

## CHRISTINE WANG

### *Coronavirus Memes*

Opening: Friday, September 4th

Exhibition: 05. September – 07. November 2020

## PRESS RELEASE

Christine Wang's canvases manifest fleeting outbursts of collective creativity. In her works she deals with cyberculture, internet phenomena and digital imagery. Her acrylic colors shimmer like RGB, they transfer pixels back into physical space. For her fifth solo exhibition at Galerie Nagel Draxler, she is copying collected visual material from Instagram: Memes.

The meme (from the Greek mimeme) is itself an imitation, its reproduction is part of the narration. Images are overlaid with texts, in humorous provocation they strive for lulz<sup>1</sup>, the merciful malicious joy of the user. Supposedly simplified, these pictorial worlds of Web 2.0 are placed in ever new contexts, appropriating the most up-to-date narratives and developing their own complexity under the speed of a blink of an eye. Away from scrolling, swiping and typing, Christine Wang allows us to take a closer look at this memplex. She generates a snapshot, enlarges it and, through the act of painting, transforms it into a historical moment, a testimony to short-lived reactions. Contrary to the viewing habits that usually accompany memes, the viewers of the „Coronavirus Memes“ stand in front of life-size, sometimes even cinematic motifs and have to relocate their own position. The pictures are dealing with the economic devastation brought on by the pandemic in the US. The complex of themes ranges from mask wearing, unemployment, Coronavirus and current US health policy.

Whether a reality TV star ("Kim Kardashian", 2020), a television painter ("Bob Ross", 2020) or a comic figure ("Goofy Movie", 2020), the protagonists in the picture macros<sup>2</sup> once posed for other narratives. It is common for such a picture to be recontextualized, but within it to convey the same feelings and intentions. Thus, the actor Kayode Ewumi a.k.a. Roll Safe from the web series "Hood Documentary" discovers a dangerous logic: "You can't count all cases of coronavirus / if you don't test for coronavirus". Here, as in the numerous other digital versions, the failure of a critical thought is mocked. With "Roll Safe or Digital Blackface in the Age of Racial Violence" (2020) the artist draws attention to a problem that is a not to be neglected consequence of the poor decision-making of white

1 Lulz describes malicious laughter at the expense of others or oneself; originally a plural of LOL „laugh(ing) out loud“, an abbreviation commonly used on the Internet and in text-message English.

2 Image macros are one of the most common forms of Internet Memes. The digital medium consists of a picture or work of art that is overlaid with a form of text.

suprematists, especially in the USA, but also in Germany. Violence against BIPOC<sup>3</sup> and socially disadvantaged people manifests itself in neglected or too expensive health care policies ("Hospital Bills", 2020), as well as in non-solidary behavior, e.g. when shopping for grocery shopping ("Yellow Suits Meme", 2020). Half a year after the outbreak of the virus in Europe, Christine Wang gives us a mirror in which we recognize our own cultural and humorous approach to pandemic dangers, rediscover our economic and social fears and through which we see ourselves in the responsibility to act precautionary to protect ourselves and others - with hygiene, humor and culture.

The artist evokes a shift in perspective and gives the subjects of her paintings a form to which the viewers react not least physically: „The viewer also contemplates my time-consuming photorealist paint layers. The large scale, contemplative, and overwhelming quality of viewing the paintings is a contrast to the handheld, fast and joyful quality of viewing memes.“ Christine Wang invites us to bring the visual arguments of far-reaching discussions in 2020 from the social networks into the exhibition space.

Christine Wang, born in 1985 in Washington D.C., lives and works in San Francisco.