilegia", which were left to the artist after her mother passed away. Knowing that she might not be able to keep them alive, Slaattelid decided to paint the flowers in an attempt of remembering by doing rather than honouring by keeping. Each of the paintings places the flower with its spurred petals at the centre. Ranging in colour, contour and gesture, the paintings both blur into abstractions and eerily take on the characters of human faces. The indecision not being dependent on the colour grey this time around. And in its range of shapes and suggestions, one is reminded that the more common name for the flower, "Columbine", stems from Latin and was given due to the leaflets' resemblance of five doves clustered together. One is reminded that the awe and amazement that would have the avid believer looking up and seeing the divine light from Pozzo's dome would with the same awe and amazement look down and see the five doves

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presenting themselves as the Holy Ghost in the petals of the flower. A construction of culture making miracles of what is nature. A dramatic conceit, so to speak.

Mari Slaattelid (b. 1960, Notodden) lives and works in Oslo. This is her first exhibition with STANDARD (OSLO). Previous exhibitions have taken place at The Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo; The National Museum, Oslo; Linköping konsthall, Linköping; Henie-Onstad Art Centre, Bærum; Kiasma, Helsinki; CAC, Vilnius; Malmö Art Museum, Malmö; and Galleria d'Arte Moderna Bologna, Bologna. Later this year a monograph will be published by Teknisk Industri A/S. 2019 will also see a larger survey exhibition at Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo.

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For further information please visit our webpage: [www.standardoslo.no](http://www.standardoslo.no) or contact Eivind Furnesvik at [eivind@standardoslo.no](mailto:eivind@standardoslo.no) or +47 917 07 429 / +47 22 60 13 10. STANDARD (OSLO) is open Tuesday-Friday: 12.00-17.00 / Saturday: 12.00-16.00. Sunday and Monday: Closed

Next exhibition projects:

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08.03.-11.03.2018

Goutam Ghosh  
06.04.-05.05.2018

Mikael Lo Presti  
Market Stockholm  
13.04.-15.04.2018

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