

Midway Contemporary Art

Julia Haller

nudes

September 7 – October 27, 2018

Vienna-based artist Julia Haller's installation of ten new paintings was conceived as a site-specific project for Midway. Unlike her most recent work, in which she uses CNC routers, engraving, and industrial composite mineral board to create precise and highly finished surfaces, Haller is here using more figurative and ostensibly fantastical imagery. Working on an industrial rubberized fabric, she employs a mix of gestural brushwork and sprayed lacquer. Figures and forms appear and recede, while white and purple lines mark the surface of the paintings, creating a phantasmagorical scene. With an exhibition titled *nudes*, she is clearly connecting to both a history of painting – Bacon, Schiele, Polke – and more recent contemporary painting from Europe. But these works are resolutely her own, with enigmatic forms that have migrated from her previous paintings and a nuanced appreciation of the work within an institutional environment.

As in recent installations of Haller's work at Vienna's Secession and the New York gallery Svetlana, the specific context is integral to her work. She has installed the variously sized paintings together on one wall of the gallery and altered the lighting of the gallery. This temporary assembly humorously anthropomorphizes the paintings, suggesting a more complicated role for these works. Artist Alexander Hempel, who has previously worked with Haller, conducted a performance at Midway in 2014, in which the audience was corralled into a lineup for a photograph up against this very same wall. In a similar fashion, Haller disrupts the conventions of this gallery space, exhibition, and the viewer by turning down the spotlights on us. There is something equally aggressive and banal in this dispassionate environment. Are these paintings the performers or the audience? And what are we – the viewers?

Julia Haller (b. Frankfurt am Main, Germany) graduated from Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna in 2011. Recent solo presentations include: Svetlana Gallery, New York (2017); Secession, Vienna (2015); Christian Andersen, Copenhagen (2014); Diana Lambert, Vienna (2014); Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2014); and Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, (2013). Recent group presentations include Belvedere, Vienna (2015); Neues Museum, Nürnberg (2015); and ibid Projects, London (2015).

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