

GRITLI FAULHABER: MILITANT JOY

Running time: March 1 – May 11, 2025

Gritli Faulhaber's practice is characterized by a deep engagement with visual cultures, be they contemporary or time-bound. Her painting is primarily realized as a form of collage, in which she combines what at first glance appear to be disparate images and freezes them in intermediate states. Personal aspects are combined with stages of a female painting history *avant la lettre*, as well as applied aesthetics from fashion and music. Although this approach primarily exploits the fracture points of the materials used in painting, it can also be understood as an examination of the mood board as a cultural phenomenon, storehouse of knowledge and arena of personal expression. The relevance of the individual image is deliberately put up for discussion, whereby the complex web of relationships between all the individual positions is addressed, similar to a psychogram or a music playlist.

'Militant Joy', Faulhaber's exhibition for the Kunstverein, focuses on a particular strand in the artist's work, on small-format dot paintings that are the result of an embarrassment. The embarrassment of not being able to work as an artist, or only to a limited extent, due to a chronic multi-system illness. Not being able to realize, let alone prime, the complex collage paintings that she actually wanted to paint for the exhibition, just as she has repeatedly had to miss out on opportunities over the last ten years due to prolonged periods of illness. The size and complexity of the dot paintings on unprimed canvas in the Militant Joy series are designed so that they can still be worked on in phases of complete physical and cognitive exhaustion - and are created only in this state. Faulhaber thus works against the externally imposed limitations and seeks artistic agency, even if her own body extremely restricts the space for it. And even if the coarse, motorized brushwork and the almost prescribed, cheerful colorfulness of the pictures cannot be detached from the context of their creation, they are nevertheless not contained within it, as the results never remain at the level of the example: This perforation of a rigid state by dappling colorful holes into it has developed over time into a delicate painterly project of formal austerity, without completely leaving behind the original moment of self-assurance on the verge of collapse. The sedative combinatorics of the manageable formal inventory remain the basic tone, yet Faulhaber drives her means out of iteration in new directions. Sometimes she works only with the smallest possible settings, then again with dominant white overpaintings. The latter rarely appear in color, and in one picture they even form the impression of a landscape, almost creating something like a pictorial ground - something that is otherwise completely absent from the pictures in this series. It is as if the painted militant joy has no connection, but floats freely in order to create new connections out of itself at a later point in time. With 'Militant Joy', Gritli Faulhaber realizes a very personal, ultra-emphatic painting based on the political slogan of a 'joyful militancy' that accepts its task despite all defeats and overwhelming

circumstances. Its inescapable conceptuality anchors the series in at least two realities and forces us as viewers to constantly re-evaluate our standards of perception and judgement.

Gritli Faulhaber (*1990) lives and works in Zurich. She has had solo exhibitions Gaudi Zitter, Brussel; Theta, New York; Istituto Svizzero, Milan; Sangt Hipolyt, Berlin; and Cherish, Geneva as well as numerous participations in group exhibitions. 'Militant Joy' is the artist's first institutional solo exhibition.

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