

06 Nov 2024

Murat Önen
malen, tanzen... weiterschauen
06.11.2024-20.12.2024

Galerie Max Mayer is pleased to present *malen, tanzen... weiterschauen*, Murat Önen's first solo exhibition at the gallery, featuring a new body of work including works on paper and canvas.

A painter is caught in the midst of his process: *Making an abstract painting while everyone is watching*. This scene, encountered upon entering the gallery, sets the tone for the exhibition. While continuing a close study of other painters' works, Murat Önen has been preoccupied with his own role as an artist, social expectations and the painting process itself for this new body of work. A figure resembling the artist stands on a stage, observed by an audience composed of portraits of other (historical) artists and figures they painted. Murat Önen works both with and against art history, using it as a kind tool box – extracting details from other paintings, transforming them, “devouring” them, only to “spit them out” as his own. His works resist a singular methodology or technique, while openly revealing their process and exposing bits of their previous versions. Besides turning the process into its own sujet, Murat Önen is also interested in chasing and finding a certain excitement in the works' own development.

Paul Cézanne's series of *Bathers* serves as a point of departure for the new works on view in *malen, tanzen... weiterschauen*, which loosely translates as *painting, dancing... keep on watching/let's see*. Murat Önen references his nude figures placed in a natural setting and painting a Cézanne-inspired landscape in the size of Önen's smaller works on paper that appear in the gallery space; he also transfers the figures into a studio environment: In *Painter's Trash*, the artist piles up the figures of bathers with the remnants of days spent in his atelier: cigarettes, take-away boxes turned into palettes and old flowers. While the flowers can be found in another painting on display, the piles of bodies link to Önen's earlier series of *Haystacks*. This potpourri of objects and references turns into a metaphor for what needs to be processed in Murat Önen's paintings in order for them to evolve.

The motif of the stage, marked in ocher and reappearing across several paintings, not only hints at the expectation of performing accompanying the artist's first show at the gallery; it also visualizes a continuous voyeurism that persists in intimate moments spent in bed and in dreams, perhaps just as formative to the development of future works. The stage provides a framework for the paintings themselves, constantly changing and adapting to the context of new bodies of work.



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The exhibition features new works on paper, where Murat Önen, for the first time, has painted over reproductions of his own works as well as that of other artists, introducing another way of showing a painting within a painting. *Zwei Maler übermalen sich*, displayed on one of gallery's bookshelves, directly relates to this act of making. In this work, the artist has transformed a copy of an abstract work by Philip Guston into a depiction of two painters in the act of overpainting each other.

How is my pink painting? is direct in its use of color and in the question it poses to the audience. The painting seeks to be recognized as a process rather than a finished work, capturing the struggle of the act of painting to presenting it to an audience. The future has taken hold of the present, marking this act as a process of anticipation. As the audience fulfills this anticipation, they become part of the painting. The social meaning of painting then serves as a mirror, drawing the viewer into the work.

