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JUDITH EISLER: RIFFS. JARMAN'S CARAVAGGIO. OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 6-8PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce the opening of Judith Eisler: Riffs. Jarman's Caravaggio. For the artist's first exhibition with the gallery, Eisler presents a new series of paintings based on Derek Jarman's 1986 film "Caravaggio".

Judith Eisler paints cinematic close-ups sourced from her own photographs of paused film scenes. With a lifelong interest in film, Eisler often returns to the work of filmmakers such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Derek Jarman. In consideration of the formal properties of light, color and space within a single film frame, the artist considers an image's capacity to exist as both real and fictional. As each image undergoes multiple layers of mediation, Eisler's renderings shift between representational and abstract. Working with oil on canvas, Eisler directs our view to the visual optics of cinematic happenings.

The film "Caravaggio" depicts the story of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's (1571 - 1610) life, filtered through the lens of filmmaker Derek Jarman (1942 - 1994). The script expands upon the sanctioned narratives of what might have occurred. If the film is at all biographical, it is in Jarman's fidelity to the color, light and tableaux of Caravaggio's paintings. Jarman either recreates or refers to a number of Caravaggio's paintings such as Boy with a Basket of Fruit (1593), The Lute Player (1596), Penitent Magdalene (1594-95), and The Deposition (1602-03). The actors and sets are staged and illuminated in a visual style that echoes the dramatic light infusing Caravaggio's paintings.

Love, lust, and violence permeate both Caravaggio's paintings and Jarman's film. While watching the film, Eisler paused the action and took photographs of this fusion of sensibilities, establishing distance in order to study emotionally and psychologically charged themes with a dispassionate eye. Eisler's photographs capture the transformation of painting through staged reality, film, and transmission. In working from these stills, the artist is rendering and reanimating the material as it is dematerialized. Despite the abstractions caused by the technological interference in this process, a structure is formed: the sum of the parts creates a whole that is simultaneously present and falling into fragmentation.

Eisler questions whether light is a substance or a process. In the film, the source of light illuminating the models is indeterminate. Does it stem from an artificial spotlight or is it high noon? Is the glare providing clarity or illumination, or is it hindering the act of seeing? In the portraits of Tilda Swinton as Caravaggio's model, Lena, and Nigel Terry as Caravaggio, faces brace against the glare or lower their eyes to turn their gaze inward. Eisler's interest lies not in recreating the subject of the gaze, which is visible in the film sequence, but to describe what it looks like when someone is seeing.

In the film, The Martyrdom of St. Matthew (1599-1600) is sketched out on a canvas. Terry, as Caravaggio, manipulates his model (Sean Bean) to perfectly mimic the pose in the painting. Eisler was initially interested in how the proto-cinematic light that suffuses Caravaggio's paintings might be transformed when viewed through a filmic interpretation of his work. As she watched Jarman's recreation of the artist at work in his studio, Eisler became less interested in painting the physical reenactment of the composition than in describing what it looks like to make something. In turn, the artist began making paintings about the materiality of making a painting. As the brush lifts color to canvas and materials are arranged on the palette, Eisler considers the elements that make up an illusionistic whole.

The palette compositions can be seen as a stage upon which material and tools are laid out in anticipation of the rendering of the subject. Eisler painted several versions of the palette in order to reflect the painter's preoccupation with raw material and the shifts that occur on that particular flat surface. There are solvents housed in decanters, colors, brushes, both active and at rest. In some of the frames, coins are also depicted, evoking the marriage of art and commerce. But even as the elements seem fixed and interconnected, at the same time they seem on the verge of falling apart, sliding off the table onto the floor.

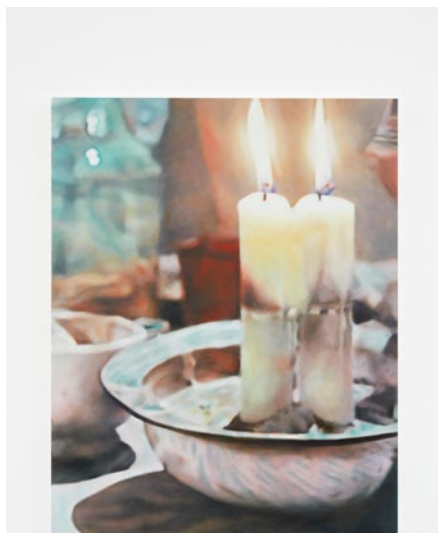
Jarman uses candles to illuminate the "17th century" studio where the painter works into the night. The candles burn as the wax melts and the expansiveness of the flame is tempered by the simultaneous diminishment of the material. Similarly, the film still contains the seeds for its own disintegration: what appears before our eyes in one moment will transition into something else in the next frame. That moment between what has happened and what is to happen is open to possibility and chance. Things still happen when one is not looking.

Eisler received her BFA from Cornell University in 1984. She has been exhibiting her work since 1995 at venues such as Kunsthalle, Vienna; Hall Art Foundation/Schloss Derneburg Museum, Hanover, Germany; White Columns, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Bass Museum, Miami, FL; Hayward Gallery, London; and Castello di Rivoli, Turin. In 2002, she was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. Eisler is a professor at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria, and lives and works between Vienna, Austria and Warren, Connecticut.

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THE NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Judith Eislser, *Candles*, 2018, oil on canvas, 55.12 x 39.37" / 140 x 100cm

The American painter, who divides her time between Vienna and the Connecticut countryside, has been working since the mid-nineteen-eighties with one strict rule: she paints stills from movies, which she captures on her computer (and previously her VCR), an art-house take on the cerebral photo-realism of Gerhard Richter. In the past, her paintings have felt somewhat constrained, a little too cool. But her new subject, Derek Jarman's "Caravaggio," inspires the most beautiful work of her career, virtuosic painting about painting, as lush as a hothouse bloom. You may recognize the perennial muse Tilda Swinton, but the best pictures here are essentially portraits of a process: closeups of brushes luxuriating in swirls of salmon, crimson, and brown oil on a palette. The interplay of shadow and light has always been Eislser's true subject, as it was Caravaggio's. Note the bravura still-life of two flickering candles, which is one of Richter's most famous motifs. But don't mistake the image for an homage—think of it as a rejoinder to anyone who still thinks that great painting is a boys' club.

-- Andrea K. Scott

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THE NEW YORKER

CULTURE DESK

FIVE FEMALE PAINTERS TO SEE IN NEW YORK ART GALLERIES



By **Andrea K. Scott** September 8, 2018



Judith Eisler, "Painter 2," 2018; oil on canvas, 39.37 x 31.49 inches
/ 100 x 80cm

East of the madding crowd (near the plant district), Judith Eisler, a native New Yorker, is having her first show in a decade at the Casey Kaplan gallery. Eisler, who now lives in Vienna, has been working since the nineties with one strict rule: she paints stills from movies captured on her computer (back in the day, she used a VCR), putting an art-house twist on the cerebral photo-realism of Gerhard Richter. In the past, her paintings have felt somewhat constrained, a little too cool. But her new subject, Derek Jarman's "Caravaggio," has inspired the most beautiful work of her career—painting about painting that is as lush as a hothouse bloom.

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BROOKLYN RAIL

Hope and Hazard: A Comedy of Eros

by Steven Pestana

HALL ART FOUNDATION | MAY 6, 2017 – NOVEMBER

A buxom blonde nude with bright red lips plays joyously atop a white fluffy cloud, stars overhead. Beneath her cloud, crude blue lettering reads, “We are just complicated animals.” This neon sculpture, by Dan Attoe, casts a cool glow through a gallery that was once a farmhouse, highlighting the kind of tongue-in-cheek wit that animates much of Eric Fischl’s own work. In this multi-generational group exhibition, curated by Eric Fischl, representations of mankind’s most basic and everlasting instinct—the compulsion to copulate—waver from existential to carnal in a vein that is often ribbed with humor.

While none of Fischl’s own work appears in the show, his taste

The majority of work here depicts the female form, ranging from abstract to hyper-realism. As with Fischl’s own paintings, the imagery is largely sexual, though less lascivious than Balzacian: a human comedy, blindly underpinned by our opaque animal natures. In one room a trio of paintings by Ellen Berkenblit, Marcel Dzama, and Tala Madani, respectively, portray cartoonish figures in the midst of performing or insinuating sex acts (in one case, while wearing a horse mask). Their partners? A human-sized mouse, a surly pack of dogs, and a play-mate suggestively wielding a hobbyhorse. The absurdity of the work is perfectly in keeping with Attoe’s neon aphorism. Complicated indeed. On the neighboring wall, a diminutive salon grouping of five small paintings by Ridley Howard, Walter Robinson, Aura Rosenberg, and Tom Wesselmann depict the female nude as it is so often represented in contemporary eroticism: recumbent, faceless, depersonalized, and sexually available. Seductive though the imagery may or may not be, taken together, the selections lean towards a transactional view of desire, with the body as currency. What is the psychic cost of a culture grounded in objectification? This question resonates throughout Hope. As with his own voyeuristic canvases, Fischl mostly abstains from overt judgment, leaving viewers to draw their own conclusions.

In the rear gallery of the second building—a larger and brighter room, previously a horse barn—two oversized wall works address the complexities of real-world relationships that spill into public view through visual art. Judith Eisler’s canvas *Liz and Rock* (2014) recreates a moment of onscreen tenderness from the 1956 film *Giant* between co-stars Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson. Eisler’s hazy brushwork and soft, cool palette create an air of wistfulness, or perhaps tension; cinéastes might complicate this reading with a knowledge of the actors’ lifelong friendship. Towards the end of Hudson’s life, following his revelation of off-screen homosexuality and AIDS illness, they grew even closer. By contrast, the pseudo-eroticism of *Fingers Between Legs* (1990), from Jeff Koons’s photographic series, “Made in Heaven” (1989 – 1991) is anything but tender, and, in reality, the relationship between Koons and the porn-star turned politician, Ilona Staller, was ill-fated. Appropriate to any exercise in high conceptualism, that disjunction occurs in the mind of the viewer.



Judith Eisler, *Liz & Rock*, 2014. Oil on canvas, 72 × 96 inches.
Courtesy Hall Art Foundation. © Judith Eisler.

The remaining selections are the most painterly, a vibrant and tactile playground of gesture and chroma. Sensuous moments abound, such as Bjarne Melgaard's *Untitled* (2005), a lusciously liquid pink, beige, and green-slathered abstraction, and André Butzer's heavily impastoed, monstrous, phallus-headed *Portrait Carl Zuckmayer* (2004). They are messy physical documents of fugitive bodily encounters between the artists and their materials, singing the body erotic. In a walled-off area at the heart of the gallery, two orgiastic scenes face one another: the first a 2009 riff on Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) by Peter Saul reinterpreting it as gaudy caricature (although, given the theme, some might say it was already this), and a frenzied bedroom scene, *Session*, (2005) by Peter Schoolwirth, where wild, disjointed limbs defy the bounds of space and time. Joan Semmel's 1971 coital devotional, *Untitled*, composed of luminous color fields, revels in unselfconscious abandon. Another wall features three paintings focused on comically exaggerated male and female derrieres. Two by Carroll Dunham, *Untitled I* (July 28, 2005) (2005) and *(Hers) Night and Day #2* (2009), feature humorously grotesque physiques demarcated with swollen black lines. They appear on either side of a third butt painting by C.O. Paeffgen, also featuring bold outlines but this time more anatomically correct. The differences are more compelling than their similarities, with Dunham's brushwork layered, loose, and lawless, while Paeffgen's is muted, harmonious, and oddly classical.

Even in the earliest Greek comedies, sexual foibles played a key role in the farces of deeply relatable and even poignant characters. In Fischl's exhibition, the motivation is Eros, god of sexual desire, and, in Hesiod's words, conqueror of "the mind and wise counsel in the breasts of all gods and men"—in other words, hope and hazard captured in a single archetype. Throughout *Hope*, Eros appears in sundry forms of attraction, seduction, tribulation, and consummation with Fischl in the role of chorus. Nevertheless, *Hope and Hazard: A Comedy of Eros* does more than extrapolate these themes through others' work. In fact, it locates them within a powerful framework for understanding human nature, namely that of the ancient tradition of drama and its enduring visions of love, lust, and the utterly inscrutable.

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Surf's Up!: The Spring Break Art Fair Offers Sexy Sights for Every Eye

OBSERVER

By [Ryan Steadman](#) • 03/04/16 1:19pm



Judith Eisler, *Red Margit 2*, 2013. Photo: Courtesy of Ryan Steadman and Observer.com

Chelsea-quality exhibitions were on site as well, with one particularly tight show curated by Alex McQuilkin and Andy Mister standing out from the pack. Every artist in this show, titled “These Things Take Time,” is well represented in the cutting-edge art world, from former Whitney Biennial standout Sara Greenberger Rafferty—who offered a very fitting digital print of a google definition of the word *alienation*—to the brilliant veteran painter Judith Eisler, who checked in with a gorgeous, woozy oil painting titled *Red Margit #2*.

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OBSCURING THE ICON

Interview

By Wade Guyton / *Photography* David Schulder / *Published* March 4, 2015



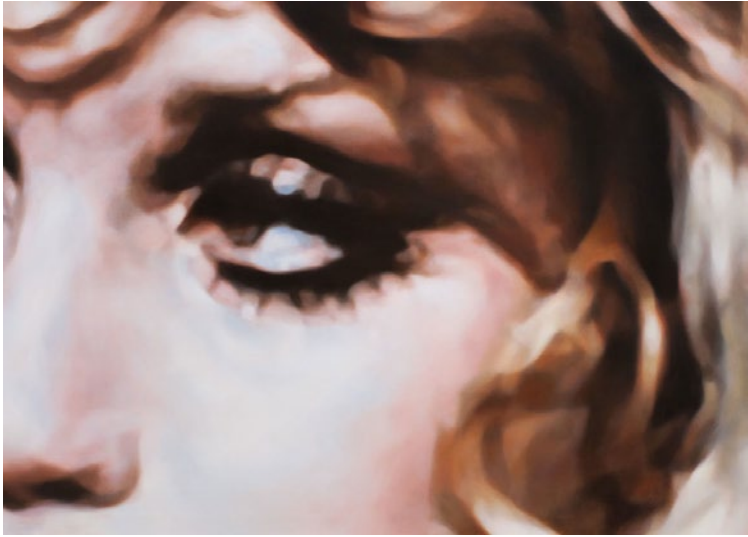
Living between Vienna and New York provides Judith Eisler with a variety of cultural influences that she could reference, yet her focus remains clear: notice underrated moments in film, press pause, record the frozen image through a camera, and use the resultant photograph to create a painting. Her paintings often distort the subject matter, blurring the lines between and exploring the ideas of iconography, motion, and light. In previous works, the distorted actors and actresses remain entirely anonymous. However, in her most recent works, which are now on view in the exhibit “Close-Ups & Two Shots: Judith Eisler” at Gavlak in Los Angeles, portraits of Hollywood icons such as Dorothy Malone, Liz Taylor, and Rock Hudson are immediately recognizable. Despite the presentation of clearer imagery, Eisler retains her focus on light through the use of shadow and contrasting colors, as well as devoting entire canvases to the subject of light itself.

While installing the show, Eisler took a break and spoke with her peer and friend of 16 years, Wade Guyton, a post-conceptual, digital artist. Eisler and Guyton were at Gavlak; we listened in from New York.

WADE GUYTON: Okay Judith, we’re here in Los Angeles. We’re going to have a professional conversation.

JUDITH EISLER: Great, what would you like to ask me?

GUYTON: Well, we’re here with your new show. I have to say, these paintings are surprising to me.



EISLER: Why do they surprise you?

GUYTON: There's a Dorothy Malone, or three Dorothy Malones, and let's just say, they are more iconic than I usually see or know about your work. Do you see them any differently?

EISLER: I think her gaze is more outward. I think all female characters in the paintings are very strong, but she has an optimism that might be a bit different than the earlier work. I think they're very interior in gazing outward a lot of the time, but she really sees something, not looking to herself.

GUYTON: I was also thinking that the image itself is clearer or more articulated than I've seen in a long time with your work. Is it because of the photographs?

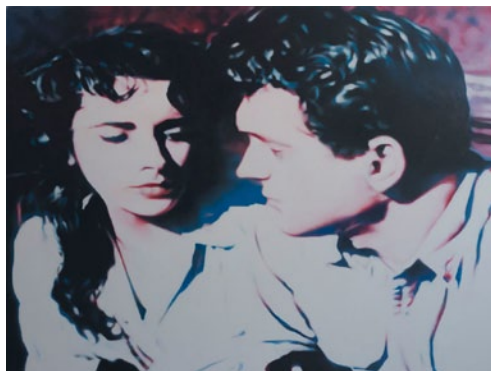
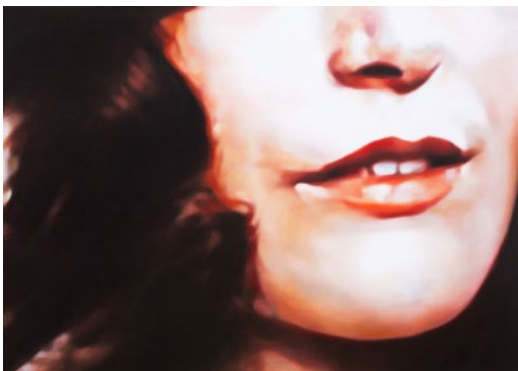


EISLER: They're based on photographs, but they're painted, let that be clear. I know what you're talking about; you're talking about that abstraction. Sometimes they're more abstract than representational.

GUYTON: I guess the viewer's relationship to it is a clear visual articulation of a body, where sometimes, I guess, they are more abstract.

EISLER: Although, even when I'm defining something so realistic or representational, I flip the paintings. I never paint them in the direction that you finally see them, so my concerns are very abstract—how does this form meet this form? How does this color shift into this color? And then when I turn the paintings around, what I'm painting becomes the figure. But I know what you're talking about, that these are really present, in the way that sometimes things were obscured or not readily identifiable. Is that what you mean?

GUYTON: Yes. Maybe we should talk about how they're made. We've known each other for so long and we shared a studio [for seven years] and I would see you painting, but I would never see you creating the photograph from which the painting would come out of. I always imagine you coming home to your little apartment on Thompson in the glowing light of your TV, looking through a camera, watching movies—watching a movie!



GUYTON: But I like that image of you too! That there's something dark and dystopic about the artist looking through lenses and screens to capture light and space that's being constructed from the other end with these other lenses and recording devices.

EISLER: Right. It's a fake reality, it's a cultural fiction, it's translated through all these different mediated layers. What I'm trying to capture [or] transcribe is the distance that exists between all these layers, from the transmission to the photos to the painting. I wanted to find the atmosphere that exists between the viewer and the painting, the photo, the DVD, the transmission, the film.

GUYTON: What's the material result of that? How would you describe that?

EISLER: I paint it. My concerns are really about painting, about putting marks of paint on a canvas and working with formal concerns like light, color, and space.

GUYTON: Light seems to be the huge aspect of the work. We're in Los Angeles. You're coming from grey Vienna. Where were these paintings made?



EISLER: Most of these paintings were made in Connecticut. The Sadie Thompson is from Vienna, and the Fassbinder paintings are also made in Vienna. The drawings were made in Vienna. It's interesting—we're sitting in the main room of the gallery and all these paintings are American actresses and actors and the back room is German.

GUYTON: Can we talk about the symbolism there? [laughs]

EISLER: No, I would talk about the fact that I live in two cultures and sometimes I'm gravitating more towards specific films or specific actresses. [both pause]

GUYTON: So, the light.

EISLER: Again, I'm really trying to define the light that occurs in the transmission on the monitor. If I can capture that in the painting, it's resolved, it's a resolved image.

GUYTON: That reminds me, I have the John Giorno painting that you gave me, and I've been struggling—

EISLER: That I traded you for. [laughs]

GUYTON: Well, we're trading, right. I've been struggling to make a painting that can stand up as an equivalent to yours. I love that green light that comes out of that painting, so I've been trying to create it in a painting for you, so it would glow green in the same way. It's a touch of this strange...

EISLER: It's an underwater color, I think. I made that painting, actually not from a monitor, but I was at an exhibition where it was being screened. I took photos of the projection and those green colors came out in the photo, which were unusual for me to use at the time. It was interesting to go in that direction because he's sleeping in the film, he's sleeping in the photo, but it had a really beautiful underwater quality for me that gave it an otherworldly character.

GUYTON: Should we talk about them and the glow, the space between them? The blue between Liz [Taylor] and Rock [Hudson], can you talk about them?

EISLER: The show is called "Close-Ups & Two Shots" and I was really exploring what the camera does in the paintings. Sometimes it's a close up; sometimes it's two people in the frame. I was really interested in what John Huston said about the two shots and the way you define distance. It's not a close up, but it's in a two shot in which you define distance between the characters. Here, I tweaked the colors so that the space in between the characters was amplified and glowing and it could become a substance of itself. In a way, the painting is not about Liz Taylor and Rock Hudson. It's about the blue that is in between them.

GUYTON: The blue and the white, the light coming in between those lines is what that painting is all about. It's the vortex.

EISLER: It has a life of its own.

GUYTON: When I first saw it, I didn't even look at the faces.

EISLER: That's good. That's what I hoped. For me, I know they're all faces, but I think I'm really interested in the mark-making and in what's going on here, the kind of light that's emanating from abstract consideration.

GUYTON: So the other thing that is really clear, it's not only the space between two things within the painting but the drama and the antagonism and the gazes among the paintings in the room, especially between Dorothy Malone and Gloria Swanson. And I noticed yesterday that when the paintings were being moved around, all these relationships started developing that maybe you don't think about in the process of making each painting, but then something electric happens when they're next to each other.

EISLER: It becomes my own little movie and these are all different periods of time in here, like '60s, '50s, '20s. There's something about all of them that had the timeless quality that's part of our collective unconscious. Even though Dorothy Malone's clothes indicate some kind of distant time, I think they also...

GUYTON: What were you saying about the Fassbinder film too? I haven't seen it but it takes place in the '30s?

EISLER: Oh, it's not that one. We were talking about Fassbinder and how his films are shot in the '70s, they're made in the '70s, but they're made about the past, about the '30s or '40s, so there's this interesting quality in terms of the style. The style is not echt, not genuine.

GUYTON: What's the word in German?

EISLER: Echt. [laughs] But there's a distance again, I'm always coming back to this idea of distance. I really want to define that in the way she's staring out into space, out into the distance, or the light—this idea of what the mood is. What started me painting the movie lights is that the people I was painting are these faces and I thought, "What are they actually looking at?" They're not looking at other people; they're looking at a bank of movie lights glaring in their eyes. It was interesting to go into that and explore the flip side of their expressions. Not just the interiority of the characters, but also what they perceive.

GUYTON: Then you also have this implication of the viewer. Basically, in this show, you feel that the paintings are implicating each other. Also, I like the idea of time travel that happens in images. We are looking at screens all the time, and in a way, each time this movie gets played, it exists again in the world. I like that relationship between you and the image, for stopping the film, looking for this moment in between a frame, then expanding that time in the studio, and then with the painting. It creates a whole other trajectory of time and space.

EISLER: Right, I'm doing that, but the painting also, by definition, is not index-able. The narrative goes way beyond the frame, into the distance, using different directions.

GUYTON: What else were we talking about? Let's have another glass of champagne... [laughs] Oh, I remember. I was thinking about attention and distraction—

EISLER: Speaking of which...

GUYTON: [laughs] I'm interested in how you find this moment in a film, like what becomes the right thing? It's not arbitrary. I get that there is a lot of accident that happens in the process of painting, but there is an intentionality finding that perfect moment.

EISLER: That perfect moment is a happy accident for me. Something that is not essential to the narrative becomes the whole meaning of the film. These are paintings and they should function as paintings. Cinema is really important to me and I probably would be involved in film as a cinematographer, but I'm a painter and I love painting. But... [pauses] What's the question again?

GUYTON: [laughs]

EISLER: Thinking about...

GUYTON: Attention and distraction... It seems like it's probably not so fun to watch a movie with you, Judith. I remember us going to see Ms. 45 at Anthology [Film Archives].

EISLER: Yeah, that was in the theater.

GUYTON: And you didn't have your camera out.

EISLER: Well, no, but you did notice. You were like, "Oh that's your painting!" [both laugh]

GUYTON: I do remember finding the painting.

EISLER: But in cinema, it's totally different watching it in the dark at home with the monitor. That's not fun because I have to stop the movie, but I have to lose control when I'm watching the movie in the theater, and I have to rent the movie later. [pauses] But it's always something that I can really only define it as a happy accident. I see something and I think, "What was that?" There's some peripheral activity that interests me. It doesn't seem essential, it seems fleeting, and I want to capture that fleeting moment and catch it in a way that it still vibrates and still has possibility. That's also why I'm interested in taking something from moving images because they are in between what they were and what they will become and how things become manifested in those loaded moments.

GUYTON: You can see in so many paintings that it's not just a freeze frame, but there is that vibration in a moment. The vibration comes through your work, through the light, through the painting, through the space.

EISLER: Through painting, through finding what it is. I do use a photo. I like to look at something, I like painting from seeing. It's very important to me, and I want to... [laughs]

GUYTON: [laughs] Judith just spaced out.

EISLER: We were talking about what's essential to the narrative. I remember, it's about seeing something and looking at what exists in something. It's not that I want to define it as something that's correct and that's why I flip them all the time.

GUYTON: What do you mean you flip them?

EISLER: I paint them in different directions from when you actually see the painting. I rarely paint them as you see them. For me, I'm interested in the abstraction that occurs in the painting. It's not really something that's about, "Oh that's her eyebrow, or her eyelash." But, what happens, and you can see it in the dark and alone, a lot of the times, her gaze is wonky. It's one eye looks down and one looks up, but it is how our expressions are. They are clear, but it's also...

GUYTON: Vision is wonky.

EISLER: Vision is wonky! There's something always a little bit off because I'm not trying to show what she looks like. I'm trying to show what she's made of, whether that's her fortitude, endurance, power, or just marks that compose her—how her hair is defined, how the light illuminates the back of her head, and her face. Where's the light coming from? It's interior and exterior.

GUYTON: That's the interesting thing of the show too. You have so many light forces that are invisible and become manifested in the painting. You also have all these paintings of light, this whole network of moving light particles, and they're trapped in this drama here. [laughs]

EISLER: It sounds very scientific.

GUYTON: And magical.

EISLER: Thank you, I like that.

GUYTON: And sexy... What do you want to talk about? Do you want to talk about Lichtenstein? I was thinking about Lichtenstein.

EISLER: That's funny that you say that, I thought of that too.

GUYTON: I was reading about Lichtenstein and I realize there is a connection between [you both] in capturing things from pop material or popular imagery, but also zeroing in on the materiality of that and trying to translate it into paint. And you're looking at film and narrative.

EISLER: I used to work much more with film and I like that analog process, that quality and texture of film and painting what happens there. Then I started using digital because it became expedient. There are different abstractions that occur in digital material, there's weird rectangles and weird color shifts. I'm interested in the breakdown in the imagery on the screen, so maybe that's what you were talking about.

GUYTON: I think about how, as someone who has always been envious of your work, when we shared the studio, I could see you come in and work on the painting for weeks or months. You would go in and the painting would come into being and you could change it. I would see the change that would happen over the course of days. In my work, I could never do that. I could never go back in and change anything.

EISLER: But you can repeat something, you can change something in a file.

GUYTON: I can repeat something but then I throw it away if I don't like it. So if something's not right, it can't be shown. You have a different relationship to an object. The object can keep changing.

EISLER: Sometimes it takes a long time.

GUYTON: But when is it done?

EISLER: It's a good question, but I know it's done. Sometimes it can take forever, and sometimes the process is really fluid and I can get really picky, especially with faces. It's hard to get the expression how I want it to be, so it's not sentimental.

GUYTON: But you're not copying the photograph either.

EISLER: I'm using it, I'm not copying it, and that's a big difference. It's a way for me to get into the painting. Like you, it's a way for me to find what I want. I'm looking for something that I want to work with initially and it's not a file, it's a photograph of something. But then the process becomes very physical, especially on this large scale and flipping them around.

GUYTON: That's great. [both laugh] Well thanks so much for our professional conversation. I've never had to talk this way to you before.

EISLER: We would talk about our work a little bit back in the day. We would borrow materials from each other too.

GUYTON: You would say, "Keep the canvas." I wouldn't be a painter without you. I mean, I'm still not a painter. [laughs]

EISLER: You repaid me with very nice linen later on.

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SLOW MOTION

by Fan Zhong
February 19, 2015

W



This Oscar Sunday, like any before it, will honor performances involving a towering scene, a chewy monologue, a ghastly physical transformation. But there will also be less showy roles that accumulate, slowly but surely, a body of minute inflections and barely perceptible tugs of the mouth. (See: Patricia Arquette, Marion Cotillard.) In her new solo exhibition at Sarah Gavlak gallery in Los Angeles, the painter Judith Eisler freezes such small moments on canvas. Even in high melodrama—such as Douglas Sirk’s 1958 aviation romance *Tarnished Angels*, from which these stills of star Dorothy Malone were borrowed—there are a few frames that sell an entire story.

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FLATT *FEATURES*

Made in America



JUDITH EISLER

Elusive Elements of Light and Motion

Interview

JESSICA STELLER

Judith Eisler has the ability to capture film's most complex and heart pounding moments and recreate them on canvas. Eisler was born in Newark, New Jersey. She obtained her BFA from Cornell University and soon found herself immersed in the New York City art scene. She has been showing her work in top galleries around the world for almost two decades. In 2002, she was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2004, her painting Smoker (Cruel Story of Youth) graced the cover of Artforum. Eisler has had multiple solo shows at Galerie Krobath in Austria, Cohan and Leslie in New York City, and Gavlak in Los Angeles. Eisler is currently a professor at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria. I had the pleasure to speak with Judith about her process, inspiration and person reflections.

JESSICA STELLER: When did you first become interested in the arts? Can you name a specific turning point in which you knew you would take the plunge into making it your career?

JUDITH EISLER: I always liked to draw. I can't remember when I first started painting. I feel that I have always been painting. My mother recognized that I liked to make pictures and she encouraged me. She gave me watercolors and magic markers.

I sometimes went to museums with my parents. The Matisse painting The Piano Lesson and Pavel Tchelitchew's hide and Seek at MoMA disturbed my young self and stayed in my mind.

In college I took sculpture, photography and drawing classes but it was always paint that felt most direct and essential to me. I liked the result of photography but was not interested in the materials. I was working one night alone in the studio and realized that pushing color around on the canvas and trying to realize something within the flat rectangle was what I wanted to do most.

I went to The New York Studio School the summer of my sophomore year of college. I had two studio visits that year with Mercedes Matter and Grace Hartigan. Both artists talked to me at length about my painting and were clearly interested in how I used oil paint. I felt understood and excited. It seemed that we had something in common – a kinship of sorts. Their input made me curious to learn more about the language of painting.

I don't know that I decided to make painting my career. I don't recall thinking about the term "career" until much later in life. I graduated with a BFA from Cornell in 1984 and moved to New York City, which at that time was affordable for a young artist. There was a lot of painting to see in the galleries and it was very exciting to absorb all that energy and inspiration.

I supported myself through waitressing, working through a temp agency, and working the box office at the Film Forum. I just wanted to have enough money so that I could pay my rent and have time to work in the studio.

My time at the Film Forum was important for my cinematic education but the job that truly transformed and enhanced my practice was working for a Bulgarian art restorer.

It was an old school apprenticeship with drawing class every morning and the repairing of paintings and objects in the afternoon. I learned how to retouch paintings of different periods and styles and I became quite expert at mixing color.

I painted abstracted figures for many years but after some time, I felt the need to strip away anything that was unessential in describing a presence. Eventually, limbs and color started disappearing and the paintings turned white. I was unsure how to continue.

I began to look at photography books and came across a photo of an alligator. I was interested in the image because it was so dark and so much the opposite of the white paintings. I let go of my desire to invent something, because now everything was available through seeing. Instead of using paint to try to define something that existed in my mind's eye, I could now paint a creature that was paused in its condition of animation. These animal paintings were often large-scale interpretations of insects, rodents, and reptiles. They were investigations about an inherent violence and repulsion made beautiful through painting. I had my first solo exhibition in 1995 at Luhring Augustine.

I was watching the George Lukas film ThX1138 when I noticed the presence of a rat surrounded by a purplish, orange light passing through a few frames. My mind was so in tune with looking at wildlife in photos that I noticed something that flashed on the screen for maybe a second. I took a photo of the rat and made a large painting of the image. Because it was 6 x 7 1/2 feet, it was difficult to ascertain what was the subject in the painting. Someone thought it was a tornado. My primary interest was not to paint a rat but to define the elusive elements of light and motion. It was exciting to shift to working from stills of moving images instead of photos which were much more resolved. I was able to capture something that was in between actions and therefore reverberating with abstraction and possibility.

JESSICA STELLER: How do you select the films you use in your work?

JUDITH EISLER: I watch everything and anything. When I'm watching a film, I don't necessarily find an image that I want to paint. Even when I am looking for a specific actress or director, and I research that individual's output obsessively, I don't always find an image that I can use. I was watching a lot of Romy Schneider films last summer but found nothing of the actress that resonated for me. I did come upon some unexpected imagery of movie lights that completely surprised me and became the focus of an upcoming exhibition.

I solicit suggestions from friends and I am especially interested in hearing about people's favorite movies. Watching one movie will usually lead me to something else and it's rare that I don't have a pile of DVDs waiting to be watched. I sorely miss the video stores in NYC and the mad categories and suggestions one could find there, but I still find inspiration in articles, interviews, reviews, and TV listings.

JESSICA STELLER: Can you explain your process from seeing an image to creating the work on canvas?

JUDITH EISLER: When I am watching a film, I see something in the narrative that usually has the quality of a happy accident for me. The image is not usually a defining moment in the trajectory of the film but a moment that's peripheral or unimportant to the story. I take this image out of its context by taking a photo, making a grid on the photo and the canvas, and then painting the canvas with a system of marks and layers so that the inherent structure and luminosity of the image are made apparent.

JESSICA STELLER: How did your 2002 Guggenheim Fellowship affect your work?

JUDITH EISLER: I suddenly had money and time to focus on my work unreservedly. The support of the foundation was a huge pat on the back. I felt honored and confident. Before receiving the Guggenheim, I had been freelancing and worrying too much about the next paycheck. It's not that I didn't have anxieties after I got the Guggenheim, but I had so much more time to do my work and think about the way I wanted to open things up in the studio. I was still trying to define light as a substance, so I expanded this investigation to include not only an artificially lit nighttime source, but also some subjects existing in daylight (as filtered through my technically mediated process). I was much more free in my painting and my thinking and I was motivated. My output in the studio increased dramatically.

In January 2004, I was on the cover of Artforum with a painting that I had done the year after I received the Guggenheim. I had a solo show open the same month in NYC. It was a Cinderella moment.

JESSICA STELLER: How have you grown as an artist over the years, what technique or advice helped you further your artistic career?

JUDITH EISLER: Working for an art restorer provided me with a traditional education that is less and less available to people studying art today. I was taught how to mix and apply colors used by other artists of different periods and styles. I had to get outside the choices I habitually made for myself and get into somebody else's headspace. All this time spent mixing colors to achieve a required result helped me to be much more specific and subtle in my own work and proved especially invaluable when I started to paint from photographs of films. I am able to describe the strange, shifting colors that make themselves apparent through several layers of technological mediation. I am defining a recognizable subject but my considerations when I am painting are completely abstract.

JESSICA STELLER: What is the emotional response that you get when you create a new piece?

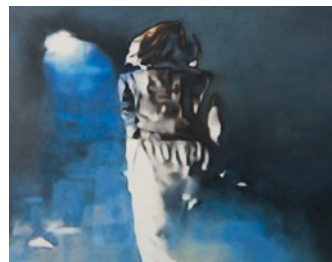
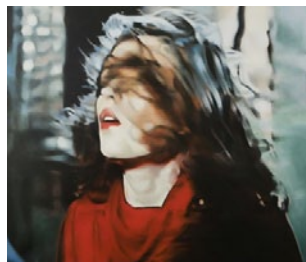
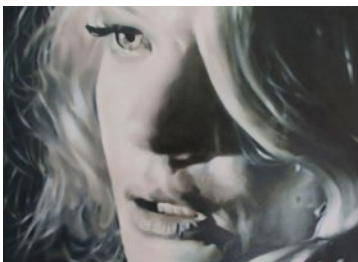
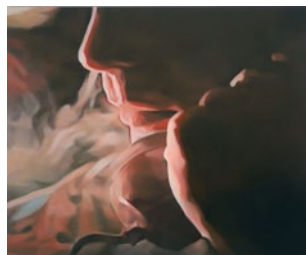
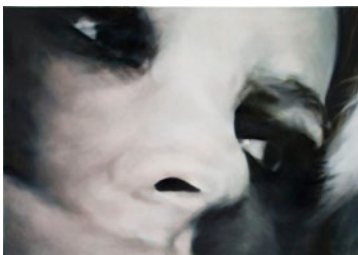
JUDITH EISLER: The compulsion to see and realize a certain kind of space as it appears through expressions, postures, and light. Feelings that accompany the compulsion are, in no particular order: delight, connection, boredom, certainty, thrills, despair, and joy. For me, it's not about whether or not I like what I am doing, but whether or not I am expressing something that is true.

JESSICA STELLER: What would you like your viewers to take away from your work?

JUDITH EISLER: An experience that is simultaneously optical and psychological, a curious, unsentimental feeling, and a sense of recognition that is both familiar and uncertain.

JESSICA STELLER: Who would be your dream collaboration and why?

JUDITH EISLER: This past summer I did several paintings of Dorothy Malone. I found out that John Waters did a few photo pieces called Dorothy Malone's Collar in which film stills of the actress shot from behind show that yes, her collar is up in almost every film. He also did an amazing piece with stills of Liz Taylor and Andy Warhol called The Strange Ones. The film source is an 'it's so bad its fascinating' film called The Drivers Seat. I did some paintings of Liz in profile from that movie. I don't know how to suggest a collaboration, but here, I would say, it's a thrill to be on the same wavelength as someone with such exquisite cinematic taste. I am fascinated by the way he interprets and redirects films through new arrangements of still moments.



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THE
NEW YORKER

ART GALLERIES

Painting and photography have been cozying up for a few hundred years, from Vermeer's rumored use of the camera obscura to Man Ray's exploits with photograms. The adroit curator Augusto Arbizo organized this show with an eye on that relationship. McConnell (who's fresh out of school and looks it) tends toward the garish in gestural acrylics based on fashion photographs. Eisler's penumbral portraits double-dip with the camera: she paints from snapshots of movies on video screens. The "Robert" eclipsed by the gloaming is Redford; the ash-pale "Romy" is Schneider. Robertson, a star of MOMA PS1's "Greater New York," subverts expectations about photographs—that there is no "original," for one thing—in one-of-a-kind quasi-abstractions that are as beautiful as they are brainy. Through Aug. 27.

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J.M.W. Turner, Night watch, 1839

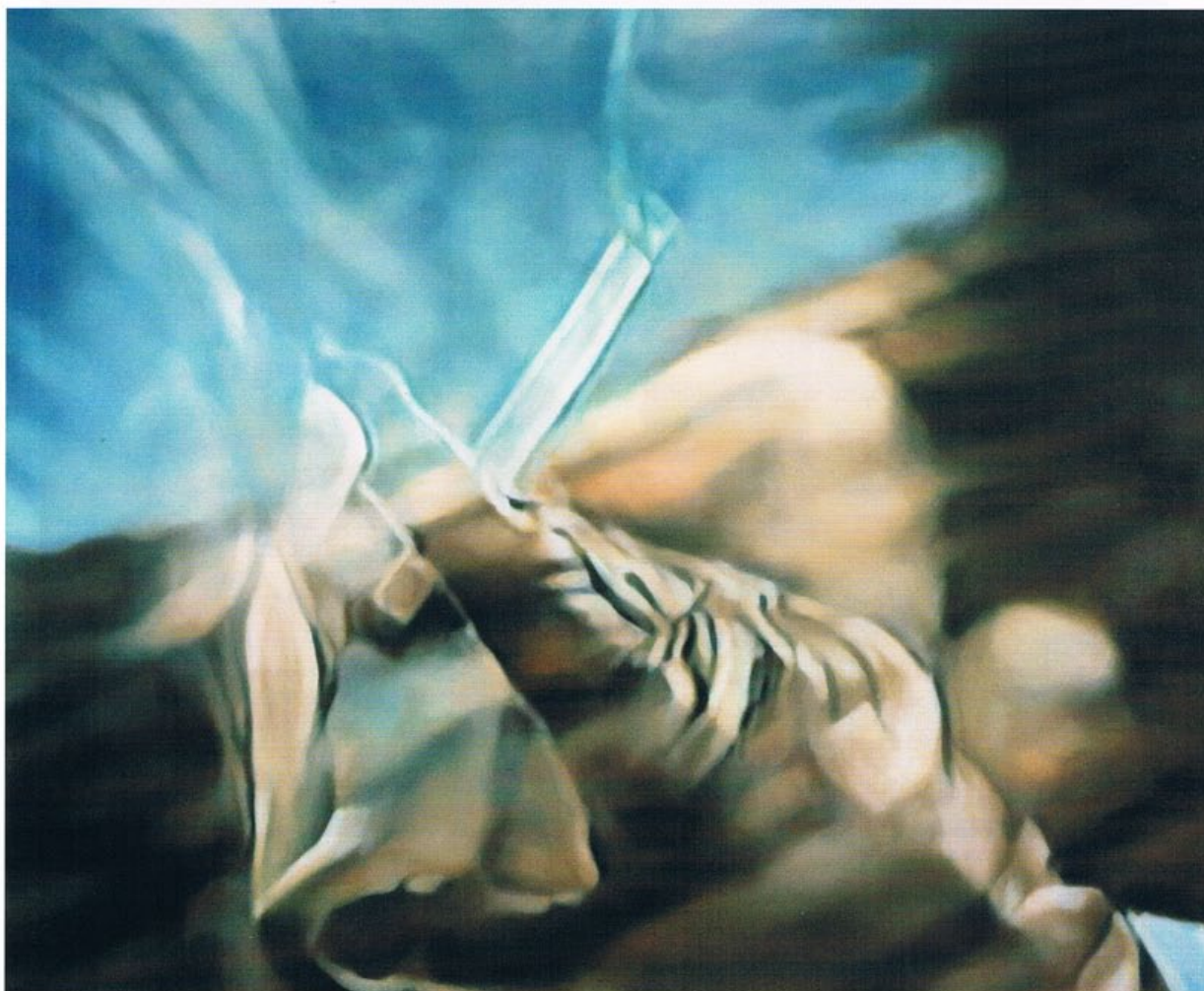


JUDITH EISLER



Le immagini sfocate di Judith Eisler nascono da *frame* di film o da fotografie scattate allo schermo acceso della televisione. I suoi soggetti sembrano liquefarsi sulla tela e risplendono di luce abbagliante.

L'opera di Judith Eisler sembra essere, a prima vista, il risultato di un processo artistico ben definito e facilmente riconoscibile. Lo sottolinea la stessa artista definendo il suo lavoro: "Opero a partire da immagini di film. Lavorare partendo da immagini note è per me una necessità. La mia pittura è un medium per comunicare un'idea". Ma la sua tecnica è anche un filtro che scaturisce dalla trasposizione su tela di stereotipi ben definiti. In "Paul and Liz" si riconoscono immediatamente Paul Newman e Liz Taylor in una delle scene più sconvolgenti del film *La gatta sul tetto che scotta*; in "Marisa Mell" la bella attrice austriaca, ritratta in una scena del film di Mario Bava *Danger: Diabolik*, capolavoro misconosciuto e purtroppo ritenuto ancora di serie B. Ma è proprio in questa trasposizione pittorica che risiede la forza del lavoro di Judith Eisler. Ridipingendo delle figure sovraccariche di storie e aneddoti conosciuti dal grande pubblico, l'artista annienta l'alone Pop che caratterizza l'immagine già nota e crea qualcosa di differente: un dipinto che si contraddistingue per una narrazione peculiare e indipendente. Vedere qualcosa che si conosce bene - molto bene - presentato in modo così diverso ha un che di prodigioso e inquietante. Il pensiero corre ovviamente subito a Andy Warhol o Gerhard Richter, i precursori di questo tipo di arte che include la fotografia e il dipinto. Ma la newyorkese Judith Eisler va oltre. Si spinge in quello spazio affascinante e confuso - "infrasonico" direbbe Marcel Duchamp - dell'inquietante stravaganza. *Emmanuel Caron*





Judy Eisenberg, 2006



Judy Eisenberg, 2003

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ARTFORUM

Judith Eisler

COHAN AND LESLIE

138 Tenth Avenue

October 10, 2008–November 15, 2008

Fifteen minutes of fame may seem fleeting to some, but for Judith Eisler, mere instants on the big screen are epic. For nearly a decade, Eisler has taken snapshots of art-house films from the 1960s and '70s—most often stills of motion—and recaptured them in blurry large-scale paintings. The results are images thrice removed from the original scene of action; to the viewer's eyes, the canvases seem to toggle between photorealism and abstraction.

Eisler's process in this exhibition, titled "I don't believe it. I won't let it happen" (a line appropriated from Jean-Luc Godard's 1982 film *Passion*), is analogous to the one deployed in her earlier works, but this time her filmic subjects are bad-boy icons. Johnny Thunders—lead singer of '70s punk band the New York Dolls—is the focus of one series. In three nearly identical compositions, Thunders's hazy likeness slips into obscurity. Installed on the opposite wall is one large tableau that, in murky monochrome, monumentalizes a still from Andy Warhol's *Sleep*, 1968—a five-hour projection documenting the provocative poet/performance artist John Giorno in slumber. On a third wall, a diptych of Alain Delon in the 1968 film *Girl on a Motorcycle* suggests velocity as the actor rides his bike into bleary abstraction.

Eisler's choice of subjects brings to mind Elizabeth Peyton, whose current New Museum retrospective is also rife with waifish musicians, sleeping artists, and outlaw heartthrobs. Yet Eisler tackles her idols obliquely, eschewing familial caricatures for Gerhard Richter-esque simulacra. Through her swishes of paint, famous figures devolve into shapes, and their familiarity becomes as elusive as flickering frames in a projection.



Judith Eisler, *John*, 2008, oil on canvas, 48 x 60".

— Emily Weiner

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ARTFORUM

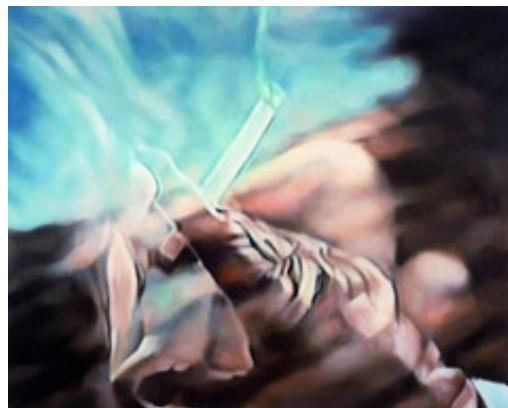
Judith Eisler

GALERIE KROBATH WIMMER

Eschenbachgasse 9

September 12, 2006–October 21, 2006

In titling her solo exhibition in Vienna “*Anhauchen*” (To Breathe On), New York-based artist Judith Eisler conjures a subject rife with philosophical import. While no direct equivalent exists in English, the word, more common in poetry than in conversational German, suggests a form of breathing out, a brief, intense meeting of interior and exterior. The artist begins her process by playing videotapes of films (such as the Heddy Lamarr classic *Ecstasy* [1933] and David Cronenberg’s *Crash* [1996]), pausing them to photograph the screen at moments external to the film’s explicit narrative; for this show, she focuses on frames involving breath, such as the exhalation of cigarette smoke. Eisler uses this found footage as source material for her paintings, translating the photographic stills into atmospheric, noisy portraits of faces, theatrically lit silhouettes, and blurry details. Her obsessive focus on the act of breathing generates paintings that dwell in a liminal space—the people pictured are ethereal; they seem to be illuminated from within. Though the picture’s filmic origins are inscribed in the works’ unique lighting and perspective, the movies’ plots are secondary: Here, painting itself takes the director’s role.



Holly, 2006.

— Sabine B. Vogel

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Die Galerie als Kino

*Mit gemalten Filmstills
wurde **JUDITH EISLER**
zum Shootingstar. In ihrer
Malerei lotet sie den
Nullpunkt des Films aus.*

TEXT: JOHANNA HOFLEITNER, FOTO: CHRISTINE PICHLER



Suche nach dem Übersehenen.
Für Judith Eislers malerische Aneignungen eignen sich nicht alle Filme. Hitchcock? Zu viel Kontrolle! Fassbinder? Zu dramatisch!

LIZ TAYLORS WIMPERN UND ROMY SCHNEIDERS ZÄHNE

Ob es sie stören würde, im „artforum“ einen Artikel über ihre Arbeit zu finden? Ein Lächeln huscht über Judith Eislers Gesicht, als sie sich an diese Anfrage erinnert. Tim Griffin, damals Chefredakteur des renommierten US-Kunstmagazins, hatte sie irgendwann im Sommer 2004 vorgebracht. Unter dem Titel „First take“ sollten „12 new artists“ in dem Beitrag vorgestellt werden.

Selbstverständlich hatte die Künstlerin, die heute an der Wiener Angewandten Professorin für Malerei, Tapiserie und Animationsfilm ist, zu dem Zeitpunkt aber gerade 32 Jahre alt war und sich ihr Künstlerdasein nach dem Studium mit Restauratorenjobs finanzierte, nichts gegen den Bericht. Wie denn auch? Noch viel größer war allerdings die Überraschung, als die Nummer im Herbst herauskam und am Cover völlig unerwartet eine Arbeit von Judith Eisler abgebildet war. Eisler: „Das war für mich wie ein Cinderella-Traum!“ Die abgebildete Arbeit – „Smoker (Cruel Story of Youth)“ – zitierte eine Stelle aus einem Frühwerk Nagisa Oshimas und zeigte ein Close-up eines aus extremer Überkopfperspektive gemalten Gesichtes, wobei die dominanten Details, der geschminkte Mund, eine glühende Zigarette zwischen den Lippen und die Kinnpartie, am linken Rand des Bildes waren.

Markenzeichen: Filmgeschichte. Das Bild sollte ein Meilenstein in Eislers Karriere werden. Nicht nur, dass „Smoker“ der Schlüssel zum Erfolg in einer der heißesten Phasen des Kunstmarkts war (Eisler: „Die Leute wussten Anfang der Nullerjahre ja gar nicht, was sie mit ihrem Geld machen sollten. Also kauften sie so lange Kunst, bis der Markt 2008 überhitzt zusammenbrach.“) In der wandfüllenden Leinwand ist auch das Konzept von Eislers Malerei in aller Vollständigkeit angelegt: Ein Realismus, der mit Abstraktion spielt. Eine luzide, fast altmeisterliche Maltechnik, die ihren Zusammenhang mit der feinen Arbeit des Restaurierens nicht verhehlt. Ein Oszillieren zwischen der Präzision bei der Darstellung von Details und der bewussten Gestaltung offener, unbestimmter Flächen. Und explizite Verweise auf die Filmgeschichte, die gleichsam Judith Eislers Markenzeichen geworden sind.

Also Malerei, die auch Medienkunst ist? „Definitiv, wobei mich am meisten Filme aus den 1960er- und 1970er-Jahren interessieren“, sagt Eisler. „Also aus einer Zeit, als es noch keine Blockbuster gab, als die Filme noch analog waren und eine eigene Art von Schönheit hervorbrachten.“ Das malerische Interesse der eingefleischten Cinephilen gilt dabei allerdings kaum den Filminhalten, sondern vielmehr der Beschaffenheit des Mediums, seinen unspektakulären Zufällen und Zwischenfällen. „Mich interessiert am meisten das, was vom Regisseur, aber nicht von der

Kamera übersehen worden ist. Es bekommt eine eigene Dynamik dadurch, dass es im Film nicht wichtig ist“, sagt Eisler. Solchen Stellen spürt sie nach, wenn sie Filme am Computer oder am Fernseher nach Vorlagenmotiven durchforstet und dafür Kader um Kader, Bild um Bild immer wieder vor- und wieder zurückrollt, bevor sie sie fotografiert und vielleicht im digitalen Stadium noch einer letzten Überarbeitung unterzieht. Selten konzentriert sie sich dabei auf Lieblingsfilme oder Klassiker der Filmgeschichte.

Fasziniert von Romy Schneiders Zähnen. „Filme von Hitchcock sind für mich ungeeignet, weil er jedes einzelne Bild unter Kontrolle hat. Ähnlich geht es mir bei Fassbinder: Ich liebe seine Filme, doch ‚stehlen‘ kann ich von ihm nichts, weil seine Filme zu dramatisch sind.“ Eher schon erweckt das Profil einer Liz Taylor mit den dichten, künstlich verlängerten Wimpern ihre Aufmerksamkeit, eine Schrägansicht Romy Schneiders, die Sonnenbrillen von Blondie oder eine Aufnahme Mick Jagers in action. „Da Filme mein Ausgangsmaterial sind, liegt es in der Natur der Sache, dass ich Stars male. Dennoch geht es nie um deren Berühmtheit und Kultstatus. Viel mehr interessiert mich das ‚Dazwischen‘ – der Raum zwischen den Kadern, zwischen den Bildern und schließlich auch zwischen den Bildern und ihren Betrachtern. Dieser Raum hat für mich eine emotionale Resonanz. Er ist ein psychologischer Raum – ein Raum des kollektiven Unbewussten, den ich malerisch wie eine Landschaft behandle.“ Eine Landschaft, die vor allem atmosphärische Qualitäten hat und auf diese Weise die Malerei, deren Farbpalette sich in den neuesten Arbeiten mehr und mehr gelichtet hat, zum Flirren bringt – bis hin zur Abstraktion.

Kein Zufall, dass Eisler ihre neuen Bilder, die sie nun in ihrer mittlerweile fünften Soloshow in der Wiener Stammgalerie Krobath zeigt, unter dem von den Impressionisten entlehnten Titel „Plein Air“ zusammenfasst. „Ich male sehr traditionell und trage die Farbe sehr dünnflüssig und in vielen Schichten auf. Es ist für mich ein Weg, das zu malen, was die Malerei selbst ausmacht, und nicht die Fotografien, von denen ich ausgehe, abzumalen oder zu kopieren. Malerei ist für mich die Dokumentation eines Sehprozesses. So begann mich etwa ein Bild mit dem Gesicht Romy Schneiders vor allem aufgrund des schimmernden Glanzlichts auf den Zähnen zu interessieren. Es fasziniert mich, wenn sich etwa ein Close-up, wenn man nah an die Leinwand herantritt, zu einer Landschaft auflöst.“

Tipp: Galerie Krobath in Wien, Judith Eisler, „Plein air“, 18.1.–29.2. Eröffnung: 17.1. um 19 Uhr

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THE NEW YORKER

AUGUST 31, 2009

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

"THE FEMALE GAZE: WOMEN LOOK AT WOMEN"

The idea is simple, even simplistic: round up about forty pictures (and the occasional sculpture) of women, by women. The title forecasts gloom, invoking Laura Mulvey's old post-structuralist-feminist chestnut "The Male Gaze." Happily, the works themselves steer clear of theoretical hoocha to focus on the figure. There are wonderful paintings, including Alice Neel's 1975 portrait of her steely-eyed granddaughter Olivia and an ambiguous scene in red, black, and flesh by Judith Eisler (is the recumbent brunette dead or being healed?). When critique does crop up, it is visceral (Marina Abramovic's photograph of her harrowing 1975 performance "Art Must Be Beautiful, Artist Must Be Beautiful," in which she wielded a brush and comb with the ferocity of a flagellant), elegant (Zoe Leonard's eerily erotic photographs), and downright bawdy (Sarah Lucas's readymade sculpture in which a chair, a bra, and two cigarette-covered balls become a portrait of the lady as a chain-smoking tramp). Through Sept. 19. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

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The New York Times

ARTGUIDE

Feb. 6, 2004

A selective listing by critics of The Times: New or noteworthy art, design and photography exhibitions at New York museums and art galleries this weekend.

JUDITH EISLER, "Room Tone," Cohan and Leslie, 138 10th Avenue, near 18th Street, (212) 206-8710, through Feb. 14. Ms. Eisler bases her sensuously painted canvases on photographs of movie video frames frozen on her television screen. The images she chooses are so oblique that the paintings verge on abstraction. Parts of actors are discernible in most, but one, based on "The Evil Dead," is quite illegible. Still, with their muted colors, dark shadows, glaring highlights and hazy atmospheres, they all have moods of noirish mystery (Johnson).

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ARTFORUM

JANUARY 2004

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



PREVIEW 2004
50 SHOWS WORLDWIDE

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Clockwise from below:
Judith Eisler, *Car Trouble*
(Evil Dead), 2003, oil
 on canvas, 68 x 80". **Judith**
Eisler, *Car Hood* *(When*
We Were Kings), 2002,
 oil on canvas, 48 x 60".
Judith Eisler, *Car Surface*
(Performance), 2003,
 oil on canvas, 48 x 60".



Jeffrey Kastner on **JUDITH EISLER**

IN AN INTERVIEW IN THESE PAGES LAST SUMMER, French theorist Jean-Claude Lebensztejn invoked Duchamp's elusive, lyrical notion of the "infra-thin" as one way to think about the complex relationships between Photorealist paintings and their source materials. The evocative neologism expressed Duchamp's fascination with finely pitched distinctions between apparently identical objects or conditions; with the way closely related things tend to seep together across their shared edges yet somehow remain distinct and integral (among his poetic examples: the warmth that lingers on a seat after someone has risen from it). More than simple adjacency, infra-thin association proposes patterns of causality, of transition and exchange, between extremely similar but nevertheless discrete things or situations—like a Photorealist canvas and the photo on which it is based. In fact, the concept suggests, it's precisely in the subtlest slippages between seemingly analogous formal, psychological, or temporal states that the richest creative possibilities are generated.

Elaborating the processes of the first-generation Photorealists from whom her approach descends, New Yorker Judith Eisler has found room to work in this territory of generative recapitulation, in the razor-thin spaces between the "original" and the faithful copy. Her technically accomplished paintings emerge from a working process built around a dizzyingly interdependent constellation of re-presentations: A film buff,

Eisler spends hours watching videos (typically psychologically complex and formally offbeat films from the '60s and '70s) with a camera by her side, pausing the tape periodically to photograph the screen. She then grids the resulting photos and painstakingly re-creates the images in oil on large canvases.

Though she started as an abstract painter, Eisler had begun experimenting with realistic images, based on nature photos, by the early '90s; her initial works in this mode were paintings of animals. Within a few years, however, Eisler determined that only film imagery could provide the possibilities for motion and surprise—what she calls "apparitions"—with which she wanted to imbue her paintings. Emerging from an intricately telescoped succession of subtly deforming iterations—from the cinematographer's lens to the film in the camera to the final edit of the film; from finished film to videotape; from videotape to television screen to photograph; and, finally, from the photograph to her painting—Eisler's new technique produced images layered with echoes and fleeting presences, traces of the mediations they'd previously endured. Her work translates cinematic effects into moments of painterly bravura: Controlled bursts of rich color balance against virtually monochrome passages whose hues seem to have been wrung out from too many trips over the VHS heads, and the indeterminate, complexly lit reflective surfaces Eisler

favors in her chosen frames often suggest the phantasmal figural phasing of a lap dissolve.

As a blizzard swirls outside her windows, Eisler is revisiting several recent paintings in the run-up to her solo exhibition at Chelsea's Cohan and Leslie gallery this month—the seductively disorienting spatial treatment and saturated ochre palette of *Smoker* (*Cruel Story of Youth*), 2003, echoing the florid mise-en-scène of Oshima's classic tale of disaffection; the trippy monochromatic mirroring and partitioning of *Car Surface* (*Performance*), 2003, suggesting both the skinny-tie London mob milieu and identity games of Nicolas Roeg's controversial cult favorite. Tacked on the wall between them is a Polaroid of what the artist calls one of her most fully realized paintings: *Car Trouble* (*Evil Dead*), 2003—a fragment of a female figure from Sam Raimi's creepy masterpiece, buzzing with atmospheric light effects that seem to envelop her silhouette like wisps of damask smoke—is Eisler at her most subtle and compositionally complex. Like the images reproduced here, the photographic stand-in can only hint at the experience of the actual painting. Yet what it lacks in fidelity, it makes up for in conceptual serendipity—presenting us with yet another iteration, another space between the thing and its duplicate, in which the multiple infra-thin correlations of Eisler's work can be seen in dynamic operation. □

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(04.10.06)
Galerie Krobath

Judith Eisler - anhauchen
13.09.06 bis 21.10.06

Und einatmen und ausatmen, und einatmen und ausatmen

Bereits in ihrer Serie "Interieurs" hatte die New Yorker Künstlerin Judith Eisler sich Prozessen der Auflösung und dem Spiel der Unschärfen zugewandt. In ihrer aktuellen Serie "Anhauchen" bilden Filmstills oder direkte Shoots vom Fernsehmonitor das Ausgangsmaterial ihrer Malerei. Die während dieses Reproduktionsprozesses entstehenden Unschärferelationen gelangen effektiv zum Einsatz. Ob es nun das im Pinselstrich der Haarsträhnen oder Luftzirkulationen aufgelöste Profil von Isabelle Huppert ist, oder Holly, die im Zigarettenqualm verschwindet oder Julie, die ihren Atem in den Telefonhörer haucht - im Nebeneinander unterschiedlicher Filmsujets gewinnen deren Medienrealitäten durch malerische Stilsynergien eine spürbare Durchlässigkeit.

Die Flut des Scheinwerferlichtes bei Filmsets wird in den gemalten Bildern trotz der Zweidimensionalität der Bildfläche nochmals gesteigert, gelangt durch die Körperlichkeit der Leinwand zu einer inhalierten Aura. Durch eine Vielzahl von übereinander gelagerten Lasuren wird eine intensive Farbleuchtkraft bewirkt. Es sind vor allem Filmsujets in welchen der menschliche Atem entweder durch den Rauch von Zigaretten oder durch Nebelschwaden sichtbar wird, welche Judith Eisler als eine Art Footagematerial auswählt. Diese Momente einer visuellen Unentschiedenheit werden durch beiläufige Einstellungen oder wie Nicole Scheyerer in ihrem Essay zur Ausstellung es treffend formuliert, durch filmische Zwischenbereiche produziert. Fasziniert von Nebenschauplätzen durch deren Einblendung jede ansonsten notwendige Distanz verschwindet, geraten Judith Eislers Lichtgestalten und Schattenwesen zu einer ätherischen Existenz.

Es sind vor allem Filmszenen in welchen der menschliche Atmen durch ein bewusstes Innehalten, ein Ein- oder Ausatmen oder ekstatische Momente sichtbar wird. Oder Extremsituationen wie in David Cronenbergs Film "Crash". Es sind schwebende Gestalten, eine Lust zur Überschreitung auf die man in den Bildern trifft und deren inneres Feuer durch eine Neigung zu Orange- und Brauntönen verstärkt wird. Jede Übertreibung, welche ansonsten der Figur der Selbstdarstellerin und Filmikonen wie Hedy Lamarr zu eigen ist und eine Voraussetzung für deren künstlerische Subjektivität bildet, wird relativiert. Diese eigenwillige Reduzierung der Lücke zwischen Artefakt und Atemholen überträgt sich in den Raum und bezieht das materielle Verfahren des Bildaufbaus mit ein. Die Fotovorlage des Filmstills bildet hier nicht das Resultat einer abweichenden Wiederholung, sondern bringt gleichzeitig das ambivalente Verhältnis zwischen Malerin und Produktion zum Ausdruck.

Ursula Maria Probst

