

Theta

Gritli Faulhaber

The Living

January 11 - February 24, 2024

Think of *The Living* as a vast container. As an idea or a word, it holds the experience of being alive and the course of human events and activities. Gritli Faulhaber's practice holds nearly as much, *mélange*ing notions of self-definition, humanism, labor, romanticism and anachronism in an utterly contemporary approach to painting, situating the present as a vacuum for lost threads throughout history.

Color, texture, detail and speed of applied paint tend to be tailored by an artist as a sense of style gets refined into something signature. Faulhaber toggles these factors at the same rate as her shifting subject matter, making pointed decisions to explore format, feel and form that seem to belie expectations of authorship. She gleans source material from a wide archive of references that stretch from personal ephemera—an oversized Billabong long sleeve from her teenage years—to works by erotic Art Nouveau illustrator Gerda Wegener and the French impressionist Berthe Morisot. Transcribed B-sides by canonized artists are interspersed with studies of canvas backsides by unknown makers. Techniques range from heavy impasto to delicate strokes, and from exposed canvas to completely saturated black pigment. Bluntness exists at either end of the spectrum, and in between is everything that's been done before.

Faulhaber collapses the temporal and value-oriented distances between her influences by way of fragmentation, giving many partial pieces toward a reconfigured whole of subjectivity. As each work builds and reflects on a gathered narrative, *Chronic State of Becoming (3)* acts as a template. The vignettes contained within its collage-like composition resonate like affinity badges, calling to mind the conventions of self actualizing through found imagery native to millennials who've grown up with social media: to construct ourselves with pictures.

In *Abstraction/Figuration*, text becomes a tool of humorous critique against language itself, calling into question, by way of negation, the use of categorization to define painting. If it's not one or the other, what is it then? For the artist, painting is a means of focus which can take the form of study, dissolution or design. Subjects evolve in role and function depending on a means of addressing, as in *Living Sample, Coded Flappers*. Here, a pair of flappers repeat in pattern to the point of functional absurdity, juxtaposed by a graphic arrangement of lines that also defy presumption, devolving into brushy imperfection.

Faulhaber harnesses the potential of shifts in study to trouble openness in representation, bringing sincere curiosity into a mode that's more riff than homage. Her conscious approach to incompleteness and interpretation builds tension between precision and generalization, and to what has been canonized or otherwise left behind. Faulhaber highlights a certain preciousness within her excessively historicized medium and subject matter, ultimately questioning what drives the longevity of its allure.

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Gritli Faulhaber (b. 1990 Freiburg im Breisgau, DE) lives and works in Zürich. Solo and two-person exhibitions include Istituto Svizzero, Milan (2023); Galerie Nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna (2023); BOOKS, Paris (2021); Sangt Hipolyt, Berlin (2020); Cherish, Geneva (2019). Recent group exhibitions include Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich (2023); Sweetwater, Berlin (2023); Theta, New York (2022); Swiss Art Awards, Basel (2022); Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg, Fribourg (2022); Artgenève, Geneva (2022); Fonda, Leipzig (2021); Galerie Lange + Pult, Zürich (2021); Kunsthaus Langenthal, Langenthal (2021); Kunstverein Leipzig, Leipzig (2020); Museum im Bellpark, Kriens (2020); Cité des Arts, Paris (2019). She is a 2022 recipient of the Swiss Art Award as well as the Working Grant of the City of Zürich.