



Friedemann Heckel - 2020-2023

28 April - 17 June 2023

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, -

One clover, and a bee.

And revery.

The revery alone will do,

If bees are few.

- Emily Dickinson

For his fourth exhibition at Galerie Thomas Fischer, Friedemann Heckel presents a series of new watercolors created since 2020. In these works, the artist turns toward his personal surroundings, which he portrays based on photographs taken with his mobile phone. Although Heckel did not take the original photographs explicitly for this purpose, his selection and painterly execution exude an atmosphere that unites all the pictures, the still lifes and the portraits, despite their differences.

Heckel's figures seem strangely isolated, not only because they are depicted alone, but also because their bodies can only be partially seen. They withdraw from the beholder by looking vaguely out in the distance or lowering their eyelids. They are lost in contemplation and deep introspection, appear driven by lurking premonitions and speculative melancholy. A captivating light brightens their faces and bodies, the light of a screen, the sun, a lighter. But this light barely ever develops a warmth; instead, it amplifies the impression of cool detachment.

The portraits of people from Heckel's personal surroundings find their counterpart in his quotidian still lifes. These bring into play symbols of a new beginning, beside the sense of melancholic forewarning. A door handle without the door it belongs to, brutally removed from its actual context, presents itself as a metaphor of a moment of transition all the more due to its functional duality of closing and opening. Then a very large still life with extinguished candles and a bouquet of flowers based on a photograph that was taken with hard shadows after a party. Here something excessive has come to an end, but at the same time, at least if we follow the semantics of flowers, we see symbols of transformation and confidence in the white lilies and sunflowers. Something closes and opens, something ends and begins anew. The floral semantics in Heckel's painterly depiction take on an additional dimension. The white of the lilies (the same white encountered in Heckel's renderings of the blank paper and a light beam) is, at the same time, the white of the watercolor paper itself, the support. Here, the images reach the limits of their own format, at the same time revealing their potentiality. The gaps on the paper become visible, and, if successful, unveil and symbolize something new. And then there's the technique of watercolor itself: the material repeatedly comes to the foreground in Heckel's works. Painted with the paper lying flat on a table or on the ground, the watercolors run across the surface and fray, taking on a life of their own and opening to the abstract. This creates a contrast, as if playing with control and the loss of control,

both with the untouched white of the paper and the detailed lines in the representation of the faces, hands, individual objects. Heckel's idiosyncratic use of the watercolor technique updates the genres he uses, portraits and still lifes. By empathetically engaging with his personal surroundings, he reveals an atmosphere between melancholy and new beginnings, where, perhaps like the poem by Emily Dickinson quoted above, the potential of imagination, of reverie is made manifest.

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