
Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Silke Albrecht

fragmented and unprofessional

January 25 – March 15

Opening on January 24, 2025, 6-9 pm

With *fragmented and unprofessional* we are opening our third solo exhibition by Düsseldorf-based artist Silke Albrecht (*1986) on January 24, 2025, from 6 to 9 pm. With her new paintings Albrecht explores the complex relationship between self-determination and heteronomy in the depiction of the female body.

A typical feature of Albrecht's works is the multi-part composition, combining two or more canvases (or other surfaces). The motifs, materials, and painting techniques of the individual parts of the paintings can differ greatly from one another. For example, naturalistically painted parts of the image are placed next to abstract compositions. Albrecht intends to metaphorically depict various facets of a character, that emerge under the circumstances of heteronomy and self-determination as a woman. She is not aiming to create a homogenous image but also to visually convey the polyvalence of the content.

Inspired by Nina Menke's documentary *Brainwashed - Sexismus im Kino* (*Brainwashed – Sexism in Cinema*), Albrecht examines the mechanisms of the 'male gaze' – the effect of which goes far beyond the visual culture of film – and explores the visual representation of female bodies using the example of bikini advertisements in social media. The painted photorealistic female bodies are based directly on Instagram posts and show isolated sections of bodies that provide no information about individuality or the character of the woman. The bodies are esthetically staged, correspond to the prevailing ideal of beauty, and appear sexually charged. In some paintings, white dots can be seen on the fabrics, which represent digital links to the advertised product and mark the economic background of the images. The attractive effect of these depictions of the body is undeniable, but a feeling of discomfort or even anxiety remains at the same time.

On the one hand, Albrecht reveals the mechanisms of objectification in which female bodies are reduced to consumption, on the other, she reflects the ambivalence of these stagings, which often oscillate between self-empowerment and heteronomy. In the context of the body positivity movement, many female voices celebrate the self-determination of their self-expression and do not necessarily want to regard nudity as self-objectification. This point is particularly relevant in the context of social media content because, unlike in film, the decision-makers about the staging are not (largely male) directors and producers, but the influencers themselves.

The depictions of the body initially appear atypical for Albrecht's work. However, figurative elements are nothing new in her oeuvre. In her previous paintings, painted depictions of plants or delicately stitched body forms can always be found amidst abstract compositions.

The abstract parts of the paintings form a contrasting antithesis to the depictions of women in her new works. With their dynamic brushstrokes, aggressive color gradients, and expressive pours, they set a sign of the artistic action itself – and thus represent the traces of an active woman, the artist, and the expression of resistance, anger, and personal presence. While the depictions of the body segments thematize the reduction of women to consumer objects through the 'male gaze', the abstract elements stand for the subjective expression of the female artist and her presence in the art process.

Another facet of the theme is revealed to us in the landscape and plant depictions, in which the personification of nature and a romanticized and transfigured symbolism are negotiated. This reflects the connection between women and nature, which is often associated with fertility and the role of women as 'Mother Nature'. Here, Albrecht not only addresses the reduction of women to their biological function but also the complex tension between the recognition of women for their contribution to reproduction and the limitation of female identity to this role.

In her works, Albrecht demonstrates her mastery of both perfectly executed naturalistic motifs and complex abstract compositions. The stark contrast of painting styles in Albrecht's works emphasizes not only her technical skill, but also her confident ability to express herself on different artistic levels without reducing herself to a specific genre. Even if she does not explicitly aim to do so, Albrecht's works reveal a resistance to existing prejudices in the art world, such as those expressed in statements by Georg Baselitz – "Frauen können nicht so gut malen" ('Women can't paint that well').

With the works in *fragmented and unprofessional*, Silke Albrecht invites viewers to confront the complexities and contradictions of contemporary visual cultures and to examine intricate dynamics of self and other determination, identity and objectification, without offering simple answers.

If you have further questions or would like to receive images, please contact the gallery.