

# GALERIE FONSWELTERS

Sarah Ksieska – Phantoms  
17 June – 31 July 2021

## Q & A – Sarah Ksieska and Fanny Hauser

*Your exhibition at Galerie Fons Welters is titled Phantoms. What phantoms are you referring to, and how do they connect to your paintings?*

I think the phantoms this series concerns itself with are soft hallucinations, a sense of not completely believing your eyes, sudden appearances emerging and coming into contact with something hiding among the ordinary. It is more about apparitions than hauntings. Phantoms have no bodily existence, and make the biggest impression before you can decide whether they are truly real or not. I like to inhabit the blurred line between the real and unreal in my paintings.

*The exhibition focusses particularly on interior spaces. What do they signify?*

Interior spaces are strongly connected to ideas of privacy, protection and personal space. The interior spaces I included are also particularly domestic. There is the idea of the safety of home and the opportunity for a strange presence to destabilize it. Additionally a person's mind is often treated as if it were an interior space. So this also touches upon the psychological role in experiencing things, which is what places it in a more surreal direction.

*Can you speak about the importance of the unconscious and dreams in your works?*

The unconscious is pre-verbal, its language is mostly images, so of course it is perfectly suited for painting. I find a lot of cryptic meaning in my work just as there are in dreams and I am often surprised myself to see what comes out of it. Dreams not only help with understanding a personal past but contain ideas about the future as well. I like this superposition of two opposites. It creates a timeless space which I try to capture in my paintings.

*How important is the realm of the digital in your working process?*

I work with digital methods and try to reflect upon the influence this has on painting. The final works begin as digital sketches, layered compositions and collages. I like to see the virtual artwork getting its body back. This is why I realize my digital images in paintings. The physicality they get through this process is not just material, but also haptic. Every touch has an identity of its own. It's absurd to simulate a programmer's simulation of real paint brushes from

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a drawing program, which I tried in a couple of works. The results can get quite strange, but I like that. The digital for me is a state of existence that has to do with a certain kind of otherworldliness and the detachment from reality and physicality, but on the other hand it is a space extremely calculated and defined. Working with it really accelerates the process of image composition, and finally gives space to something more spiritual, undefined, to emerge later.

*Where do you see the potential of painting and figuration?*

There is always a lot of potential, but some of the more recent things that stand out to me are VR experiences finding their way into painting. Just that is some kind of interactive surrealism. I would be interested in painting in VR as well, just to see how it would influence the spatial and figurative relationships within my works for example. Also, I personally like to continue my practice with painting figures that are not immediately evident but rather emerge out of the image. I think the concealed figure has a lot of potential and I'm excited to see where it could go.

*You tend to use rather unconventional materials as painting surfaces. What affects your choices in materials?*

At the moment I am using aluminum sandwiched panels for my work. Their smooth and closed surface allows me to construct, collage and erase my paintings, similar to the feeling of painting on my tablet. I feel more familiar with industrial and technological materials than touching a linen sheet. Since switching to metallized materials I have been able to develop some particular techniques that help me to realize all the different gestures and aesthetics of the images I have in mind.

I like how these materials have a sense of being somewhat mysterious and not immediately categorizable.

Fanny Hauser is an art historian and curator from Vienna. She is co-founder and co-director of Kunstverein Kevin Space.