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Sophie Reinhold
the end of here and now



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Pio Pico, LA is pleased to present *The End of Here and Now*, the first solo exhibition of Berlin-based artist **Sophie Reinhold** in the United States, consisting of a group of paintings conceived for the occasion and inspired by the city of Los Angeles.

Reinhold employs her generous tonal registers that range from the dreamlike to the uncanny and the mordant within this cycle of canvases. The work adds up to a travelogue that, through an expansive stylistic palate, plunges the viewer into a narrative that confronts the artist's scrutiny of the Western art canon and the current condition that reconciles hyper-connectivity and disorientation.

Reinhold was born in the former East Germany, and as a child witnessed the estranging reconfiguration of everything she knew in the process of the nation's reunification into a novel entity. When invited for a show in Los Angeles—both a physical metropolis and one of the most accessible mental backdrops for the idea of the “city” itself via the film industry—she chose to use as a starting point the question: “Where is the centre?”

The answer is not straightforward and entails: voyages to the centre of the Earth and up into the sky; antique cartography; Renaissance perspective grid formation; solemn sunsets and human dials; GDR public service announcements; anthropomorphic typography and pop art; digital speedways and the feeling of an “eternal present”; mysterious caverns; and much more.



Sophie Reinhold (b. 1981) lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Leipzig; Weißensee Academy of Art, Berlin (class of Antje Majewski); and the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (class of Amelie von Wulffen).

Some of her recent solo exhibition include *Menace* at Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna, in 2021; *Y* at galerie philippzollinger, Zürich and *Das kann das Leben kosten* at CFA, Berlin, in 2020; *the ballad of the lost hops*, *SUNDOGS*, Paris, and *Kein Witz, No Joke* at Kunstverein Reutlingen in 2019; and *DEAR HANNES* at Schiefe Zähne, Berlin, in 2018.

Her work has been presented in group shows organised by, among others, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; Efremidis Gallery, Berlin; Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; and Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles.



Sophie Reinhold
Nadir and Zenith, 2021
Oil on marble powder on jute
90.6 x 78.7 in / 230 x 200 cm [HxW]



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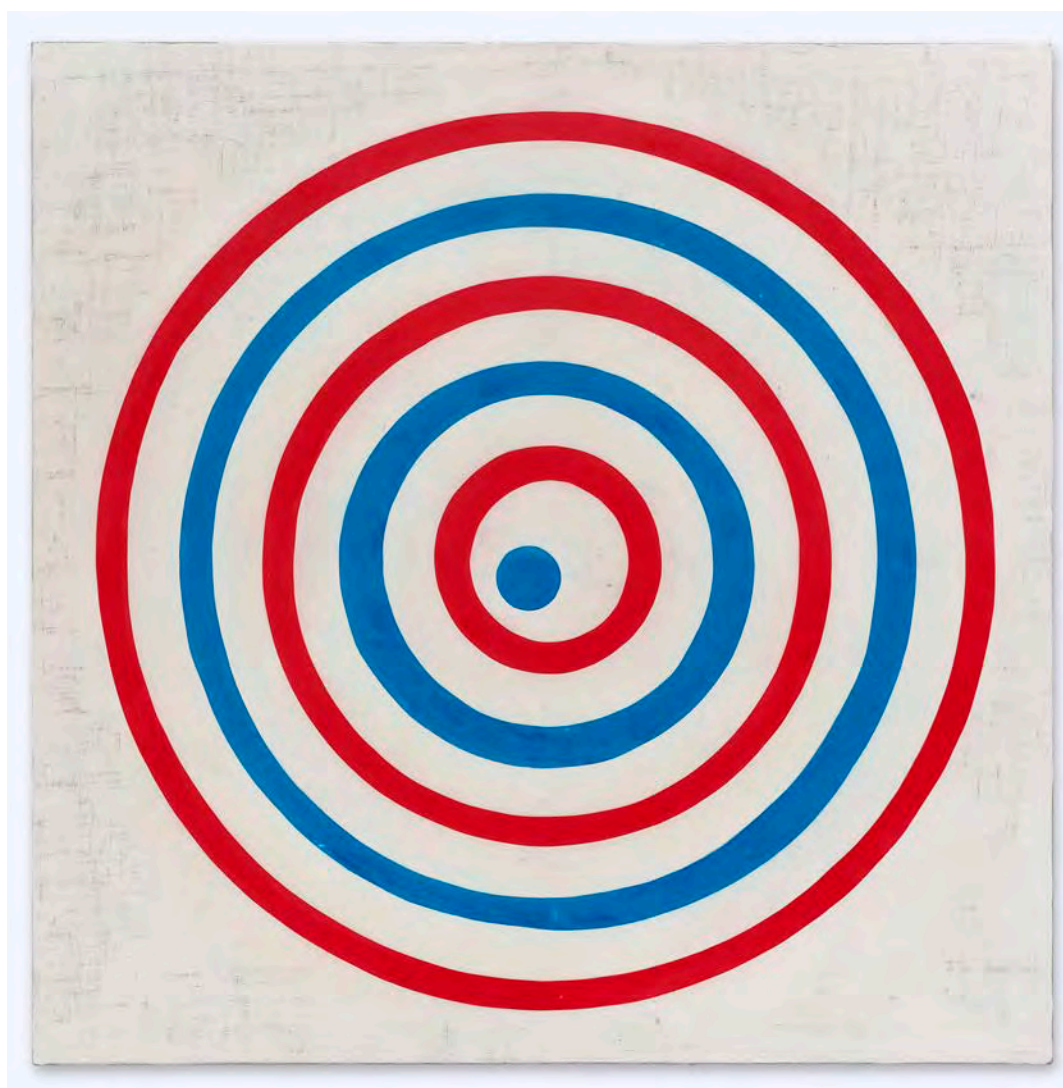


Sophie Reinhold
HOPELESS ROMANCE, 2021
Oil on marble powder on jute
74.8 x 94.5 in / 190 x 240 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
IO NON SONO, 2021
Pigmented marble powder on jute
59 x 59 in / 150 x 150 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
MERCEDES BENZ, 2021
Oil on graphite and pigmented marble powder on jute
35.4 x 43.3 in / 90 x 110 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
Subversive Softening or the softened reality, 2021
Pigmented marble powder on jute
80.7 x 90.6 in / 205 x 230 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
EMPTY MAP (FOR NELLA), 2021
Oil on marbled paper on jute
86.6 x 74.8 in / 220 x 190 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
In the absence of a distant horizon, 2021
Oil on marble powder on jute
19.7 x 23.6 in / 50 x 60 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold

Emotions are power of judgment, 2021
Oil on pigmented marble powder on jute
19.7 x 23.6 in / 50 x 60 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
The Contortionist, 2021
Oil on pigmented marble powder on jute
43.3 x 35.4 in / 110 x 90 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
CABBAGE HEAD, 2021
Oil on pigmented marble powder on jute
19.7 x 15.7 in / 50 x 40 cm [HxW]



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Sophie Reinhold
press

ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2020

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

WHERE WE'RE AT:
VIEWS FROM ALL OVER

STEVEN PARRINO

CARCERAL AESTHETICS:

NICOLE R. FLEETWOOD

TALKS TO RACHEL KUSHNER

STANLEY WHITNEY



The interest was in the gesture and in the trace. Referential meaning and even intentionality are dispensable. So is classical compositional organization. What counts is weightlessness, suspense. As Bowie phrased it, channeling his Major Tom: “I’m floating in a most peculiar way!”

With a certain mysterious detachment, Haller tries to prevent us from figuring out her creative logic. “Knights” needed no *Texte zur Kunst*. A xeroxed leaflet sufficed. It consisted of eight repetitions of the phrase “I’m trying to write a sentence with a mouse,” borrowed from a text by artist Christoph Bruckner. Art and language were here reduced to a scrawl, contesting the authority and professorial presumption of experts. And yet Haller does not hesitate to insert allusions to canonical works of art into her work: The black square inevitably evokes Malevich. But these are not quotations, as the gallery’s Christian Meyer assured me, nor statements, but rather symptoms. And, as they say, thou shalt love thy symptoms as thyself.

—Brigitte Huck

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

BERLIN

Georges Adéagbo

BARBARA WIEN

Georges Adéagbo is a one-trick artist. But the outcome of that trick is endlessly variable. His method consists of making assemblages of objects: mostly books, magazines, newspaper articles, record covers, and wooden sculptures, but also the occasional pair of underwear. These items are pinned to the wall, as in a teenager’s bedroom, with what looks like a contrived messiness: Everything’s askew, with no apparent relation between one thing and another. So open does Adéagbo’s structure appear that for a second you might think you can just pick anything up, perhaps even take it home. But then it is art, after all, and so you start to look for distance, permanence, design.

The exhibition’s title, “*L’Abécédaire de Georges Adéagbo: la civilisation parlant et faisant voir la culture’ . . . !*” (“The Alphabet of Georges Adéagbo: the civilization is talking and making culture visible” . . . !), was a reference to *L’abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, Claire Parnet’s landmark 1989 series of television interviews with the French philosopher. Over nearly six hours, Deleuze worked his way through the alphabet, offering his two cents on *A* for *animal* and *B* for *boisson* and so forth. In *C* for *culture*, he explains his hatred of the subject, saying he engages with it only in the hope of encountering an idea that allows him to get out of it again. Escaping art through art also seems to be the point of Adéagbo’s trick. Every object gestures to an exit, an unexpected connection to other things, elsewhere.

Each iteration of Adéagbo’s art speaks to the times and the places that framed its production. In this case, the places were Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the artist’s native Benin. The time is the present, evidenced in a magazine cover of Harry and Meghan and in renderings of the spiky Covid ball. Other elements seemed less temporally specific. A story about Jennifer Aniston “finally happy again,” for instance, could have been from any point during the past fifteen years. One wondered about what lies behind all this hoarding. Does Adéagbo share my preoccupation with the outfits of the French first lady or with queer-interest films such *Carol* (2015) and *The Danish Girl* (2015), or was the occurrence of these references a matter of chance, meaning that I forged these paths through his alphabet myself? Could these assemblages accommodate any and every narrative, or was there some hidden design?

Both were the case, it seemed. Taking a few steps back, you realized there was symmetry to the scatter. Each wall had the outline of an altar,



View of “Georges Adéagbo,” 2020.

with the knickknacks unfolding from the center. The floor-based groups, often organized on and around a rug, likewise invited a devotional attitude. These vaguely religious formats pointed to Adéagbo’s construction as a cosmology, a self-conscious world-building exercise, the result of which was something very close to an immediate imprint of life itself in all its confusing, multifarious mundanity.

At the center of this cosmos was a thesis on how stuff comes together to testify to the geographical and historical situatedness of subjectivity, as well as to its transience. But this subjectivity was, as it turned out, not that of anyone in particular. Rather, as you wandered through the nine installations making up the exhibition looking for Adéagbo and the meaning you assumed he’d planted there, what you found was some warped and elusive reflection of yourself. Likewise, locations and temporalities melted and fused into something both shared and deeply intimate. Deleuze sought to escape culture through what he called encounters, and, as he told Parnet, “one has encounters with things and not with people.” Judging by Adéagbo’s alphabet, Deleuze was right.

—Kristian Vistrup Madsen

Sophie Reinhold

CONTEMPORARY FINE ARTS

The title of one of Sophie Reinhold’s paintings here, *Gewöhne dich nicht daran*, 2019—referencing an anti-drug addiction slogan of the German Democratic Republic and translating as “Don’t get used to it”—might also apply to her purposely elliptical practice. The Berlin-based artist frequently works up pale paintings on a ground of jute and marble dust, with pieces of canvas cut out and stitched onto their surfaces to create ghostly figurations, like shallow reliefs on a facade. In this show, “*Das kann das Leben kosten*” (That Could Cost You Your Life), the chimerical expanse of the opening painting, *Courtroom*, 2020, was fashioned that way, with a small spectral face—judge? defendant?—floating within it. The canvas beside it, *R U concerned?* (*Eiermann*), 2020, was much brighter and tighter. A melancholy Humpty Dumpty or, as the subtitle would have it, egg man—maybe referencing the twentieth-century German architect Egon Eiermann—

wanders lost and exhausted amid the rainbow contours of a modernist stripe painting, toting the minor enigma of an unidentifiable blue book. The show also included a shaped canvas, text-driven works such as *Gewöhne dich nicht daran*, cartoonish sexualized scenarios, and more.



Sophie Reinhold, *Das kann das Leben kosten* (That Could Cost You Your Life), 2020, oil on marble powder on jute, 55 × 43 3/4".

The initial effect was of energetic misdirection, reflex swerving without anything very tangible behind it.

Yet a breadcrumb trail slowly became manifest. In *I know I have the right to remain silent, but I want you to know I am a screamer*, 2020, a busty redhead in heels and miniskirt being ticketed by a goofy-looking patrolman thrusts her butt toward his crotch as she leans over the trunk of a car. Across the room was *Poli*, 2019, a blaring white-on-blue text painting nodding to early Ed Ruscha, its wording clearly a cropping of POLIZEI. *Das kann das Leben kosten*, 2020, spells out another GDR-era apothegm in dirty pastel tones, an antic monkey perched on the second word. (Reinhold, born in 1981, lived her childhood in that vanished world.) A repeated motif of travel, of getting from A to B—or not getting there because the cops pull you over—sometimes twists toward the absurd. In *Mann mit Wurst* (Man with Sausage), 2020, a tiny, suited man clings to a sausage with horsy legs that, like an unstoppable bucking phallus, tugs him through an empty brown landscape. *BVG*, 2019, a taut graphic canvas featuring interlocking black and yellow forms, refracts the bumblebee colors of the Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe, the city's transport system.

The show's vectors, then, seemed to include a travelogue of its host city over the course of the artist's life, the shifting shape but eternal presence (and gendering) of authority and judgment, and the perpetual problematic of converting such themes into art with a light touch. Several works here alluded impatiently to active looking and conversely to being observed: In the vaporous, pinky-orange *Untitled*, 2020, a disembodied hand grasps a fringed circle that contains an eye, and floating eyeballs were secreted, *Where's Waldo* style, within many of the other compositions. In the pallid tropical landscape *The truth, a cave (allegory of the cave)*, 2020—the final work if you read the show clockwise—Reinhold goes full Plato to retroactively detach what's envisioned from what might actually be there.

"*Das kann das Leben kosten*" scanned as a fractured essay on the decorum of sociohistorical assertion. In a handout, the apparent neutrality of Reinhold's method was compared to that of Rachel Cusk's in the novelist's much-admired *Outline* trilogy (2014–18), wherein the narrator is more lacuna than presence. But rather than lacking an authorial viewpoint, Reinhold's show felt populated by many, as she mixed diverse signals into something approaching disheveled equilibrium.

—Martin Herbert

DÜSSELDORF

siren eun young jung

KUNSTVEREIN FÜR DIE RHEINLANDE UND WESTFALEN

It all started with a photograph of a wedding party. There was nothing unusual about the scene at first glance: the bride and groom, the family. . . . Yet as South Korean artist siren eun young jung examined the picture more closely, it gradually dawned on her that the people depicted in it were all women, including those whom one might initially

have thought were men. They were members of a troupe of performers of *yeoseong gukgeuk*, a variant of traditional Korean opera sung exclusively by women. Established in South Korea in the 1940s, the art form remained popular until the 1960s. Delving into its history, jung found herself enchanted. She met surviving participants, dug up historic footage, conducted interviews, and supplemented the material she had gathered with excerpts from a musical starring Korean drag king Azangman. The resulting works make up her ongoing "Yeoseong Gukgeuk Project," 2008–, which was also the starting point for her recent exhibition "Deferral Theater." The videos on view showed, for instance, actress Lee Ok Chun's transformation into a man in the makeup room and nonagenarian Lee Soja—who acted in male roles throughout her career—commenting on her life and struggles. More than just documentaries, they are dramatic works in their own right.

Yeoseong gukgeuk has its roots in the Korean musical storytelling genre of *pansori*, which boasts a long tradition of subversion vis-à-vis social hierarchies. By performing the parts of men, women established a distance from time-honored gender roles and made a critical perspective possible through a kind of alienation effect. And so jung rightly asks: "What are the implications of the discussion surrounding yeoseong gukgeuk and its potential to be considered in the position of a 'contemporary' performance?"

Jung took the inquiry into gender roles further in the three-channel audiovisual installation *A Performing by Flash, Afterimage, Velocity, and Noise*, 2019, with which she represented Korea at that year's Venice Biennale. Again featuring Azangman, as well as transgender electronic musician Kirara; lesbian actress Yii Lee; and Seo Ji Won, who leads a Seoul-based disabled women's theater group, it probes the question, prominently raised by Judith Butler, of the performative nature of gender—and other—roles. Accentuated by lighting and sound effects, the projection makes a rousing case for a community life founded on the celebration of difference.



Yeoseong gukgeuk fell victim to the "modernization" of Korean society pushed through by Park Chung-hee's military government in the 1960s. An "audience that had already become part of modernity that sought after 'Western' values as its ideal," the artist notes, saw this type of theatrical performance as outmoded. Her assertion points to another dimension of this outstanding project: In deeply moving images, jung champions not only a diversity of gender expressions, but also another kind of diversity, that of the manifold cultural traditions threatened by today's Western-dominated globalization.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

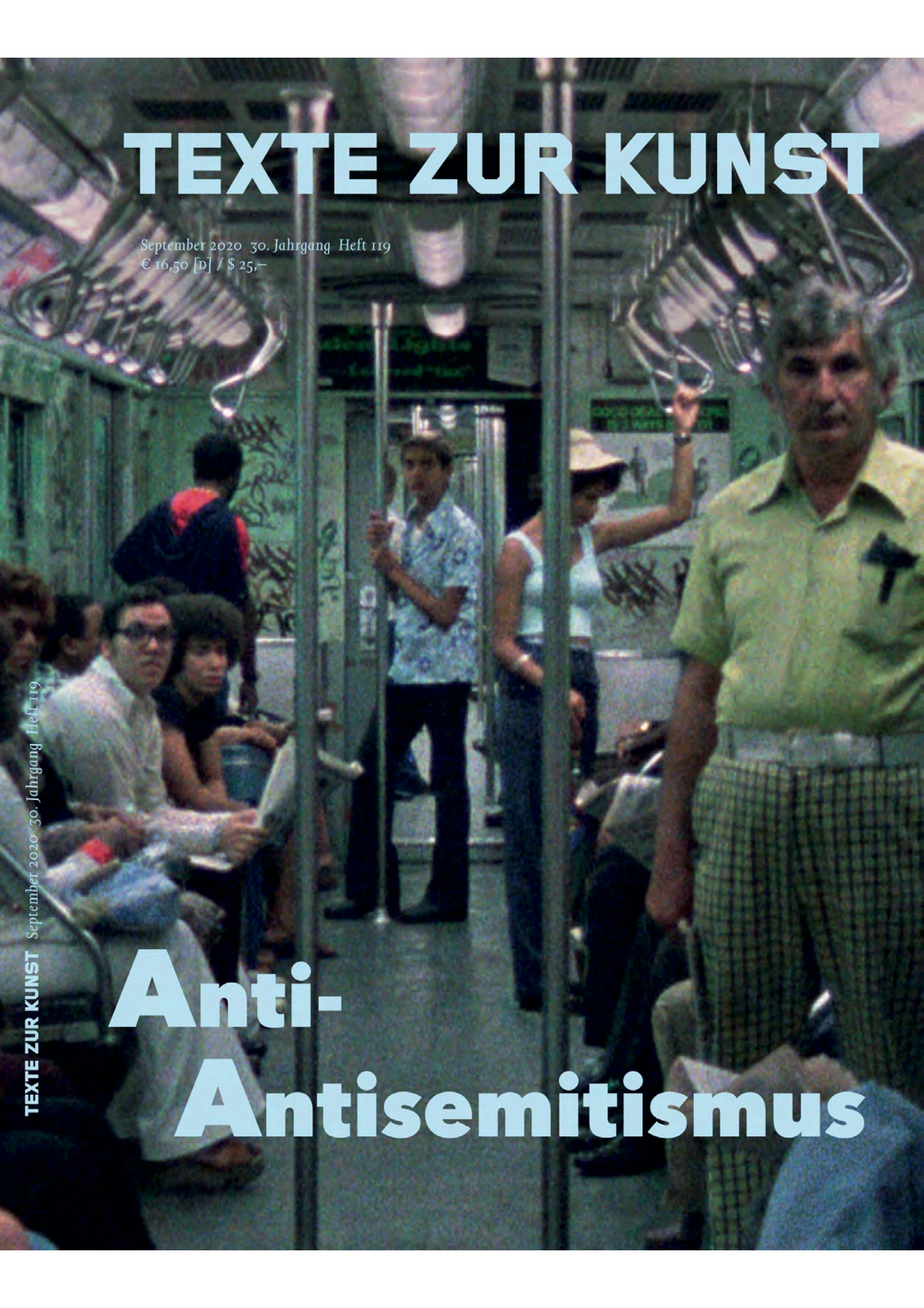
siren eun young jung, *A Performing by Flash, Afterimage, Velocity, and Noise*, 2019, three-channel HD video projection, color, sound, 27 minutes 36 seconds. Installation view.

TEXTE ZUR KUNST

September 2020 30. Jahrgang Heft 119
€ 16,50 [D] / \$ 25,-

TEXTE ZUR KUNST September 2020 30. Jahrgang Heft 119

Anti- Antisemitismus



DIRTY JOKES, TRUE LIES

Kristian Vistrup Madsen on Sophie Reinhold at Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin



Sophie Reinhold, "Mann mit Wurst," 2020

We're presented with a game of viewing habits, symbols, associations, and hasty evaluations determined by market-oriented exploitation logics that shape our everyday life and our perception of art. And who, at least in the German-speaking art world, isn't reminded of all those male artists (who have also been generously discussed in this magazine) when it comes to humor, or more precisely, to irony in painting? With Sophie Reinhold's works, this irony serves to show us authority as precedence without past: emerged not from the fogs of classical antiquity, or ancient scriptures, but through flat symbolic accumulation, stripped of ambiguity.

Falling into Reinhold's painterly sprawl, as the exhibition's title warns, "can cost you your life" – even if only in a philosophical sense. You lose yourself, and things and beings become other than what you thought they were: an egg man; a sausage on horse legs; or a mesmerizing ram, like an ur-mother who carries all the wisdom of the world in her eyes. Reinhold is of a generation more comfortable than the one preceding it with embodying the artist-as-subject, and even in revelling in that position. There's so much joy taken in these paintings, and consequently, what they ask of the viewer is not criticality so much as indulgence.



"Sophie Reinhold: Das kann das Leben kosten," Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, 2020, installation view

But such abundance presents us with two problems: one of coherence and one of clutter. That is to say, the moderately sized rooms at Contemporary Fine Arts were somewhat overwhelmed by the many visual references and intensely rich surfaces of Reinhold's assembled paintings. Both were issues of adding up the sum of vastly different parts – cartoon figures, landscapes, typography, architecture. You might easily have refused and concluded that it was too much to take on. But then the paintings were just so engrossing, quite simply so well done, I, for one, couldn't help but want to. In tackling this Hydra of an exhibition, it is useful to understand Reinhold's work as an exercise in cosmology, in narrative, and as such, that we read the exhibition like literature, work by work, scene by scene. This is the solution to clutter: not to sneak-peek ahead.

What Reinhold does is not render, but digest. She makes such a tight-masked filter for the world that all subjects and styles that pass through her, however wildly they might differ, in the end appear to have hailed from the same closed ecosystem. The orchids of *Wilde Orchideen* (2020), then, grow exclusively on the Island of Reinhold, which, you get the feeling, is both

familiar and strange, in this moment, and in some other time entirely. One reason for this is her mixing of marble powder into pigments, lending the paintings a fractured, hard surface, almost like frescoes, survivors of the ages. Another is her peak painting skills aided by a dark sense of humor and somewhat freaky imagination. Could the answer to the problem of coherence be the artist herself?

As a consequence, the works are adjective-repellant. It is tempting, for instance, to apply a concept like "feminine," not just to the flowers and pastel colors, but also in order to name a certain openness, a lack of aggression. But spend time with them, and aggression rears its head in roundabout ways, communicated by the stubborn incongruity between and within the works. And what seems like openness – say, to interpretation – is more like an insistence on intricacy and versatility. So "feminine," sure, but only to show that such collective descriptors were inadequate to begin with.

In the almost two-by-three-meter-large painting *Courtroom* (2020), a classical architecture of pedimented doorways and checkered floors outlines the first in a series of encounters with authority. The central perspective and the

symbolically loaded motif recalls all the power of ancient civilization and European history. But there are cracks in the marble, and a little graffiti-like ghost is visible through a slit in the wall. As intricately painted faces fading in and out of view, the picture disintegrates before our eyes to ask a question about what it even is, and what else might still be trapped under its surface. What we see in *Courtroom* is both a ruin and a mirage of something that was perhaps only ever an idea. Narrative in Reinhold's work, it seems, is not teleologically progressive, or spatially expansive, but layered and thick.

Authority appears again in the guise of a police officer about to frisk a long-legged woman in *I know I have the right to remain silent, but I want you to know I am a screamer* (2020). Retro-kitsch sexism run through the Reinhold filter means both making the dirty joke and laughing at its premise. A couple of pictures over, *Mann mit Wurst* (2020) shows a similar landscape of blue, green, and grey, this time with a suited man racing off toward the horizon on a sausage run amok. The two make up an absurd interlude liberated from the constraints of propriety precisely by their stylistically loose but nonetheless inherent connection to Reinhold's overall project. Where in *Courtroom* law and order was a fading metaphysical fantasy, here it is a farce, which, dressed in Reinhold's marble dust, and even in all its ridiculousness, looks just as time-honored and true as the former.

The cop work serves as a narrative primer for a wall of three paintings that come down on the exhibition like whips. (Talk about aggression.) BSR, POLI, and BVG (all 2019) crop the well-known graphic identities of Berlin's waste management company, police force, and public transport agency, respectively. As if in head-to-toe latex fetish

gear, you feel compelled to violate their perfect, crack-free marble façades to free the orchids and strange animals that Reinhold's paintings have taught us must be cowering underneath. These pictures show us authority as precedence without past: emerged not from the fogs of classical antiquity, or ancient scriptures, but through flat symbolic accumulation, stripped of ambiguity.

Though not quite as aesthetically disruptive, *Das kann das Leben Kosten* and *Gewöhne dich nicht daran* (both 2020) also break with Reinhold's pleasing visuals by introducing typography. The works' painted slogans are lifted from GDR propaganda posters, but what might originally have been well-meaning injunctions to drive safely or not get addicted to prescription drugs here sound ominous, almost threatening, when divested of context. As the past can devolve into "pastness" – as in the mythical and open spaces of the courtroom, ram, and orchid pictures – so expressions of authority become hazy and frayed at the edges once their source withers – as in the case of the GDR, a whole nation. A monkey rests on the tip of the word "KANN" like on the remnants of a crumbling temple, while a single tit is almost visible next to "LEBEN" – or maybe it was there even before, and is instead becoming visible once again? Pastness is an effect of something having been turned into an image, something usually flatter and more static than it was before. But in these paintings, time passes and life sprouts, manically, uncontrollably. Images lie, but from that lie a truth trickles down. The better the lie, the more truth. Sophie Reinhold is very good at lying.

"Sophie Reinhold: Das kann das Leben kosten,"
Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, May 20–June 20, 2020.

Sophie Reinhold Suggests There's No Such Thing as an Innocent Picture

[frieze.com/sophie-reinhold-menace-2021-review](https://www.frieze.com/sophie-reinhold-menace-2021-review)



From the outside, Galerie Sophie Tappeiner in Vienna is currently hard to tell apart from the nightclubs and brothels in the neighbourhood, its mirrored windows suggesting striptease poles on the other side rather than a painting exhibition. Even before entering the gallery space it's evident that Berlin-based artist Sophie Reinhold's show 'MENACE' is an attempt to rethink strategies of presentation and how these play with our expectations.

At the centre of the exhibition is the eponymous six-part series of paintings depicting enchanted ruins (*MENACE (E)*, all works 2021), lush foliage (*MENACE (M)*), a rocky crag with a castle and a torrent of water (*MENACE (C)*) – scenes reminiscent of illustrations in storybooks. Despite their historical appearance, the hazy pastel palette and perfectly painted arabesques make it difficult to attribute these settings to a specific period. Familiar but lacking context, it's easy to give in to this idyllic imagery. The works are kind on the eye and thanks to the opaque mirror foil on the gallery's windows, the outside world stays outside. This peacefulness, however, is deceptive: taking a step back, Reinhold's richly detailed paintings resolve into letters that also reflect in the windows, spelling out the word 'MENACE'. An abyss opens up: are we really safe here?



Sophie Reinhold, 'MENACE', 2021, exhibition view, SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna. Courtesy: the artist and SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna; photograph: Kunst-Dokumentation.com.

With their combination of typesetting, writing, landscape and architecture, these new paintings bring together different strands of the artist's cosmos. Taking pleasure in the historical, in ornament and in visual clichés of the romantic, Reinhold's paintings have a peculiar eccentricity, a playfulness coupled with tongue-in-cheek cutesiness. The works flirt with a naïve sentimentality whose witty casualness is almost improper – but also great fun. In *MENACE (M)*, for instance, a group of ducklings swim in a pond while a bizarre figure wearing underpants and a floppy hat points a gun towards a ruin in *MENACE (E)*. Although lacking pious earnest, these paintings are nonetheless deeply serious, a successful balancing act between ironic performative distance and a sincere passion for the medium of painting; disciplined virtuosity of execution is coupled with the casual humour of awkwardly jotted lines and childish rendered subjects.



Sophie Reinhold, *MENACE (E)*, 2021, oil on marbled powder on jute, 160 × 140 cm. Courtesy: the artist and SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna; photograph: Matthias Kolb

The way the gallery's architecture is incorporated into the presentation of the paintings creates intermedia tensions. As in a drawing, the pictorial content stands out against the white background, preserving the lightness of a sketch. At the same time, this relief structure gives the paintings a sculptural quality, which is further highlighted by Reinhold's choice of materials. She works with ground marble, applying it in several coats and then removing it in places, scraping forms out of the material. Different painterly modes are orchestrated on the canvas: mark-making in rhythmic lines and finger-smudged traces; sealed surfaces of fetish-like smoothness with precisely positioned cutaways that bare the textile weave of the canvas, revealing the picture's constructed quality, unmasking their seductive illusionism. The familiarity of Reinhold's paintings switches all too quickly

into the uncanny, due in part to their many aspects, oscillating between figuration and abstraction, between letter and picture, between material and sign, declaring every manifestation of meaning temporary and latent.

With their allusion to ornamental capitals, Reinhold's letter paintings refer to the narrative potential of pictures and to the writing of history and stories more generally. Having grown up in former East Germany, and thus between two grand narratives or promises – socialism and capitalism – Reinhold is a witness to the power of ideology that is rarely able to tolerate ambivalence and contradiction, which come all the more disturbingly to the fore in her exhibition. This much is clear: there is no such thing as an innocent picture.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

Sophie Reinhold, 'MENACE' is on view at SOPHIE TAPPEINER, Vienna, until 27 November 2021

Loops and Escapes: Sophie Reinhold

[moussemagazine.it/magazine/sophie-reinhold-francesco-tenaglia-sundogs-2019](https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/sophie-reinhold-francesco-tenaglia-sundogs-2019)



Sophie Reinhold interviewed by Francesco Tenaglia

“Both gods and men are angry with a man who lives idle, for in nature he is like the stingless drones who waste the labor of the bees, eating without working; but let it be your care to order your work properly, that in the right season your barns may be full of victual. Through work men grow rich in flocks and substance, and working they are much better loved by the immortals.”

— Hesiod, *Work and Days*

The centerpiece of the exhibition *The Ballad of the Lost Hops*, titled *Die Allegorie der vier Jahreszeiten* (The Allegory of the Four Seasons), is a four-part work in oil and marble powder on jute. It evokes, in playful and ectoplasmic form, the celebratory representations of physical labor decorating facades under Western and Eastern European totalitarian regimes.

Each canvas contains silhouettes of anonymous—and thus universal—protagonists performing different tasks, and hints, as in Japanese haiku poetry, at a different time of year. But we are not on the street; we are inside a Parisian apartment, where Sundogs is located, and the artist chooses to make contemplating these emblematic workers more pleasant by offering two sculpture-armchairs on which the visitor can comfortably sit. Out

the window we enjoy an agreeable view of the Republique area, which Reinhold answers with a painting of a window—hanging on the wall opposite the real one—grimly painted in black. Perhaps this is to mirror the city symbol of the bourgeois revolution, Paris, and therefore the early epicenter of art world infrastructure as we continue to know it, with the residues of a truncated revolution set in the city where she was born, Berlin, during the last decade of the GDR. Or perhaps the black window simply alludes to a party that will continue through the night. One of the foundational metaphors of the exhibition is beer production—the raw materials that can be lost if the process goes awry, but that more frequently blend in a successful concoction—thus, alcohol flowing, inebriated conversations, dances. Fun follows fatigue cyclically, as if per an ancestral pact.

Hunter (2019) portrays a swan without wings guiding two children who have lost their heads, a fairy-tale allusion to loss of control as the two urinals, titled *Water of Life* (2019). Drunkenness and self-containment, propaganda and decor, the regimented division of work and leisure, Paris and Berlin, folklore and art history. *The Ballad of Lost Hops* exceeds these premises, using a constellation of polarized references like bricks to build—with a distinctively commanding voice—a complex and powerful display.

FRANCESCO TENAGLIA: To “enter” your show at Sundogs, Paris, the first crucial thing is to understand its title: *The Ballad of the Lost Hops*.

SOPHIE REINHOLD: The exhibition title deals directly with the individual works and their context. A ballad is a narrative poem with multiple verses, usually telling of a tragic event. It is a hybrid between an epic, a lyrical poem, and a drama. Following the idea of verses, *The Ballad of the Lost Hops* suggests relatedness between the different elements in the exhibition. At the same time, the entire setting can be seen as a kind of stage design for a corresponding action. The German proverb “when hops and malt are lost” comes from beer brewing. When the process goes wrong, the main ingredients—hops and malt—are lost. In the proverbial sense, it describes something or someone as a hopeless case.

FT: The allegory of the four seasons—which has manifested in many, many permutations since the classical era—has been used to illustrate the ages of humanity, from youth to old age, therefore the transience of mortal life. How did you reinterpret this trope in the economy of the exhibition?

SR: The allegory puts time and space in an interesting relationship. The seasons suggest a universal order, a constant continuum of change and life. To me, it was important to include this epic-ness, especially chromatically. I used the formal structure of four individual canvases, each depicting one figure, as a nod to this extensively used format. I simultaneously reference historical allegorical representations in which the seasons are illustrated by a human activity. I’m curious about the interconnections between the seasons and different types of labor. Although in the contemporary workplace, the link is supposedly missing. Today, everything (and everyone) is designed to function all year round. This leads to detachment—in the interest of capital—from a certain reality, namely aging and its natural cycles. At the same time, the idea of immortality prevails. Like the tech companies that offer their female employees the option to freeze their eggs so they

can keep working and worry about having kids later. This corresponds to the interruption of the work/recreation rhythm, a temporal and spatial expansion of labor processes to all available areas. I see this as closely linked to aging prevention, research geared toward immortality, and the obsession with never-ending youth.

FT: One has the feeling that Paris is an important counterpart for the construction of the exhibition, both in visual terms—I am thinking of the black window that contrasts with the marvelous panorama of roofs and streets that can be glimpsed from Sundogs—and in terms of calcified connotations of the city. Could you expand on how valuable Paris was for you as a reference?

SR: When I made the works, I considered the fact that Sundogs is located in a private residence. The painted window, its proportions and grid structure, refer directly to the apartment's window, from which one has a typical view of Paris. Seen from the outside and in the daylight, the window appears black, the view inside blocked. I see my work as a mirroring of that view. You see a surface that doesn't reveal anything, and at the same time you have to assume that something is behind it. Growing up in the GDR, Paris was a projection plane that was historically rich and unreachable. When I was seventeen I spent some time in the city, and the projection mixed with actual experiences. After the system changed, and after all the longing, I had a very curious but humble attitude toward everything that was part of the Western reality. Sometimes I'm quite happy that I grew up with this different perspective. When I see how readily Western values are accepted, I have to smile at how transparently the system actually functions. How inherited status and money are passed on and celebrated, completely unquestioned. This has its effect on the art world. I can see the boredom with which things are created and how it's expected that we sit and watch how the codes of privilege are reproduced. It's not really about the eye level.

FT: In what way—beyond formal and chromatic echoes—do the sculptural chairs relate to the paintings?

SR: In its form, the bathtub is already related to the body, and the chairs are made from tubs that I've sawn into pieces. They remind me of Caesar's throne in the French *Astérix* comics. The way in which the objects are arranged in the apartment makes them function like interior decor or design elements. The distribution of the objects in the space appears generous, almost lavish and decadent. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was possible to live in enormous old apartments without this connotation. Money and space had a different relationship. On the one hand, I am interested in the tension between comfort and work, leisure and money and decadence. In Berlin, for example, living space is becoming more expensive due to speculation. What used to be a rather comfortable situation has become a luxury. Experiencing these changes raises questions.

FT: I find it very interesting that you use urinals, beyond making them less the object of artistic contemplation (the plinth, the signature, the decades that separate us from the significance of the first gesture). You stick them on the wall as one would a normal toilet,

even if at a bizarre height, to invoke the alternating cycle of work and inebriation that is one of the themes of the exhibition. Do you have a particular interest in Marcel Duchamp and the readymade?

SR: In my exhibition *Dear Hannes* at Schiefe Zähne, Berlin, last year, I installed under a painting an object reminiscent of a “piss channel.” The sculptures at Sundogs are casts of urinals and clearly a few steps away from readymades. I find them intriguing as objects. They’re important as a verse in the ballad. In reality, urinals have a functional role. They’ve been appropriated by art history. But hopefully this doesn’t lead to a reduction of their reading! I find it interesting to enter mined territory, art historically speaking, because I like the irritation that comes with it. First and foremost the urinal makes us think of the act of peeing and, as such, it addresses circulation. Hanging them higher makes them more suitable to receive vomit, and they become less gender-specific. Their title, *Water of Life*, is a term that comes from “urine therapy,” the belief that drinking the so-called “middle stream” of morning urine has health benefits. Seen this way, the cycle hermetically closes: the human being itself becomes the fountain.

Sophie Reinhold (b. 1981, Berlin, GDR) lives and works in Berlin. Recently, her work was exhibited at Galerie Tobias Nähring, Leipzig; Schiefe Zähne, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna; Villa Romana, Florence and Kunstverein Friedrichshafen. She has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Kunstverein Reutlingen.

at Sundogs, Paris
until 30 June (by appointment)