

BQ

CARINA BRANDES

Exhibition 19.03.-16.04.2022

Carina Brandes' works inhabit the interfaces between photography and painting. They avoid the painterly just as much as they steer clear of perfectionist cadrage. They are genuine, genre-less artworks. Consequentially, her works allow for a heightened sense of freedom, a playful engagement with depiction, situation, and movement, which bluntly points to what is amiss in both painting and photography: being unable to show what a thing really *is*. The black and white layered images in which the artist interrogates her own reflection linger on a threshold between different media. They never show anything in its complete and simple entirety but remain on the side, separated and fragmented. They become subtle spaces of reflection about the curious constitution of one's own subjectivity.

The exhibition at BQ follows the dramaturgy of a turn and, as such, inverts meanings and space: The word 'END' stands at the beginning, painted in black letters across the entire wall, repeated over and over. The large-format photographic floor piece situates 'YES' and 'NO' in a slow approach towards one another, turned upside down. In the last room, the mixing and mingling of images and text continues: here is the sole of a foot, as if one were standing right underneath it – behind it a mural iterates a self-referential system. 'Presses' becomes 'messes' becomes 'looses': declinations of a mysterious message. While its estimated sense can be felt, its meaning remains unintelligible. The gallery's corridor, which is painted black, attracts visitors with a sense of urgency and leads them on to the next room with a feeling of uncertainty. Here, a photograph shows a kind of departure that is stuck to a fence: a suitcase with its contents scattered, a grid that cannot be overcome and again that heavy feeling of levitating a few centimeters above the ground, *of being between things*.

In her works, Carina Brandes follows established photographic tropes and extends the vocabulary of the frozen moment with impressive skillfulness by the syllable of falling – an endless motion. Her works thus aim at dissolving an illusion by means of its specific anatomy: a falling body, the fragmented look onto the self. Other photographs by Carina Brandes do at times show photographic reproductions of her head, at times her entire silhouette. Her works feature projections of the female body, consisting of multiple exposures with anatomic longitudinal views. All of this appears like the exploded views of a giant hopelessness: of never being able to fully express, show or see oneself. Every now and then, a photograph replaces her head that has ducked out of view, sometimes she wears herself as a hat. A gesture immanent to her work is that of a staged photograph within a photograph. This is an ironic gesture which belongs to the topos of the juggler or the outsider: an alluring and liminal figure that walks the fine line between truth and illusion, between power and powerlessness. Here, the aesthetics of the break is faced with a humoristic (and playful) aspect of her artistic position, which amplifies that fundamental and processual character of her multi-layered works without having to fall back onto time-based media: everything remains mute, motionless, and focused. Everything consists of overlays and puzzle pieces, doll's arms and other body parts become a collage that reveals naked fragility.

The exhibition by Carina Brandes creates spaces, situations and images that do not seek to resolve what is contradictory, but instead somehow repeat it again and again. It is this (specific) mode of reproduction and representation in which a kind of presence that almost explodes becomes tangible. This presence lives in mere sketches and shapes, just as much as it inhabits a fundamental tension between photography, text, and movement. 'Truenottruetruenottrue'. A moment for being in the *in-between*.

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CARINA BRANDES (born 1982 in Braunschweig, Germany) studied at Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig in class of the artist Walter Dahn. Since 2013, she lives and works in Leipzig, Germany. For her artistic practice she received, among others, the Scholarship for Fine

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Art of the State of Lower Saxony, Germany, the working-Scholarship “Fürstenberg Zeitgenössisch“in Heiligenberg, Germany, and the Villa Romana Prize 2017 in Florence, Italy and Germany. Carina Brandes’s works, which range (in)between photography, installation and textual interventions, have been on display in numerous international exhibition venues – such as the MoMA PS1 in New York, NY, the Kunst Haus Wien in Austria, the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart in Germany or the Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig, Germany. Her photographs are part of the following art collections: the LBBW Collection of Landesbank Baden-Württemberg Stuttgart, Germany, the FRAC Haute-Normandie Collection in Rouen, France, or the McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco.

Text: Tobias Muno

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