

BERLIN

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger "Deep Adaptation"

Galerie Barbara Weiss
27 April–15 June 2019

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger's first exhibition at Galerie Barbara Weiss is an exhibition of paintings, through and through. This is so although various aspects of the show might suggest otherwise: it is, at first, not immediately apparent. Its title, "Deep Adaptation" – borrowed from a paper by the scientist Jem Bendell that circulated widely thanks to its dramatic and alarmist picture of climate catastrophe – points to a much bigger endgame than the eternal endgame of painting. With its depictions of self-driving cars, it takes on the next big tech disruption. And finally, its depictions of sexual encounters between people of the same sex and/or different ethnic backgrounds bring it, in the present climate, into the realm of representation and identity politics. This is a painting show, however, precisely in those respects in which it goes beyond painting, and where it succeeds, with sensitivity and tact, in drawing connections between the real world of this "beyond" and the self-sufficiency and artificiality of the technique and the discourse known as painting.

After all the buzz about "painting beside itself" and Zombie Formalism, painting seemed, somehow, to have checked out. It seemed to have been swept off the field after the Dana Schutz controversy, through the sheer force of arguments that were decidedly about identity politics, which appeared, at least initially, to take priority over aesthetic questions, leaving painting, with its endless self-referentiality, its intensely introspective formalism and its nerdy specialised questioning, holding the short straw. But is that all there is to it? Jaeger's works (all 2019) leave no doubt that this context is the background against which they are to be understood.

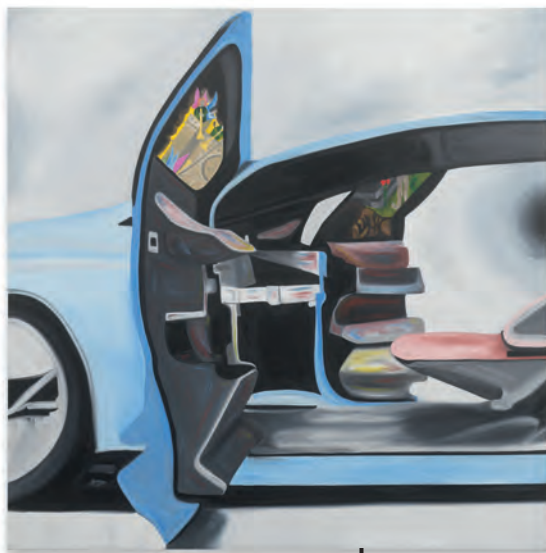
The paintings in this exhibition not only from time to time feature in performances that Jaeger organizes with them; they actively refer to contexts, charged situations, attributions, speculations, relationships, activations, and circulations of all kinds. They have adopted mobility and their own performativity into their material DNA in a way that is impossible to miss. Three of the eight works on view are made up of hinged panels, which sometimes recall classical altarpieces and thus remind us of one of the ritual uses of painting prior to its autonomy: three parts in the

case of *Sappho*; five parts in the case of *Untitled*, where they are arranged so that the work stands on its own; and even seven parts in the case of *Der Wert der Ware drückt sich am Besten in den Körpern der Anderen aus* (The Value of the Commodity Expresses Itself Best in the Bodies of Others) – a wall work with diamond-shaped panels painted on both sides that mean it can be unfolded into a star.

The remaining works do not offer traditional, hermetic pictorial spaces either. Those that do not already consist of fragmented canvases are perforated with needles and thread: an embroidered broken heart on the painting of an engine bay in *The individual differences in the post-traumatic response to eco trauma*; an embroidered spot of deep-red blood in *Die Wunden sind tiefer im Rolls-Royce* (The Wounds Are Deeper in the Rolls-Royce), which seems to drop from outside into the driver's compartment of a car.

And with that we have arrived at the subject-matter of these works. Ultimately, Jaeger's paintings are explicitly representational. If painterly figuration was a few years ago often rendered literal as grotesque comic-style overdrawn, it here seems, by contrast, to be

Photos: Jens Ziehe. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin



Frieda Toranzo Jaeger
Deep adaptation on Audi Aicon 2020
costume design by H. Memling, 2019
Oil on canvas, 200 x 400 cm

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Frieda Toranzo Jaeger
Nach dem Spuckschluck, 2019
 Oil and embroidery on canvas 30 x 40 cm

taken entirely seriously, which itself also adds to the sense of this practice being anchored in the present. *Sappho*, for example, presents an oral-sex scene with two women with differently coloured skin on a car seat in the middle of an exuberantly paradisiacal South Sea backdrop à la Gauguin, including small lapdogs. Within the car interiors and cockpits on view, specific imagery from the history of painting is reproduced

– presented as a kind of interior decor.

In these cockpits and interiors Jaeger has found a fantastic image, a metaphor for her own medium. Self-contained but mobile spaces: spaces in which traditionally male-connoted subjectivity plays out as domination and autonomy, but also spaces where, in the near future, no driver will any longer sit, which means not that these spaces will be eliminated but that

they will be radically transformed. They are spaces that can be opened again and again, into which the outside can penetrate, whose windows offer a view onto the outside. And they are ambivalent spaces that are self-sufficient and closed-off but always only seemingly separated from their surroundings. Each is a part of the world, and a world in itself.

Dominikus Müller

Translated by Steven Lindberg



Frieda Toranzo Jaeger
Sappho, 2019
 Oil on canvas,
 75 x 178 cm