

Press Release

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger
Deep Adaptation

April 27 – June 15, 2019
Opening Friday April 26, 6–9 pm
Gallery hours Tue–Sat, 11 am – 6 pm

Galerie Barbara Weiss is pleased to announce Frieda Toranzo Jaeger's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

With *Deep Adaptation*, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger presents a new series of paintings – some of which are comprised of several canvases – depicting engine parts, a spaceship and car interiors in their relation to the body. The artist's large formats, multi-panel constructions and use of embroidery reference both historical forms such as the triptych, where painting was not yet bound to the easel and commodified, and contemporary discussions about its place in a post-medium field. Such a confrontation of different historical forms is used to address the complex temporality of a threshold between past, present and future technologies, defining the relation between painting and history as one of the artist's abiding concerns.

At the center of Jaeger's painterly investigations is the car interior, which she thematizes on two different levels. Iconographically, the artist interrogates the experience of driving as an incarnated fantasy of male control. If he were asked to condense the whole 20th century into one image, J. G. Ballard once said, he would pick a familiar everyday sight, "a man in a motor car, driving along a concrete highway to some unknown destination." Such is the myth of driving, of conquest and control that is deconstructed in Jaeger's work. Not for nothing are the cars in her paintings exclusively hybrid, electric and self-driving cars: representations of a possible future where masculine control would have become anachronistic. In appropriating these images, Jaeger de-genderizes the car motif and shakes up its semiotics, working out possible scenarios without offering general answers. The emptiness of the driver's seat might, some works seem to suggest, transfigure the car's interior into the scene of an erotics of passivity. Yet, the more somber atmosphere in other works seems to question the future this emptiness could also stand for: an absolute loss of all agency, a fatally sedative comfort in the face of disaster. The exhibition's title, *Deep Adaptation*, describes strategies of coming to terms with an inevitable ecological catastrophe. Perhaps the ambivalence in these paintings must be read as so many ways of working through this trauma: utopian, dystopian, unafraid of contradictions.

But in Jaeger's work, the car motif has a second, yet more reflective dimension. In allegorical fashion, the space of the car comes to stand for the space of painting itself. It is a carefully chosen comparison, underlining that the field of painting is – still – a masculine field, that a female painter has to develop her idiom in and against a male vocabulary. Here, stitching reveals its subversive potential. Traditionally associated with femininity, decor and domesticity, with collective handwork rather than individual genius, embroidery quite literally comes to take over the symbolic space of masculinity as it penetrates the canvas. On its surface, embroidery merges with the essential materiality of oil paint to create a thick and vibrant texture. In this gesture one can read a pointed critique of the masculine-formalist obsession with painting's surface, where the materiality of paint is idealized as a purely optical quality. Painting's abundant materiality, as it presents itself in Jaeger's work, is not an optical, but an eminently corporeal quality, giving the canvas an agency of its own.

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger (*1988, Mexico City) studied with Jutta Koether at Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg and now lives and works in Berlin. Recent exhibitions include CFHILL, Stockholm; Reena Spaulings, New York; and Lulu, Mexico City. She is participating in upcoming exhibitions at Kunstwerke, Berlin; Museum for Modern Art, Warsaw; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris.