

DEBORAH SCHAMONI
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Francis Offman
Keep Looking
10.02. – 24.03.2024

Deborah Schamoni is pleased to announce Francis Offman's first solo exhibition with the gallery, marking his inaugural presentation in Germany.

Keep Looking: a platitude, a maxim, a last-resort. A call for understanding, a reminder to re-examine.

Francis Offman's work reconciles fragmentation and cohesion, division and community, using material strategies of accretion and abstraction to symbolic end. To look at one of his works is to speculate a landscape in suspended animation – scraps strewn in the aftermath of a seismic event; primordial soup teetering on coalescing, viewers tasked with the challenge of coherence.

Offman's work is reliant on gifted and found objects, making work by assembling materials given to him by friends – paper hand-carried from China, coffee grounds from strangers' espressos, wallpaper peeled from disused shops – and pasting them together into singular planes. The materials belie an attentiveness to stories near and far, carrying both the material history of mass-production, global supply chains, and large-scale, a transatlantic movement of goods, but also the more local, personal histories of the friends who gathered them and the conversations garnered by their exchange. With every constituent element comes corollary dialogue: difference and understanding; perspectives that don't always tessellate; forums for mutual learning. The memory of these exchanges is woven into Offman's canvas' in staccato layers: if we could hear the paintings, they would chatter like a room full of people.

In *Keep Looking* at Deborah Schamoni, the conversation in the room takes on an urgent tone, inflected by the current global, political climate, and the dissemination of violent news through both official and unofficial channels. With the artist's memory of genocide in Rwanda thirty years ago at the fore, the paintings in this body of work reveal a renewed attentiveness to perspective, memory, and loss.

In the early twentieth century, many critics saw the medium of collage, inherently modernist, as an epistemic shift, metaphorically centring discontinuity, rupture, and an artist's deferral to a secondary mode of authority. In particular, the rise of the medium pointed to a new kind of subjectivity, where meaning was deferred to a paintings' reception, onlookers working to cohere the disparate into a whole. In this climate, Offman's works speak to the strange experience of watching violence from afar, in quick bursts, in short-form videos online, with the cadence of everyday life unperturbed, and the new kind of subjectivity this necessitates.

Engendering new strategies of cohesion, *Keep Looking* emphasises the importance of making space for nuance and competing perspectives. Here, the works' cryptic, fragmented nature becomes a metaphor for the act of looking, searching, and keeping apathy at bay.

Text: Lydia Earthy