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Mark van Yetter

BY MELISSA CANBAZ

Micky Schubert, Berlin, Germany



In his solo show 'We are what we walk between', Mark van Yetter draws our attention to the associations that arise when we 'walk between' his paintings, rather than the meanings of the works themselves. Van Yetter's painting style ranges from accurate depictions to intuitive gestures, and this seemingly irreconcilable mix corresponds to his choice of motifs, none of which seem to have much to do with each another. Typically his

compositions are tightly cropped, pastel coloured surreal moments or still lifes: potted plants and bananas, pool scenes, portraits of dogs, or two classical reclining female nudes facing each other in a large-scale piece that resembles an antique tiled frieze (all works untitled, 2016). The works seem to have fallen out of time, evoking a cross between the themes of Modigliani and the style of George Grosz. At the same time, Van Yetter's pictorial repertoire, with its poetic yet bizarre motifs, recalls his contemporary Jonas Lipps – perhaps because both painters are so refreshingly uncontemporary.



Mark van Yetter, 'We are what we walk between', installation view, Galerie Micky Schubert, Berlin; photograph: Anna von Stackelberg.

Though it's tempting to create a sequential narrative from the eight oil paintings in the main gallery space, it's ultimately one that feels interrupted or recombined in random order. Consequently, the three monochrome linocuts in the back room – with their amateurish style and rather fusty medium – look less displaced (even if I can't remember when I last saw linocuts in a contemporary gallery context). Van Yetter's alternation between different formats and styles becomes part of the generative process of viewing the exhibition.

where is the thread running through this show? Briefly rummaging through my knowledge of current discourses on painting, I noticed how this distanced me from the pictures themselves, causing them to start losing their agreeable lightness. Finally, it makes no sense to keep interpreting these works until they take their place within a narrative sequence. Why should they? Perhaps they are just images meant for intimate contemplation, ultimately allowing them to escape any kind of attribution or contextualization in the history of the medium. Perhaps Van Yetter's scenes simply point to everyday moments that are taking place outside the visible frame, thereby pushing the intimate values of a metaphorical 'inner space' into the foreground. In this light, the meaning of the lid-less toilet bowl or the box of tissues lying beside the person under a blanket eventually become important details – evidence of a larger narrative outside the frame. The individual pictures are loaded with stories yet offer nothing more than the surfaces of the things they depict. The special quality of all these pictures, however, is that they do not close themselves to the viewer, but rather stimulate a more intuitive reading – counter to how we might usually approach figurative painting.



Mark van Yetter, 'We are what we walk between', installation view, Galerie Micky Schubert, Berlin; photograph: Anna von Stackelberg.

Because we can extend the conditions in the paintings into suggestive, hypothetical scenarios, the gallery setting itself becomes more relaxed, more organic. Nonetheless, it would be naïve to think that this amounts to decoding Van Yetter's painterly strategy. 'We are what we walk between' is a good example of painting that has both feet firmly in the present, but which skilfully evades being pinned to any specific discourses of the past.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell