

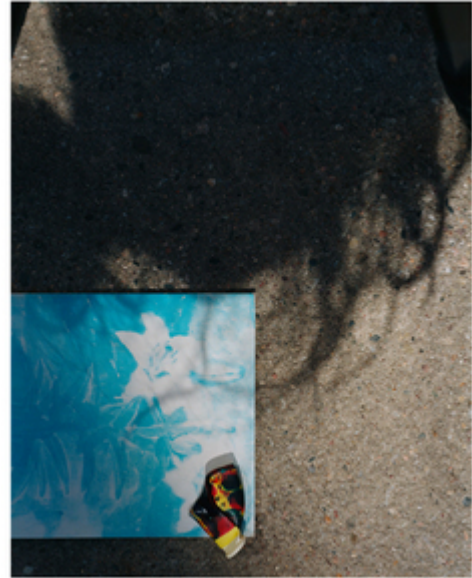
ARTFORUM

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili

GALERIE MICKY SCHUBERT
Bartningallee 2-5, HH 1.Stock,
September 14–November 9

Flowers provide the soft yet potent theme to Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili's neatly installed photographs. This orthodox subject has survived Andy Warhol's multicolored, flattening economization and Robert Mapplethorpe's deluxe treatment in monochrome, among more prominent variations on the exchange-value of nature—or, rather, of beauty. The species here aren't American; as the show is titled, they're "German Flowers": austere in their economy rather impenetrable, even chaste, juxtaposed at turns with ghostly fragments of church windows. Yes, there's an orchid (*White flower*, all works 2013), but not the titillating type to which Georges Bataille once attributed "the most troubling human perversions." Maybe the artist's gender matters, after all? When Alexi-Meskhishvili serially works through this "feminine" floral motif, she rarely grants it rampant bloom, doing away with the properly fetishistic aspects of the flower, like its promise to sell love and sex. Her assorted floras occasionally come under the scalpel, with several of the images' negatives having been lacerated by X-Acto knives.

What speaks to the works' contemporaneity is not only their intimations at compulsive (im)perfecting and neospirituality, but their calculated muddling of analog and digital qualities. *E-Z May*—whose Day-Glo swirls and swishes conjure an aimless Photoshop session with filter menus maxed out—owes much of its appearance to "genuine" experimental handicraft. Then again, every flower is presented behind at least two additional layers of semitranslucent effects and textures, suggesting, if not a fundamental substrate crisis, then surely confusion. Alexi-Meskhishvili's strongest game, though, isn't her probing into our latter-day iPadded (ap)perception but her knack for alien humor. A case in point is *Wilfred flower*. Here, a discarded, flaccid party balloon with a black, red, and gold tie-dyed surface shares a gravel patch with a similarly cast-off turquoise book cover depicting lilies, the picture plane obfuscated by yet another silhouette of either more foliage or the artist's strands of hair, cascading down as she makes her confounding image.



Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, *Wilfred flower*, 2013,
 ink on paper, 12 1/2 x 10 1/4".

— Daniel Horn

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