

Evelyn Plaschg

Viscous City

28. 6. – 28. 9. 2025

Press talk: 27. 6. 2025, 11 am

Opening: 27. 6. 2025, 6 pm

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Catalog (Revolver, Berlin)

Artist Talk:

3. 7. 2025, 6 pm

Curator:

Jan Tappe

Styrian artist Evelyn Plaschg is considered an outstanding painter of her young generation. Her work is now to be acknowledged in a solo exhibition at HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark. The artist combines sophisticated technique and her own idiosyncratic imagery to produce a kind of painting that is figurative in ways that transcend all standard approaches. Plaschg uses the medium of painting with great state-of-the-art prowess, in order to explore convincing forms, expressions, and perspectives that while working within the well-known tension between the figurative and the abstract also open up intimate realms shaped by digital worlds. This has much to do with the approach to life taken by the artist's own generation, which has practiced and internalized showing, enacting, and optimizing the body like no generation before. These works tell of the artist's own physical desire in connection with the other, and of collective experience in (real and imaginary) shared spaces and social systems in which these merge.

For a long period, Plaschg placed the body at the center of her paintings, exploring it as both authentic expression and anonymous enactment. In her early works, she remained close to the human figure and worked intensively on this. Her pictures are mostly based on very relaxed and often playful smartphone photos that are taken together with other people. Using pigments on paper, Plaschg ensures that her painted depictions retain these qualities. The vignettes and actions she paints are very direct and situational, and seem also very much a product of chance. In particular, these portrayals include personal points of reference from the artist's own context. But these are usually just fragments that are combined with other pictorial elements. Full-body views of individuals and couples are clearly in the minority, while "cut-off" faces and hands that sometimes cover up or lasciviously play with other parts of the body are more frequent. This way of depicting the body is not portraiture in a narrow sense, but rather a detailed representation of the physical, often emphasizing the flesh and sometimes seeming more mechanical, then again subjective and personal. These pulsating compositions are situated within a pictorial frame that seems very intimate while yet remaining vague. The paintings alternate between playful staging and the spontaneity and authenticity of a moment. It is this dualism between intimacy and enactment that gives viewers of these works the feeling that they should rather not be witnessing this scene, as they may be disturbing it or they may just be present as (tolerated) voyeurs. This is due not only to the apparent privacy of these images, but also the proximity of the selected views, which are like close-ups.

In the past two years, Evelyn Plaschg has made technical and formal changes that have developed her work. She moved from working with pigments on paper to oil painting on canvas, and also began to take an interest not just in the body but in everyday objects and the spaces where these are found.

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HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, halle-fuer-kunst.at
Press contact: Mag. Helga Droschl, +43 316 740084-14, +43 664 3935718, hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at

Her work still begins with photo and video material using a smartphone, from which she then carefully selects her motifs. Plaschg films and views spaces and surfaces such as ragged textiles and architectural structures, and she transfers these into meticulous compositions with a direct and also digital-seeming nature. In this new direction in her work, bodies do not disappear abruptly and entirely, but they are less obvious and no longer the clear center. Now, spatial elements and objects are transformed more and more into schemes and shapes that sometimes become completely abstract. An image in white and blue, for example, can at first be taken as a net of soft shapes and then the depicted zipper adds a perspective to this reading whereby all of a sudden, a close proximity to the now visible body is created.

This exhibition *Viscous City* at HALLE FÜR KUNST is Evelyn Plaschg's first solo show in a museum in Austria including not only oil paintings but also an all-encompassing installation in which these are placed, and in which the future direction of Plaschg's work is indicated in a playful manner. The lower story of the museum thus becomes an intense arrangement of pictorial sequences in which single works enter into a larger whole. This can also be taken literally, as the artist creates her own forms for hanging her works, which may partly stand alone in traditional fashion and may also be placed together in groups edge-to-edge, with no or only very little distance between them, thus bringing several motifs together into one arrangement that looks a bit like a film strip or photographic contacts. This way of working engenders a rhythm between the individual paintings and the architecture of the exhibition gallery, whereby each mutually shapes the other. Through repetitions and variations of colors and motifs, the works together become a network that unfolds before the beholders. In the medium of painting, Plaschg has developed a crucial contribution that transforms our contemporary aesthetics of visual culture and image production into independent pictorial worlds that make these aesthetics irritatingly tangible.

In *Viscous City*, Evelyn Plaschg articulates her interest in urban spaces and their architecture, traffic, and infrastructure. In this context, she is also concerned with identifying and locating the subject – in a place where people live densely together and encounter each other, just as Georg Simmel described the city in the early twentieth century. Plaschg sees the city as a thick or *viscous* substance, where particles rub up against each other as if part of a single organism. Her understanding of the city stands in contrast to the view of (western) urban researchers up to the mid-twentieth century, for whom the city was the opposite of nature. According to Plaschg, it is a pulsating and living organ.

The exhibition *Viscous City* will be accompanied by a publication (Revolver Publishing, Berlin), that richly illustrates Evelyn Plaschg's artistic development, including two texts by the Vienna-based German art historian and curator Vanessa Joan Müller and the New York critic and curator Kari Rittenbach, entering into a special kind of conversation with the exhibition at HALLE FÜR KUNST.

Evelyn Plaschg (*1988 Gnas, lives in Vienna)

Solo exhibitions (selection): Layr, Art Basel (2025), Paulina Caspari, Munich (2024), Scherben, Berlin (2024), Layr, Vienna (2023), Galerie Kirchgasse, Steckborn (2021), Canopy, Malmoe (2021), Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nuremberg (2021), Pina, Vienna (2020), Parallel Vienna, Vienna (2019), Zeller van Almsick, Vienna (2017).

Group exhibitions (selection): Esther II, New York (2025), Leopold Museum, Vienna (2024), Hard Scent Salon, Copenhagen (2024), Belvedere 21, Vienna (2023), The Grand Chelsea, New York (2023), Kunstverein Eisenstadt (2022), Basel Social Club, Basel (2022), Kunstverein Bremerhaven (2022), Smolka Contemporary, Vienna (2021), Belvedere 21, Vienna (2019), Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg (2018), Acappella, Naples (2018), Forum Stadtpark, Graz (2017), Glovebox, Auckland (2016), ENSBA, Paris (2016), Neuer Kunstverein, Vienna (2016), MUMOK, Vienna (2015).

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