

The title *Angst vor Angst* sets the tone, or even more: it names an atmosphere that communicates between new and recent compositions by Argentine-Swiss artist Jill Mulleady (*1980, lives in Los Angeles). The English language has long integrated the German word “Angst” and the term “German Angst” is also in common usage. The connection that Mulleady makes is to the movie “Angst vor der Angst” (“Fear of Fear,” 1975) by the German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, in which the lead character Margot suffers diffuse anxiety attacks and is immediately judged as mentally ill by her social context. Fassbinder was concerned with showing the “normal” human condition of feeling alien in one’s own life.

In Mulleady’s paintings we see silent acts, as if someone has turned down the volume of a film. She freezes her figures in mid-movement, isolating these gazing, hypnotized creatures within their own cryptic gestures. And even while the sense of the plot may go missing, the pictures can never be reduced to their narrative content: something in their experience remains always open and in communication with the viewer.

In her painting, Mulleady shifts between extremely artificial, atmospheric spaces and coolly observed domestic still lives. In both her figurative fantasies and her everyday realism, and even more so in this restless shifting itself, she seeks to stage the interplay of drives and repressions, eroticism and fear. These scenes and the exhibition as a whole provide a framework that becomes intoxicated by inner passions. Here, desires are discharged according to both the laws of the everyday and their transgression. Meanwhile, life is composed of intangible demands; they are in the air and cover one’s skin like a heavy coat. In Fassbinder’s movie, Margot flees from her vague fears by taking valium and drinking alcohol, by sleeping with her doctor and listening to the Rolling Stones. She escapes into these black holes and submits to them, falling in. A specific sense of time in a German post-war scenery is evoked: the housewife in the straitjacket of a patriarchal family environment walks the stereotypical fine line between adaptation and hysteria. In Mulleady’s compositions, we find ourselves in a temporality that is difficult to grasp; the notion of decadence in a “demimonde” appears in some pictures, in others we encounter allegories of domestic fatigue—all this within an ambience vacillating between kitchen sink realism, dream, and hallucination.

One can sometimes discern allusions to Edouard Manet or to the suspended gestures in Pierre Klossowski’s figurative works. A certain tonality remains at the fore, as when writing unfolds while reading the texts of others. As was the case with Klossowski, Mulleady’s pictures are mischievously anachronistic, and perform a willful indifference to the supposed look of contemporary art. It seems that untimeliness, too, is of the moment.

Jill Mulleady's exhibition continues the program of the Kunsthalle Bern that engages with the current possibilities and manifestations of contemporary painting and its varied lines of flight into the future.

Works by Jill Mulleady (*1980 in Montevideo, lives and works in Los Angeles) have recently been presented in solo or group shows at among others Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles (2017), Simon Lee Gallery, New York (2017), Gaudel de Stampa, Paris (2016), Herald Street, London (2016), Dépendance, Paramount Ranch, Los Angeles (2016), Supportico Lopez, Berlin (2016), Forde, Geneva (2016), Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples (2015), Island, Brussels (2014), SlyZmud Gallery, Buenos Aires (2013), Museo Sivori, Buenos Aires (2011).

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