

Valérie Favre

PAINTINGS

January 18 to February 23, 2013

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to show new paintings by Valérie Favre. The artist was born 1959 in Evilard by Biel in Switzerland. She lives and works in Berlin. "Paintings" is the first solo show of the artist in Galerie Peter Kilchmann following her participation in the opening exhibit of the new gallery space in early 2011.

How can one die? Over the last ten years Valérie Favre has occupied herself with the motif of suicide and has created over one hundred small-format paintings on the subject (*Selbstmord*, 2003-2013, Oil on canvas, each 24 x 18 cm, available as series of three or more works). While parts of the cycle of paintings have been shown on different occasions, this is the first time that Valérie Favre presents the project in its entirety. Simultaneously the exhibition will mark the end of the painterly discussion for her. From the beginning the artist was adamant about one thing: "There is no place for the color red in these paintings." By no means was the series meant to be palpable. Blatancy as an attitude does not interest the artist at all. For the paintings' format Valérie Favre borrowed from analog photography. The consistency in size and color palette creates the impression of a visual encyclopedia, which one encounters upon entering the gallery space. From historical, fictional, to famous deaths – Favre spells all of them out in detail. Yet what does it all mean? Suicide as a social taboo has no visual tradition for the artist to draw from. Precisely because of this gap Valérie Favre became intrigued with the subject. The names on the invitation card hint at the amplitude, with which the artist has dealt with the motif: From Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, who protested against his mistreatment through authorities by burning himself in 2011, to Egyptian empress Cleopatra, who supposedly took her life through the bite of a cobra in 30 B.C. The challenge of depicting the "unutterable" is at the heart of Favre's self-concept as an artist. She is not here to concern herself with things that are easily representable. Favre doesn't work with preparatory drawings. Instead she literally draws her figures out of the canvas and color layers. In a wonderful manner the painter strains her imagination and that of the viewers. "Representation demands radical measures and stems from necessity." The words of Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann could also be a statement by the painter Valérie Favre. After all, it is quite a radical decision of the artist to focus on the motif of suicide with such intensity. The time and effort has been worth it. The small-format paintings invite one to a visual encounter with a delicate subject and open up a wide range of thought.

The two other gallery spaces are dedicated to a different world. Collage, woodcut and drawing complement the paintings here. The pictures vary more in size (up to 205 x 145 cm). The paintings are from the series "*La fragilité des fleurs*", or "The fragility of flowers". The still lifes with the withered bouquets tie in with the death theme of the first gallery space. Cracked vases invite one to a slight reflection on the state of the world: "*Les Petits Reflets du monde*" is the name of the object series. Additionally, the first references towards the "*Rotkäppchen Zyklus*" emerge. Next to the fairy-tale and victim figure Little Red Riding Hood the wolf makes an appearance, as does grandmother's bedstead, or a sewing needle that signified the path through the woods in the original story tale. Valérie Favre often draws on ideas and motifs from fairy-tales. For the first time, she now concentrates on a single fairy story. In the installation the works point to each other, visualizing cross-references and inciting the viewer to a dynamic reading. Despite the fairy-tale motif the central theme is still Painting as such. "Actually," Valérie Favre muses, "my paintings are always about the same ideas. I always deal with the same issue." Favre understands painting to be its own language, and it is the disruption that happens at the point of translation from Idea to Form that drives her artistic practice.

In 2012 Valérie Favre was nominated for the renowned Prix Marcel Duchamp in France. Her work was further shown in a number of group exhibitions, including: "Beyond Memory" in the Museum of Seam, Jerusalem, 2011; "Intensif Station", K21, Düsseldorf, 2010. A catalog was published on behalf of her solo show at Kunstmuseum Luzern and Carré d'art de Nîmes in 2009: "Valérie Favre: Visions"; another catalog "Valérie Favre" was published for Kunstmuseum Ulm in 2008. Both publications are available through the gallery. In Spring 2013 Valérie Favre will show an extensive single exhibition in the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein.