

DEBORAH SCHAMONI

KAYA (Kerstin Brätsch & Debo Eilers)

HISTORY_HERSTORY

03.02.–25.03.2023

KAYA (no secret) are Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers. The two artists merged practices in 2010, uniting in the form of an allegorical Other with the first name of Kaya Serene, their then 12-year-old patron saint. Key motifs, concepts, and techniques identified in the collaboration's earliest show at 179 Canal in New York would continue to feature prominently in KAYA's work thereafter: paintings were sliced, patched, re-tuned again and again. A reclining figure played a sick painting.

Subsequent exhibitions would sometimes involve other guests and performers. Like their namesake Kaya, these invited Others act as a kind of antimatter that collides with Brätsch/Eilers' art practice, unleashing energies that derail common notions of art production. It oscillates as a state of perpetual experimental excitement.

The pictures expose painting as a bag of tricks, not least because they play with the gestural and aggressively engage in tricks of their own. They dissect painterly platitudes and routines, print using various techniques, perform surgical interventions. This is painting on mirrors, painting on transparent foil, painting with bathtub handles, painting with lashing straps and belts, as if they were meant to be worn or strapped on like bondage gear. Cronenberg would have had a field day! But KAYA is not content to skirmish with corporatist phantasmagoria or technological frills. No, they show cruel, irreversible futures.

The result is technical landscapes created as allegories of a new world, into which elements of our surroundings and even parts of ourselves already extend and stand ready to be thrown back over us in digested form.

The works in *HISTORY_HERSTORY* have their origins in a summer workshop at TROPEZ in Berlin. At the time, children cut pieces out of canvases (a series of coloring book pictures) and used these scraps to build their own talisman. Then, at Bärenzwinger Berlin, the female bear (Kerstin) patched these cut-up paintings together and used them to heal and warm the sick painting (Debo) lying motionless on the floor. Thus charged, the pictorial objects made their way to the Villa Romana in Florence. They flew to the Athens Biennale before landing at Kunstverein Braunschweig. Each location found the painted objects transformed by performative interventions, serving variously as a floor or a bedspread and playing the role of an exhibition piece as if it were a matter of course. As is the case here.

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The present exhibition sees the alien KAYA devour its spawn. Devouring is the ornamental amalgamation of different visual systems. Devouring is the assimilation and digestion that gives KAYA's body new forms and functions. KAYA's previous performative, sculptural, installative layering has merged once more in the two-dimensional logic of painting.

HISTORY_HERSTORY features a new series of paintings: second- and third-order hybrids that flaunt their retrospective character, if only in the interest of setting the bar of painting even higher with this self-digestion. Note: "KAYA is unstoppable experimental research that delivers us new insights!" To which KAYA counters: "Ik Bün bet op e Huut Natt Worn."

- Stephan Dilleuth (translated from German)