

Who—or what—is Reena Spaulings? Since 2004 the name has stood for various collective artistic activities. Initially Reena Spaulings was the title of a novel written by an undisclosed number of anonymous authors from the circle of the artist collective Bernadette Corporation. Around the same time, a commercial gallery with an exhibition space in New York was founded, which since then has represented artists such as Merlin Carpenter, Jutta Koether, Claire Fontaine, and Klara Lidén. Also in 2004, an artist collective was formed that operates under the name of the fictional artist Reena Spaulings, creating collective paintings that are both reflective of the system and self-deprecating.

*HER AND NO* is Reena Spaulings's first solo exhibition in a museum. The presentation focuses on the collective's artistic work. Created especially for this exhibition and including new works, new versions of existing series of works, and existing works that deal with the status of the artist in society in a wider sense, the installation also plays with the format of institutional museum exhibitions. For Yilmaz Dziewior, director of the Museum Ludwig, the multilayered spectrum of Reena Spaulings's practice is an ideal fit for the new series *HERE AND NOW* at Museum Ludwig, because it questions the roles of the different participants in the art world in a critical and entertaining way.

Three freestanding, large-scale panels made of aluminum are featured in the exhibition. The subject depicted here is an adaptation of Gustave Courbet's famous painting *The Meeting (Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet)*, in which the painter, during a hike in the countryside far from the urban cultural scene, runs into his patron Alfred Bruyas. Reena Spaulings transposes the scene from 1854, in which Courbet presented himself as a self-confident outdoorsman, into the present. In doing so, she offers a tongue-in-cheek analysis of the painter's awareness of his role back then as well as today, simultaneously pointing to the delicate balance of dependence within the art world. In the same spirit, the fourteen-piece portrait series *Advisors*, which portrays famous male and female art consultants, examines their growing significance in the art market. Although since the beginning of modernism artists no longer depend on patrons for commissions—the genre of portraiture can today be understood as a symbol of this kind of relationship—they are still influenced by clearly discernable market and power mechanisms that become apparent in the seemingly autonomous decision to paint the *Advisors* series.

In addition, new adaptations of the most important series of works by Reena Spaulings can be seen in the exhibition. The painting technique ranges from pointillism in the New York and Cologne pictures, following Oskar Kokoschka's *View of Cologne from the Messeturm* (1956), to paintings created by cleaning robots, which possess a surprising vitality and vividness that at first glance is reminiscent of William Turner's sea pictures. In both series the attempt at a collective painting

practice is paramount, a practice that overrides the idea of individual authorship and artistic style.

*REENA SPAULINGS: HER AND NO* was curated by Anna Czerlitzki. It is the third exhibition within the project series *HERE AND NOW* at Museum Ludwig, which is an experimental format that critically examines conventions of presenting art in museums and questions the approach of its own institutional work.

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