

# SWEETWATER,

## *Bathos*

Sofia Defino Leiby

June 6, 2024 – July 27, 2024

Sofia Defino Leiby's vessels are sometimes empty, other times filled with liquids of an unknown origin; some are water bottles, some resemble cosmetics, others are filled with painters' linseed oil. A few have labels. Partially transparent, they meet as scraps of society; covering each other up, lying on top of each other, engaged in humorous convergence. Her framed 3D renders, created in the open-source program Blender, were based on real-life objects as one would paint a still life. The objects consist of a mesh, which is overlaid by a texture; like paintings, which have surfaces, and products, which have packaging.

Bathos (not to be confused with "pathos"), is an eighteenth century literary device, first introduced by British writer Alexander Pope, in which two juxtaposing elements ascribed different values—one higher and one lower, often a "serious" versus a "light" occurrence—result in an anticlimax, with an ironic or tragicomic result. Rarely illustrative, and inherently unmemorable, the term often attaches itself to situations in retrospect and by repetition.

Leiby's works engage the ordinary and everyday, but are not naive. Common sparrows squabble over a croissant on a hunter-green table after its patron has paid the bill. Strawberry tartlets face you from behind glass. Leiby draws a cheerful utopia-dystopia in which desire and resistance, near disgust, coexist. As a viewer as well as a consumer, you are alone. What you have is what you can spend.

Just like in window shopping, a gap between passerby and object creates an inherently unfulfillable desire. Painting, superficial by nature, here becomes an act of consolation. As Nietzsche writes: "What does the artist paint? What [s]he likes. And what does the artist like? What [s]he can paint."

Olga Hohmann, Sofia Defino Leiby

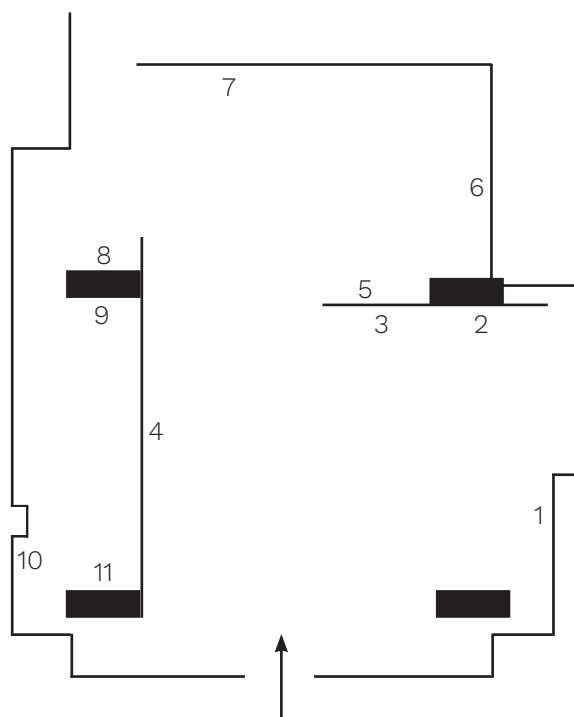
Sofia Defino Leiby (\*1989, US) lives and works in Berlin. Prior solo exhibitions include Sweetwater, Berlin (2021); *γλη* [matter] HYLE, Athens (2018); and Clifton Benevento, New York (2016). She has also been included in group exhibitions at Stiftung Binz39, Zürich; Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich, among others. Leiby's debut collection of prose *May Text* was published in 2023 by Bauer Verlag, Frankfurt. She studied at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, and received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago.

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|----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | <i>10.08.23</i> , 2024<br>Mixed media on artist panel   | 6.  | <i>Happier than Ever</i> , 2024<br>Oil on antique linen                       |
| 2. | <i>Still Life with Bottles V (Monday Morning)</i> , 2024<br>Archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Hemp paper, artist's frame | 7.  | <i>Tarts</i> , 2024<br>Oil on canvas  |
| 3. | <i>The Ground is Still Wet, but I Never See it Rain</i> , 2024<br>Acrylic, screen print, oil on fabric                      | 8.  | <i>Domestic Scene</i> , 2024<br>Four-color screen print on Rives BFK          |
| 4. | <i>Still Life with Bottles IV</i> , 2024<br>Archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Hemp paper, artist's frame                 | 9.  | <i>Close-up bottle scene</i> , 2024<br>Collage on panel, pen                  |
| 5. | <i>Untitled</i> , 2024<br>Collage, acrylic, oil and shellac on artist panel   | 10. | <i>Peonies</i> , 2024<br>Collage and silkscreen on canvas                     |
|    |   | 11. | <i>Guilt Carries the Deed</i> , 2024<br>Collage and oil paint on artist panel |