

A painter known for her vibrant, insistent, enigmatic paintings and works on paper, Charline von Heyl demonstrates that abstraction is intensely relevant in contemporary art. Von Heyl's paintings are not abstractions of real things in the world; rather, her work begins and ends with purely abstract forms. With their intentional confusion of foreground and background, their dynamic energy and their contradictions and reversals, these paintings require (and desire) careful looking. Nonetheless they refuse to yield to the impulse to name, identify, and define. Powerfully imbued with emotion, von Heyl has called her work "melodramatic abstraction."

In addition to her large paintings, the exhibition will present von Heyl's collage-based works on paper. Largely black and white, they combine woodcut, silkscreen, and lithography, and are defined by a wild overflow of energy. They are sometimes more conventionally legible than the paintings, their source images—whether Magritte drawings, found photographs, or comic books—less transformed. They reveal an artist deeply engaged in altering and manipulating forms until they become something utterly new. The unusually wide heterogeneity of her work has been seen by some as a political gesture aimed at an art world that values and rewards signature products, but it may just as well be the result of an artistic sensibility that values questions over answers. As von Heyl says, "It is about the feeling that a painting, or any work of art, can give—when you can't stop looking because there is something that you want to find out, that you want to understand.... Good paintings have this tantalizing quality. And once you turn around, you absolutely cannot recapture them. They leave a hole in the mind, a longing."

(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)