

Katja Seib
dear diary

16 November 2018 – 05 January 2019
Sadie Coles HQ 1 Davies Street
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6 pm

Sadie Coles HQ is delighted to present the gallery's first exhibition with Katja Seib – also the artist's first solo presentation in London. Seib's new paintings (all 2018) form an interconnected group throughout which lucid figuration blurs into dreamlike symbolism. Alternately time-intensive and rapid, her works share a quality of psychological depth and atmospheric nuance.

In a group of large canvases, closely related in theme and iconography, Seib depicts individuals ranging from real-life models to imaginary personae. The paintings are made variously on rough burlap and found textiles – materials which permeate both their texture and imagery. *Girl with Teapot* shows a girl seated at a table, cast in the glow of her iPhone. The underlying textile is used to represent both the tablecloth in the foreground and – tinted a darker shade – the wallpaper behind. Seib found the material in Los Angeles's fabric district; the real-life object intrudes upon – and becomes identical with – the painted image, in such a way as to parallel the larger interplay of the real and the fictive in her paintings.



Seib's paintings are marked by recurring symbols and subjects. *Eve's Curse* depicts a woman reclining on a bed beneath a picture: female sexuality and subjectivity are examined through the prism of Eve and the serpent. The related motif of an apple appears in the installation hello there: a painted piece of fruit hangs between two inscribed canvases, doubling and inverting the imagery of another painting, *Real life is stranger than my dreams*. Snakes appear in multiple guises, embodying the paintings' various strands of meaning – ornamental, symbolic, formalist. The formula of a figure in bed, viewed from an elevated cinematic perspective, together with that of a 'picture within a picture', appears in *Dreams and Forgetting* and *You made your bed, now sleep in it*.

In the latter, a girl lies back, her outspread hair rising into a filmy veil that covers the top half of the picture to create a split scene – a structure that appears in many of Seib's paintings. Reality shades ambiguously into fantasy: cradled like a statuette in the girl's hand is the motif of Europa and the Bull (borrowed from a *Jugendstil* illustration by German artist Adolf Munzer) – an ancient mythic 'inset' that variously implies transgressive desire, the line between sexual coercion and complicity, and the condition of Europe. Reflecting this plurality of meaning, two giant hands intrude on the top of the image, clutching a massive rolling pin – either a figment of the girl's imagination, or a real and impending threat.

Throughout her new paintings, Seib plays with light and colour, using fluctuations in shadow and tone to convey – or render ambiguous – spatial depth. Her figures are often shrouded in darkness or literally veiled, in an extension of the delicate layering (of paint and fabric) that gives rise to each picture. Installed upstairs are multiple smaller works, made on identically-sized square canvases, each produced within the space of a day. These are based primarily on photographs that Seib has taken of people she has encountered in Los Angeles. Painted more quickly and lightly than her larger canvases, she likens these works to drawings – each is an open-ended experiment. Yet the canvases also mirror and magnify the charged symbolism of her more 'finished' pieces, repeating their interplay of illusionistic content and surface patterning, and suggesting a cast of characters coming into being. Throughout her new paintings Seib evokes a world that is alternately luminous and nocturnal, mundane and surreal. Repeatedly, the viewer is inveigled into this world. The pictorial space seems to extend into, or recede from, the real space of the viewer, so that we are invited to be participants and subjects as much as detached observers.

Katja Seib (b. 1989, Düsseldorf, Germany) studied at the Fine Art Academy of Düsseldorf. She has been featured in exhibitions including 'Salon des Amateurs', a presentation of works by the pupils of Peter Doig and Tomma Abts, at Tramps London (2017), and 'Figure of Speech', Cassina Projects, New York (2016). Seib lives in Los Angeles.

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