

# GALERIE FONSWELTERS

Galerie Fons Welters  
at  
Art Cologne

presenting Olga Balema

April 19-22, 2018  
Halle 11.3, Booth A-018

Olga Balema constructs objects and installations from the found, the readymade and the fabricated. Her work moves fluently through various stylistic points, but inherent is a material intelligence and references to personal narrative, the cinematic, and the literary. What is most important to Balema is the way the work slips between the viewer and the space in an effect which heightens consciousness of the physical as well as psychological. Discomfort and distress serve as critical starting points for much of her work, and the quality of tension is key, elucidated through a specific misuse of material that counters what is perceived as prescribed or correct.

In the work shown at Art Cologne, Balema created foam-and-vinyl sculptures, composed to first draw the eye to discrete spaces and then cohere. As in earlier series, like her *Biomorphic Attachments* (2014-2015), Balema explores the body's interaction with its environment. Their attenuated shapes recall the pixilation of a degraded image, producing the illusion of a big picture but offering up instead the reality of missing information. Clinging to the walls like protruding cells, their subtle frictions –faux–eel skin, ostrich, snake, crocodile make for a tactile image of vital interiority. While attracting with their candy coloured smooth surfaces, the sculptures tend to leave you with an uneasy feeling of allure that is typical for Balema's work.

*Olga Balema (1984, Lviv, Ukraine) holds an MFA from UCLA and has had residencies at Rijksakademie and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Recent solo exhibitions include: Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles; Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam, Swiss Institute, New York; Kunstverein Nürnberg; Kunstvereniging Diepenheim (NL); 1646, The Hague (NL). In addition, Balema's work has been included in many international group exhibitions at institutions such as Kunsthalle Basel; n.b.k., Berlin; Bergen Kunsthall; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; New Museum, New York; SculptureCenter, New York; Fridericianum, Kassel. Her works were part of the exhibition "Made in Germany drei – PRODUKTION" at the Kestnergesellschaft in Hanover and is currently part of Blind Faith: Between the Visceral and the Cognitive in Contemporary Art at Haus der Kunst, München, on view until 19 August 2018. Opening 11 May her work will be shown as part of the Baltic Triennial in Vilnius.*

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Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi  
at  
Art Cologne

presenting Juliette Blightman

April 19-22, 2018  
Hall 11.3 / Booth A-018

In 2013 Juliette Blightman shifted her artistic practice, which had focused up to that point mainly on sculpture and room installations, to include drawing and painting. Made from photographs of friends, their surroundings, and the environments Blightman found herself in, both as an artist and mother, she painted during the free hours between dropping off and collecting her daughter to and from school, and continuing into the night once her daughter slept.

One of the first series to emerge from this shift in practice was a group of drawings made of the interiors of toilets and bathrooms. These belonged to and were titled after the private spaces of friends and peers, as well as the public restrooms of planes, trains or art galleries. Taken from phone snapshots, Blightman's works on paper actively reversed the interior notion of architecture and their inherent private regions intended to be 'left unseen'.

The monumental paintings shown at Art Cologne grew out of an idea similar to earlier toilet portraits. Yet, the artist is not interested in naming their subjects, seeing them instead as still lives, as their titles suggest. Blightman paints fast, aiming to capture the timely moment of original photography as well as the consecutive physicality of painting on this scale. Standing close to the large canvasses, the viewer experiences a fragmented perspective of an intimate subject matter. Despite their mass, the linen possesses a translucency as the stretchers propped up against full crates of bottled beer, let light illuminate the canvas from behind. The painterly style is as soft as the depicted penises.

A relevant aside to these paintings is Blightman's introduction to Dorothy Iannone's experiences of censorship during an exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, in which the genitals in her drawings were taped over by museum staff. In 2016 and forty-five years later, Blightman showed her penis portraits in the same institution. With the support of its first female director Valerie Knoll, her works this time went uncensored.

With these paintings, Juliette Blightman is interested in the idea of the moment, a moment of coming inside, creating and changing life. Although we do not have to be reminded that women's bodies have been depicted freely by men over the centuries in all manner of ways and contexts, Blightman's still lives are not combative statements. They stand for her very own position as a woman, mother, and female artist and as 'an elsewhere that invalidates here - another penis, as it comes and goes.'

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