

The giant beast of painting raises its head in a panicked wild scream. It resumes, shaking off the desperate and the terrified, and gnaws at its own flesh out of an insatiable hunger. The scene, the action, is diffused into a kaleidoscopic space of many colours — the motif merging into the background. A battle ensues between the abstract and the figurative, the narrative and the photo-realist, the amateur, the faux naïve, the romantic, the conceptual and the bad. Now, though, there is no more fighting. Something else takes its place. As the hungry eyes of the beast sweep the room it recognizes that for all that has been said about the end, the final, the last, and the knowingly bad, at least everyone is trying their BEST.

Curated with artist Sophie von Hellerman, Painting Show is an exhibition as an act of painting. Questioning and utilising the function of painting as an essential element of forming a space for art, a grouping of exquisite moments of ‘painting’ are brought together, supported by a customized architecture for painting, newly installed to a square and triangular grid.

Hellermann has painted a sequence of wall panels as a backdrop depicting a brief history of civilization, and Tamuna Sirbiladze and Nicolas Party make wall paintings across the large main walls of the gallery. Glasgow based Party is using the complete range of 200 colours of ‘Montana Gold’ spray paint, and Vienna based Sirbiladze continues her gestural, delicate, wall paintings recently seen in Franz West’s kitchen para-pavilion in the Venice Biennale.

The gallery is full with painting, from the amateur work of the footballer George Best and ‘bad painting’ of Paul Thek through to the sophistication of Ashley Bickerton’s post-neo-geo works and Zheng Guogu’s computer influenced Chinese calligraphy. Within this ‘kaleidoscopic kitchen’ lie cartoon characters, monochrome figures, bears, S-Tar Children, paper golums, rainbows, smiling women, knives, computer controlled pig-brains, signs about walls, signatures, love hearts, dirty materials, cardboard worlds, drips, blood and gold.

Painting Show is part of a series of group productions examining modes of display and the construction of a public sphere — the gallery. The series started with ‘This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things’ in 2008, followed by ‘Sculpture Show’ and ‘Abstract Cabinet Show’ in 2009, ‘Curtain Show’ and ‘Book Show’ in 2010, and ‘Narrative Show’ in 2011. Each project invites new curatorial and artistic voices to effect change upon the existing conditions of Eastside Projects and aims to impact on artist practice further afield.

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