

Tanya Leighton

KUNZTEN



1999 in Berlin, Germany; lives and works in Berlin, Germany
Photo: Lucia Jost

An Artist Interview #31

Lunita-July Dorn



by Lunita-July Dorn
„OCCCHIO, MALOCCHIO, PREZZEMOLO E FINOCCHIO“ (Auge,
böses Auge, Petersilie und Fenchel)
2024
Acrylic on canvas
160 x 180 cm

Kunzten, April 2024

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Tanya Leighton

Did you grow up in an artistic family?

No, not really. My father is a total handyman. He and my mum are both punks or former punks from the left-wing scene and they tended to be survival artists. They're both definitely very interested in art and it's always been creative at home, I'd say. That was simply part of it. We were totally given the freedom to do handicrafts or paint.



by Lunita-July Dorn
Glotz nicht so
2024
Acrylic on canvas
155 x 175 cm

How has your painting been evolving in the recent past? What is your focus at the moment, what is currently interesting you?

A lot has happened for me recently, which I then have to filter in order to get back to the calm of painting. When so much happens, you actually think, oh, now it must be boiling, now it's going to start again. And sometimes I need time to really process it all a bit or think about it. At the moment I just really want to paint again and have realised that the process is going much faster. First and foremost, it was fun again. Sometimes I just paint over almost everything again. It's also really funny to stand in front of my painting and see how many layers there actually were in the painting, to see how the painting changes. It's really freeing to know that you don't always have to leave a picture as it is, that no-one tells me what the end is. After all, it's my painting. Something has definitely changed. Everything usually happens very spontaneously for me anyway, as I don't plan much of what I do.

Tanya Leighton



by Lunita-July Dorn
Zu Besuch beim Marlboro man
2024
Acrylic on canvas
160 x 180 cm

It seems as if your recent experiences, how you felt, what you experienced, had more of an impact on the process and less on the actual subject matter of the work. For example, the feeling of calm and lightness that went hand in hand with overpainting and a faster way of working. As a viewer of your works, however, one has the feeling that your figures and portraits are self-portraits. How much self-portrait is there in your paintings?

I would describe it as a self-portrait because the work has a lot to do with myself and also with where I am at the moment or how I'm feeling. And I can always be seen somewhere in most of the pictures. But I'm not interested in making myself visible in the pictures for the viewer. For me, it's not an exact self-portrait, but it's me in my world, in my inner and emotional world or in my own memories.

Tanya Leighton



by Lunita-July Dorn
Schön war's gewesen
2023
Acrylic on canvas
150 x 170 cm



by Lunita-July Dorn
Rot+Blau, Blau+Rot=Das
2022
Acrylic on canvas
150 x 170 cm

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What was the process of discovering your very own visual language?

I've always drawn and painted incredibly much. As a child, I used to read a lot of comics, where you don't actually have to read the text, it's all about the pictures, they're illustrated stories. I thought it was a really nice way to express oneself. And I kept going like that. After I dropped out of school, I first tried out lots of things, apprenticeships and internships. But I always knew that I wanted to paint. Then I applied to the Kunsthochschule Weißensee and I was accepted. At the beginning, it was quite a change to suddenly present myself to the public, especially with the unfinished works. Before that, I only painted for myself. At home at my mum's place and then in my room in the WG. But I think it was also really good for me to somehow find a better visual language. It also took a bit of time. In the beginning, I would say I was more overthought in my work. It's important to me to keep moving, one's own visual language is constantly evolving and you always have to keep an open mind when working. I don't want to commit myself to any visual language.



by Lunita-July Dorn
Blaue Rose 3,50€
2024
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 200 cm

Tanya Leighton



by Lunita-July Dorn
würd' ich gern behalten, aber kann ich mir nicht leisten
2024
Acrylic on canvas
220 x 260 cm

What role do identity and femininity play in your work?

Quite a big role. I'm with myself all day long and since I actually paint most of the time, I think I have no choice but to confront myself and let that flow into my work. I just ask myself how am I at all? Or why do I do some things the way I do them, including painting. Sometimes you're like this, sometimes you're like that. I actually grew up almost exclusively with women and that was something totally normal and beautiful for me. And I don't know any other way. My work is often associated with femininity, but I honestly don't think about it that much when I'm working. But of course I also think it's important to show women and to show femininity, because that's what I am. But I also think it's funny because, no offence to you, but a man probably wouldn't be asked.

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Photo: Luis Bortt



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