

Press Release

English

## Vanessa Disler: Euphoric Recall

curated by Fabian Flückiger

Kunstforum Baloise Park, Basel

November 11, 2024 – Mai 23, 2025

Opening November, 13, 2024, 6pm



Vanessa Disler, *Euphoric Recall*, 2024 (detail), courtesy the artist and Damien and the Love Guru, Brussels/Zurich, photo: Franz Mueller Schmidt

**Kunstforum Baloise Park presents *Euphoric Recall*, with a new installation by Vanessa Disler, engaging with the work of her distant relative, Martin Disler, through pieces from the Baloise Corporate Collection.**

Vanessa Disler's practice navigates the complex legacy of 20th-century gestural abstraction – a genre that has, over the past two decades, been redefined by queer and feminist practices, moving beyond its historically macho foundations. Echoing Michelle Kuo's insights in *Acting Out: The AB-EX Effect*, Disler's approach emphasizes the performative aspect of painting, where the gesture acts as an extension of the artist's identity and bodily presence.

Within her work, this revitalized field becomes an arena for exploring themes of identity formation, whether within the nuclear family or through collective identities, and their impact on artistic production. Her work is deeply informed by the methods of psychoanalysis, layered with elements of the absurd, the uncanny, and the fictional. Central to her practice are the dynamics of projection, doubling, and denial, making her approach to authorship multifaceted. The presence of Martin Disler's work has been a theme running throughout her work, serving as both a grounding influence and a source of tension – a lens through which multiple influences converge.

In *Euphoric Recall*, Vanessa Disler reimagines the exhibition space as a bar, inspired by a scene from Paul Schrader's film *Light Sleeper*. In the film, Willem Dafoe's character, John LeTour, steps into a bar dominated by a long painting depicting two mirroring demons – a scene that echoes the motifs found in Martin Disler's art. By night, Disler's bar becomes a transformative space, where guests are bathed in a different light.

The installation is intricately linked to the concept of "euphoric recall" – a psychological phenomenon in which memories are perceived more positively than they were originally. Disler connects this psychological concept to various threads in art history, citing iconic bar scenes such as Édouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* and Jeff Wall's *Picture for Women*. Manet's painting employs a mirror to reveal a dual perspective of the barmaid and her served guests, while Wall, a fellow Vancouverite of Disler, reinterprets this motif by examining gender dynamics and the act of seeing through the reflections in his photographic composition.

Disler's installation brings together psychological, biographical, and art-historical elements, creating a layered portrait of gestural painting today in form of an all-over reflective still-life. The artist directly applies paint to the mirrors of the rear wall of the bar, challenging the way the history of gestural painting – despite its controversies and inconsistencies – has been romanticized. Her work asks us to confront this 'euphoric memory,' where the audience's reflections become entangled with the painted image.

*Euphoric Recall* ultimately offers a meditation on the inescapable legacies of art history, from Manet to Wall, while celebrating the complexities and contradictions that continue to shape Vanessa Disler's own artistic journey – much like the lingering influence of familial ties.

## Side programme

### Opening

November, 13, 2024, 6pm

### Guided tours

December, 20, 2024, noon – 1pm

Mai, 16, 2025, noon – 1pm

### Press images

Press images on request.

### Contact

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## Short biographies

Vanessa Disler (b. 1987, Vancouver, Canada) lives and works in Berlin. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, attended the De Ateliers program in Amsterdam, and the Wiels International Residency Program at the Wiels Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels.

Her painting practice draws on the medium's seductive and performative qualities, which she likens to "lipstick" – oscillating between the intelligent and the dumb, the glossy and the matte. She is fascinated by oil paint's rich history yet cautious of its seductive power, using painting as a means to explore and question the world. Her works inhabit a space between abstraction and figuration, where linguistic and material realities blend, gestures transform into codified language, and text dissolves into form.

Vanessa's work is marked by a continual shift between mark-making, text, form, and meaning, using the body as a thinking instrument. Ideas from psychoanalysis – such as the concept of the hysterical body "speaking" beyond conventional language – inform her approach to making marks on a canvas. Her practice draws inspiration from diverse sources, including music, 1970s autofiction, and cinematic atmospheres. Transforming these influences into visual language conveys psychological states, as present in the exhibition *Euphoric Recall* at Kunstforum Baloise Park, Basel, *Light Sleeper* at Damien & The Guru, Zurich (2022), and with *Unfinished Business* at Franz Kaka, Toronto (2017).

A key element of her work involves engaging with the legacy of Swiss painter Martin Disler (1949-1996), exploring a "posthumous collaboration" through reinterpretations of his forms and language. She is deeply interested in the mistranslations and inaccessibilities of language, memory, and history, using her art to question notions of authorial authenticity while summoning past figures and bending time and gender.

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Fabian Flückiger is a Swiss curator based in Bern and Brussels. After holding several institutional roles, including at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, and the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Flückiger transitioned to freelance curating in 2021. He has curated a range of notable exhibitions and publications, featuring artists such as Nora Turato (2019), Steven Parrino (2020), Miriam Laura Leonardi (2021), Manon de Boer (2022), ektor garcia (2022), and Fatima Moallim (2023).

One of his most recent projects was the major thematic exhibition *This Is Us* at Z33 in Hasselt, Belgium, where he collaborated with Belgian public collections and commissioned new works (2023). Flückiger has also served as a guest critic at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York and has taught at the F+F School of Art and Design in Zurich and the École de Recherche Graphique (ERG) in Brussels.

Currently, he is working on exhibition projects for Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne, Gallery Marietta Clages in Cologne, Simian in Copenhagen and art institutions in Switzerland and Belgium. In addition, Flückiger is a jury member for the Swiss Art Awards.