

Galerie Barbara Weiss is pleased to present our fourth solo exhibition by Monika Baer (born 1964 in Freiburg/Breisgau). The title of the show, "o – to – i", refers to a specific dynamic between heterogeneous motifs and elements of Baer's paintings. The mental and emotional space that opens up within each picture and also between the various pictures cannot be separated from the material motifs and styles of painting the artist employs. Breast and seam, wall and hole, hole and eye, web and frame, mortar and segments of oil paint pressed straight from the tube all interlink both literally and metaphorically. Figure and background, the literal and the symbolic, form and allusion are thereby all interwoven in a myriad of ways. These diverse processes of exchange overlap each other to produce complex pictorial constellations within the exhibition, as the act of perception is always included in the process of constituting the painterly objects.

Since her early years at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, Baer has avoided following specific traditions of painting. She seems, however, to have been influenced by the minimalist, conceptual, and performative approaches that formed the essential points of reference at the Academy at the time. The performative factor has found expression in one pole of her artistic approach that one might define as 'stage-like'. In these works – from the series of the "huts" and the so called "Mozart paintings" to the "hunter"- and "vampire" series –, props, sceneries, and masks appear as key starting points for entering into an unusual exploration of painting as a discipline of art that stages its possibilities. The other pole of Baer's work could be viewed, against a minimalist-conceptual background, as the very 'object' of painting, revealing itself, since her cut pictures of the late nineties if not earlier, in the seams of her breast paintings and, especially in her recent web paintings, in the form of visible framework, carrier surface, and, sometimes, even mounting. Object and stage may well represent opposite poles, but there is an increasing interplay happening between them, which thematizes the object-like side of the stage and the stage-like side of the object. The individual themes develop in the area of tension in between. They may appear both literal and linked, trivial and thought-through at the same time. Some paintings seem almost emptied and meaningless, while others leave the impression of being loaded with collectively experienced, emotional, and psycho-sexual moments of meaning. On the one hand, the object may turn into a motif, as can be seen in the jeans-like seams of Baer's breast paintings; on the other hand, the motifs, such as the breasts, become objects – not only in a sexual sense (both as passive objects to be looked at or desired and as active 'subjects' that drip and squirt), but also in a literal sense, since they end up serving as a carrier surface for the paintings. Along these lines, her seemingly realistic bills, which seem almost within reach, can also be read as abstract surfaces that vanish into the pictorial space. The webs, in turn, are based on actual spider webs; here, the motif becomes virtually identical with the object of the painting, while the monochrome coloration ranging from pink to peach alludes to other levels of reference altogether. It is in this kind of exchange, the process of

veiling and unveiling, that Monika Baer's artistic agenda becomes evident. Her paintings accentuate the ambivalence between perception and recognition, between the technique and production of a piece of work, and generally between the content, expression, and medial conditionality of painting in ways that make them appear paradoxical.

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