

What's in a name?

One wouldn't expect cynicism from someone named Flora Klein. The name is earnest. Literally translated as "small flora" into English, an exhibition of works by the Swiss painter Flora Klein already starts off on an optimistic foot. Flora makes "good painting".

On the other hand, having studied in Vienna, and developing her career in Germany, it is hard (for any young artist) to escape the processual similarities with "bad painting".

Another Klein (also with Viennese history): the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. In Klein's play and object theory, the ego undergoes a 'splitting' of the ego into good or bad, via the splitting of an external object, namely the mother's breast. The infant thus creates two mental images; the 'good breast' and the 'bad breast'. Flora's lively work is situated as "good" painting. What you see is what you see and it's what you get. No allusions to a decaying value system. Her paintings are to be judged by their own parameters, which in 2024 is no small feat.

Another Klein: this time, the German mathematician Felix Klein. The Klein bottle is – in topology (a branch of mathematics) – a one-sided surface which, if traveled upon, could be followed back to the point of origin while flipping the traveler upside down. It has no boundaries. For comparison, a Moebius strip has boundaries and a sphere does not. Flora Klein's compositions are topological and the orthogonal frame that contains them by no means acts as a boundary to their internal space.

These paintings have a joyful resonance, eager and inviting. Can we really reconstruct the process that led to the painting's final image? Her paintings reach a point of completion while indicating they could, and should continue. The age-old Ab-Ex conundrum of knowing "when to stop" becomes here, another knowledge: intangible and present. The ability to tolerate ambiguity prevails.

-Amanda Schmitt