

Birgit Megerle (b. 1975 in Geisingen, lives and works in Berlin) focuses on the figure in her paintings. The artist paints her surroundings, well-known personalities, stars, and – with increasing frequency in more recent paintings – anonymous individuals. Precise, detailed, and delicately executed, the portraits are both artificial and distanced. In the paintings, painterly “reduction” and abstraction determine the implicit views of the private and the public, of medially constructed personalities, and of casual, random poses. In her practice, Birgit Megerle addresses media-specific questions and is concerned with the temporality and historicity of painting. Her motifs are contemporary and up-to-date, and yet devoid of an obvious time period or identifiable context. The images are subtly voyeuristic, direct our gaze, and yet remain vague, as if a hermetic glass pane or transparent veil separates us from the figures. With motifs referencing the most varied notions of value, Birgit Megerle explores the portrait as a social currency. For instance a portrait of Christine Lagardes, director of the International Monetary Fund, painted in soft pastel and gray tones, or portraits of actresses whose capital depends on being able to slip into various (media-exploited) roles. The portraits also reflect on Birgit Megerle’s own role and involvement, thus demonstrating the social modes of the artist’s existence.

Birgit Megerle’s paintings, whose characters often peer at the viewer theatrically or wear costumes, are not just about role-playing as a social currency, but at times they also serve as a stage for the virtual and real appearance of a wide range of actors. For her exhibitions, she creates heterotopic visual spaces with stage-like settings. Groups of portraits are interrupted by other motifs, such as classical still lifes or coquettish, decorative paintings of flowers. Geometric, abstract paintings, on the other hand, reference the motifs of the American painter Robin Bruch, whose body of work from the 1970s and 80s only recently surfaced in contemporary contexts.

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