

Gina Fischli,  
*Press*



Hello Gina. I know you were born in Zürich. Are you there right now?

Yes, I was born in Zürich, but I moved away when I was nineteen. After high school, I moved abroad and then I was all over for thirteen years, and now I moved here a year and a half ago.

You started your studies by learning stage design in 2011 in Hamburg. And I would like to ask you how your studies in stage design have affected your artistic practises.

I think that also influences my work a lot. It is not something I actively think about, but when I look at the finished exhibition and talk about it, I can always really see it there. Because I often conceive of the exhibition as a whole. Most of the time I don't produce work and then later is an exhibition and I just put all the recent work in it, but I already have an idea of what the exhibition as a whole could be, and then I make the work, or I already have some of the pieces, and I make the other piece to make the experience of the exhibition. And I think what I really liked about stage design as well is that you direct people, you give the actors certain instructions on how to behave within the space, and obviously you give the audience a hint on how to feel about the space or about the situation. You could do very similar things in an exhibition as well. When you place a work, you can instruct the people on how to walk through the space and how to interact with the art, with themselves, or with other people. So I think that's something that I'm still very interested in intrigued by, whether you do it in theatre or in art.

What you are saying makes me think about your exhibition *I Love Being Creative*, which was your first institutional exhibition in the US and happened at the Swiss Institute in New York. There you projected a video piece and you sprayed around it, on its borders, curtains somehow as a frame, and you conceive the piece more like an installation, and as I know, I can relate this kind of installation to stage design and to creating a narrative because of the work.

Yes. It was the first time I've ever made a film as an art work. When I had the file, I knew that I wanted to stage it in some way because it is about performance; I wanted to give it a stage and also acknowledge that it does exist within a space.

Everything always exists within a context, and I wanted to also address the context of the Swiss Institute and of it being a basement space as well. And I had the idea with the curtains when I was on a plane with my daughters, and when you sit in economy class, the stewardess is coming through the curtains from the first class to the back, and my younger daughter, who is three years old, said, "Oh, oh, there is going to be a show! It is going to be a show!" She thought that something was happening because someone was coming out of the curtains, and I thought that was so simple; you just need curtains, and then everything is a show, everything is a performance if you are coming out of the curtains, and it is so simple in a way.

And after your studies in Stage Design, you started Fine Arts as well in Hamburg. Which was the motif of making this decision and going for arts studies.

I did both. I started with Stage Design for one year, but I had already worked in stage design for a few years since I was a teenager and started to work in theatre. So when I initiated studying it, I realised that I kind of already knew the job because it is a very practical job, and if you are already doing it, you don't really need to study it because it is teamwork; you have to do it with other people. If you are studying it and just doing hypothetical stages, that is not really the job. The job is working with the stage, with the director, and with the actresses, coming up with things together, and it really didn't make sense for me to study stage design at some point I also found that in theatre, or at least in Germany at the time it was quite cerebral; everything was very intellectual, and it is all in the words, when I started to get more interested in things that may have more subtexts or music as well, in things that are not completely outspoken. And I wasn't really convinced anymore at some point. Often in theatre, you think you have this cultural agency that you are making a play about the economic crisis, and then people watch it and then they understand and they are going to be less greedy or something, but that is never going to happen.

It is kind of pretentious, no?

A bit pretentious and a bit didactic, teaching people to be different. I started to be a bit annoyed by some of the attitudes. Of course, there are also super cool people doing super cool stuff, but I started to believe more for myself in the communication form of art. And I like that you have more freedom to do so. You don't need to have a ticket sale. Even if no one cares about my art, I can go to the studio and make more art, whereas in theatre, I need to be employed by a theatre to make my art, and that makes you very dependent in a way.

Talking about the accessibility of art, my mind goes to your project at Cork Street in London where you made a project, called *Ravenous and Predatory* in 2021. I know that the project happened because of an interview you did with Hans Ulrich Obrist for his Catalogue project, and there you shared one of your unrealized projects that was about the placing of banners in the public space in London, banners you've already installed in The Royal Academy of Art. Please tell me more about the project and how it happened.

I was always interested in reaching a large audience as well as an audience that was not in the museum. This project was so special because I went to study at the Royal Academy Schools, in 2015-2018 and it is such a surreal place because it is the oldest art school in England, and it is also the only one that is still for free. There is no other place in England where you can study art for free. And then you go there, and it is like Hogwarts is like from 1768; everything is still super old in the building (or at least the bits that Chipperfield didn't destroy); you have these secret studios in the back of the museum; and you are in this Mayfair world of crazy expensive cars and Louis Vuitton and kind of a Disney idea of what England is or what London is, or like a Mary Poppins kind of fairytale world. It was super surreal or maybe super transparent for me to study art in this context, to go every day to Mayfair, and to spend all of my time in this world. And I really started to look at the area. I was very interested in what it looks like and how it functions, and then the Royal Academy was doing the two hundred fifty-year celebration, and because I always went to architecture talks that they were hosting, these people were asking me: "Do you want to do a public art project because we know the people from the Council?" and then I made the collage with my idea with the banners, but it never happened. I gave them the proposal, but I never really heard anything back. Years later, Hans Ulrich Obrist, during the pandemic, had this idea of doing a catalogue, which I think is a great idea where artists could talk about projects that had not materialized and so I gave them this collage, and then someone from Westminster Council saw the catalogue and they had money for public art because of COVID and they were very interested

in doing things again outside so the people could engage with the city, and then them and Cork Street approached me. We got to do it.

It is great! You launched the project. I saw the installation of Sonia Boyce in 2022 during the Frieze week, and I was really touched by the intervention. Your protagonists for the project are a mouse, a bat, and a squirrel. Why is this obsession with animals, and please tell me more about it?

I don't know! I love watching animals, depicting animals, and taking animal photographs. I think that is something you cannot really change as an artist. Some people always want to draw the human form, and they have a never-ending interest in it. What I like about this situation is that the banners in such a commercial context will always look a bit ambiguous. There are also flags from like Louis Vuitton. I think it is curious how animals are being used for advertising, especially because you try to emotionally blackmail people into thinking that what may be a very predatory company is actually really sweet. I wanted to also express this hunger that people are feeling when they are in the city centre, like Marais in Paris or Mayfair in London, and you can feel it in the air that people want to do shopping, and it becomes very tangible in these places, so the animals are reflecting that.

For instance, when I saw a piece by you for the first time in 2019 at FIAC, it was the big-size bag, and I remember that just entering from one of the sides of the Grand Palais, I found the work in front of me at the booth of the London-based gallery Soft Opening one of the galleries that is representing you, and it was the enormous faux fur bag surrounded by those seductively colourful cakes, much smaller than the bag. Tell me more about those works, please.

Actually I'm showing the hand bag now. Again!



Installation View, *Pride and Prejudice* at Karma International. Courtesy of the artist and Karma International.

Yes, fantastic, I know, at Karma International in Zurich.

... and I'm so happy that I can show it again because that is a work I really love. And again, it was just before the pandemic, and I had to put it away, so I'm super happy that I get to whip it out again. This exhibition *Pride and Prejudice* talks a lot about surface, but also shopping.

Why is the exhibition titled *Pride and Prejudice*? And please tell me more about those fantastic animal sculptures that I think you started doing in the pandemic because you found yourself indoors surrounded by pillows and fabrics and you created the pieces. As well, in the exhibition you are showing your glitter glasses and fake Joseph Albert compositions.

Yes, the exhibition is called *Pride and Prejudice* because of the famous novel and it's fitting topics which was set in England during the Victorian era. It is a time when people started to breed animals and make animal shows. Before, you would say, "This is a hunting dog or this is a lap dog," but there wasn't yet that absurd idea of a race having a purebred terrier or purebred German Shepherd.

And then in Victorian times, they started to get really obsessed with this idea of breeding, where you have to have the tail exactly at this angle or a specific nose, and then making these kinds of animal shows where you show your animals and then you get a prize, and I thought that that was very fitting to show also with these animal sculptures. And again, they became these animals from that time on, became a status symbol, and you don't just have any dog; you have a poodle because the poodle is going to represent something. The book itself talks a lot about class and about marriage and choosing the right match, seeing through the surface of something there is a lot in there that I thought was very fitting to the work. both to the animal sculptures and to the handbag.



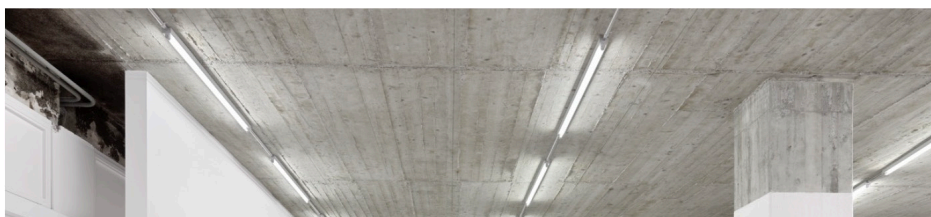
*Albers (Greener), 2020, Glitter, glue, plywood, 53 x 53 x 4.5 cm / 20 7/8 x 20 7/8 x 1 3/4 in, FISGI52758*

I see it as being very much related to your sense of humour because the animals are quite fragmented; they are not the kind of animals that would be winners at a beauty competition.

But they are trying. I think that they are trying, and I think that this is something that also reflects in these cake sculptures. That the cake is always an attempt to make something nice. It may not look nice in the end, but you just try, and you can see the effort, putting another ball on it, another heart, another piece of something, like you try so hard to make it presentable in a way.

The titles of the cake sculptures are names of real castles...

Yes, it was quite necessary to give them serious, real names. Often the castles have a semi-dark background. Almost all castles have a spooky story about someone being killed or ghosts. So I thought that it would be good to tie them to very real places. The castle presents this fairytale dream and fantasy, but actually it is a manifestation of very brutal power and of subjugation, and both of these aspects of the castle have to be within the sculpture somehow.





Installation View, *Pride and Prejudice* at Karma International. Courtesy of the artist and Karma International.

What are your current topics of obsession? What are you working on right now?

I've got to do a few more cake sculptures because I made them before the pandemic, and during the pandemic I had no studio. Now that I have the studio again and I can make sculpture.

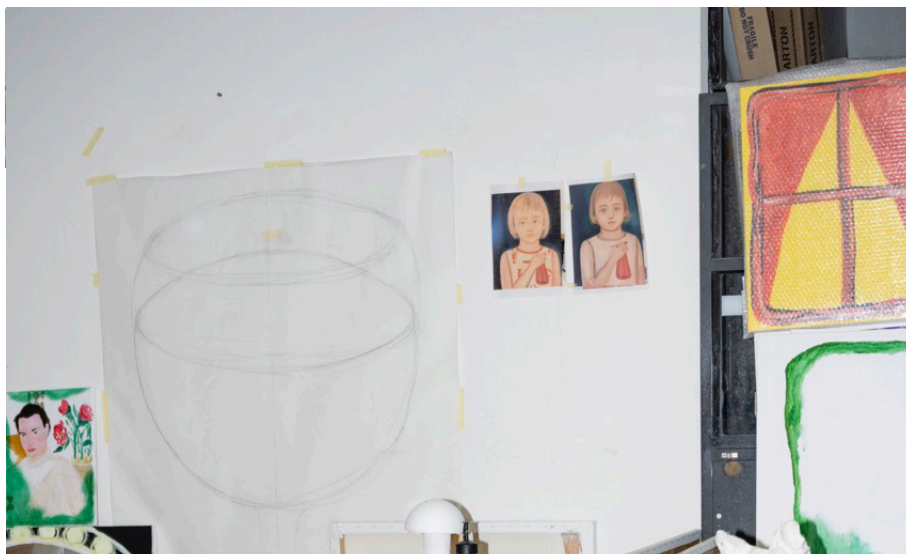
I'm also thinking a lot about art in public places, and that is something that I guess I have the most urgency with because, for me, *Ravenous and Predatory* in that respect was one of the most important works, and I would really love to find more ways to engage with people outside of galleries and museums and think about what that could be public space is not clearly defined as to what is what. You can encounter anything on the street.

Do you have any specific ideas of a city or a place where you would like to see your work and make an intervention?

At the moment, I'm making sketches for fountains. There is a project for Paris + in October where they are doing the Tuileries sculptures garden, and I'm going to apply with a project for there because I would absolutely love showing in the Tuileries Garden.

Let's end up with one more question. You've been showing with Chapter Gallery and 303 Gallery in New York, with Soft Opening in London, and now you have the exhibition with Karma International in Zürich, and I'm wondering how you think the perception of your work changes through the location. And how has your life abroad during those thirteen years not living in Zürich shaped your artistic practises?

Oh, that is a very complex question. For me personally, it is easier to be an outsider, and I really enjoy being an outsider in a city and looking from the inward from that viewpoint. I find that a very comfortable position, where as in your home town you can read all the codes. I guess that makes it more complicated being here, but it is only the beginning; I've only been here for a year and a half. So I don't know yet what it might hold. It is definitely exciting showing here and it was very satisfying to introduce myself in this city with my work.













# The Art Newspaper, 2021

## Critters to take over Cork Street for London Gallery Weekend

Swiss artist Gina Fischli is making 3m-high banners



Gina Fischli, detail from *Ravenous and Predatory* (2021)

### The Art Newspaper

11 May 2021

A new public art commission in Mayfair will introduce a menagerie of furry and feathered fauna next month to the historic London gallery hub. To be unveiled on 7 October, five sets of 3m-high banners depicting photos of woodland animals such as foxes and squirrels will tower over visitors to Cork Street, which hosts prominent galleries including Goodman, Saatchi Yates as well as Frieze's first exhibition space.

These large-scale 'pawtraits' have been made by the Swiss-born artist Gina Fischli, who used internet screengrabs as the basis for the works. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Arts, which is situated a stone's throw away from Cork Street, Fischli says she is fascinated by "the tension of Mayfair, which visualises so much of what London as a city is right now but also a fantasy landscape of what it once was. It is an intriguingly beautiful woman that has undergone over 30 facelifts and stands apart from any timeline". Fischli's banners will stay up until April 2022.



An installation view of Gina Fischli's *Ravenous and Predatory* (2021)  
Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Luke Hayes

# The Art Newspaper, 2021

As with much of Fischli's previous work—such as the enormous handbag sculpture she showed at Soft Opening's booth at Paris Internationale fair in 2019—saccharine elements are underscored by a sense of menace. Indeed, the aerial format of Fischli's Cork Street commission may well have viewers questioning whether these are cute critters or vicious predators.

"This marks a historic moment for Cork Street as it will be the first-time banners have been hung across the street. It is more significant than ever that we see art not just in a gallery context but that it spills into the street and is viewable to all," says Julian Stocks, the property director of The Pollen Estate, Cork Street Galleries' primary owner and developer.

• ***Sign up now to our [Ultimate guide to London Gallery Weekend](#) and receive alerts about the top shows, latest trends and insider tips ahead of the city-wide event***

## **CORK STREET GALLERIES UNVEIL STREET BANNERS BY ARTIST GINA FISCHLI DURING FRIEZE WEEK**

*By Mark Westall • 6 October 2021*

Cork Street Galleries is pleased to announce a new initiative which will see a series of artists invited to design banners for Cork Street. Gina Fischli is the first artist to be invited to take up the public art commission and has created a site-specific installation which will be erected on 7 October 2021 for a six-month period. The unveiling of the artwork coincides with Frieze, London's busiest art market week. Fischli's banners, based on five photographs, will hang across Cork Street like bunting, encouraging the street's visitors to stop and look up.



*Gina Fischli rendering *Ravenous and Predatory* (2021)*

*Ravenous and Predatory* (2021) draws the eye up past the street's ground floor windows and depicts a series of animals including a mouse, bat, squirrel, blackbird and wolf. Fischli has collected the animal imagery as screen grabs from the internet and from open-source platforms, apart from the image of the blackbird which is by wildlife photographer Paul Sorrell. The animal portraits directly interact with their surroundings and express an emotion or

# FAD Magazine, 2021

action for us all. Whilst they pose as something that seems at first glance endearing, there is an undercurrent of intimidation and potential danger heightened by their enlarged format and aerial perspective.

Fischli, a graduate from the Royal Academy of Art, was among the diverse group of artists selected by guest editor Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director at the Serpentine Galleries, for the latest edition of *Catalogue*, the art journal published by Cork Street Galleries. Catalogue 4.5 was created and published during lockdown as a way of celebrating conversation, ideas and the energy of creative exchange between the global art community. Hans Ulrich Obrist posed the question '*what is your unrealised project?*' to 39 new-generation artists, in his Editor's letter he mentions his hopes that many of the projects will soon become realised. Fischli's contribution was *Street Flags Proposal from 2017*, a project which is now being realised with the support of Cork Street Galleries.



*Gina-Fischli\_rendering Ravenous and Predatory (2021)*

*"In the three years I studied at the Royal Academy I spent every day in Mayfair and with the tension of this neighbourhood. I found it endlessly fascinating because it visualizes so much of what London as a city is right now but also a fantasy landscape of what it once was. It is an intriguingly beautiful woman that has undergone over thirty facelifts and stands apart from any timeline. I love art in public*

# FAD Magazine, 2021

*places and immediately started to think about ways art could exist in this peculiar landscape which is really tricky because all the space is already densely occupied. This collage artwork was originally handed in as a proposal for the Royal Academy's 250<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and then last year I was so happy to share it as my 'unrealised project' for Catalogue magazine and finally give it life. I really hope the work will be of good service to everyone."*

*Gina  
Fischli*

## **About the Artist**

Gina Fischli (b. 1989, Zurich) studied at the Royal Academy of Art, London (2018) and the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Hamburg (2015). Solo exhibitions include *Sandy Brown*, Berlin (upcoming); *Soft Opening*, London (upcoming); *Chapter NY*, New York (upcoming); *Good Girl*, Neuer Essener Kunstverein, Essen (2021); *Gina Fischli at 303 Gallery*, New York (2020) and *Interior Living* at SUNDY, London (2018). Group exhibitions include: *Winterfest*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2020); *Winter Solstice*, suns works, Zurich (2020); *Grand Miniature*, Sentiment, Zurich (2020); *Gegenwart: Doing Youth*, Hamburg (2020); *Una Sta Con*, Stalla Madulain, Engadin (2020), *After Image*, Mamoth Gallery, London (2020); Geneva Biennale: Sculpture Park, Parc des Eaus-Vives, Geneva (2020); *Love Sign*, Galerie Noah Klink, Berlin (2020); *Jahresgaben*, Neuer Essener Kunstverein, Essen (2019); *Die Läden sind geschlossen*, Weiss Falk, Basel (2019); *A house is not a home* at Fri Art, Fribourg (2019); *ON SITE* at Swiss Institute, New York (2019) and *Way Out* at Jenny's, London (2018). In 2018 Fischli published *Bad Timing* (Hacienda Books, Zurich). Fischli's work is in the collection of the Royal Academy of Art, London and the Schaulager, Basel. The artist lives and works in London.

## Frosting Middle Age: Gina Fischli Isabella Zamboni

While watching a beauty pageant on television, Mark Greif saw the camera addressing the young women contestants about their favorite reliefs from schoolwork and pageantry. “What were their hobbies? Many listed ‘eating.’ I suppose you could hear ‘eating,’ not ‘cooking,’ as a victory for feminist equality. It’s not housework.”<sup>1</sup> The array of cake sculptures by young artist Gina Fischli in the last FIAC booth of the London gallery Soft Opening suggested a comparable but different competition, a fight not between beauties but between mothers, ambitiously parading their efforts at matriarchal birthday-party dominance—in either case, food as spectacle of leisure or rivalry or both, pointing to the pathetic connections between beauty tournaments, competitive parenting, TV cooking battles, and the survival of the fittest artist.

“There is a natural connection between the figure of the artist and the pressure that leads us to compete and make an exhibition,” states Fischli, “but as soon as we accelerate to keep up with the rhythm of the times, something comical happens, like in a Buster Keaton film, where everything goes slightly too fast to be serious.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Fischli’s cakes appear too innocent and unsophisticated to come across as earnest. The execution is not virtuoso—or, better, not hyperbolic. They do not seem like parodies, but really just the sugar paste and marzipan commonly seen at kiddie raves. They might be replicas of frivolous culture-industry products, but then “separating the decorative or the superficial from social reality” is a questionable operation, reminds Sabrina Tarasoff. “Particularly when you run the risk of miscalculating where power actually lies.”<sup>3</sup>

The majority of the cake sculptures’ titles are names of existing British and German medieval or neo-Gothic castles, many of which carry the haunted history one expects. *Comlongon Castle* (2019) refers to the fifteenth-century Scottish mansion apparently visited by the crying ghost of Baron Carruthers’s daughter, who threw herself from the tower to escape a forced marriage. *Glamis Castle* (2019) takes its name from the hyper-tormented fortress, in Scotland as well, inhabited by an assortment of spirits: the burned Lady Glamis, accused of being a witch; a young servant boy; a woman without a tongue; and a whole family walled in by another family whose skeletons are apparently lost in a hidden chamber. The sculptures, though, do not mimic the real architecture, but remodel their attributes into childlike, stylized forms.

What social reality is tied to kiddie-gothic *patisserie*? It is not overdramatizing to state that we may have currently entered a new Middle Age, Earth having reached a degree of extreme irritation and the collective body of society having long been in a state of intolerable stress, as Franco “Bifo” Berardi reminds us.<sup>4</sup> Myths of unlimited growth notwithstanding nature or social justice, along with the failure of digital euphoria, are now finally laid bare by the surreal and apocalyptic coronavirus stagnation. A new Gothic spirit penetrates much of today’s world.

Fischli’s cakes, one might say, absorb this spirit by revealing its saccharine aftermath, converting the Romantic *Schmuck* for exotic dark times into a faked, celebratory gloom below the age of puberty. And not only do they

funnily echo today’s home-sweet-home quarantine command—exhausting like a sugar rush. The sculptures, as little monuments to unnecessary needs, seem to point to the current collapse of the discretionary consumption on which the Western economy is built. “It’s going to be catastrophic,” notes Ian Shepherdson, founder of Pantheon Macroeconomics—a firm that advises Wall Street firms, hedge funds, and institutional investors—bluntly to the *New Yorker*. “All this nonessential stuff amounts to about forty per cent of the U.S.’s gross domestic product. In other words, it is enormous, in terms of both its dollar contribution to the economy and the number of people it employs.”<sup>5</sup>

And yet “you bake a cake for someone you love,” says Fischli in the press release for her recent show at New York’s 303 Gallery (2020). If not competition, frivolous (cultural) gloom, or compulsive consumerism, her sculptures may ultimately suggest the sense of commonality, if not community, we are all now sinisterly experiencing while realizing how tragedy is hitting everybody systematically. It’s the very same individual but common-to-all sense of struggle that Raymond Carver’s solitary, overworked baker shares with two of his customers, grieving parents who just lost their child, in the moment they all three eat warm cinnamon rolls just out of the oven, the icing still runny. “‘You probably need to eat something,’ the baker said. ‘I hope you’ll eat some of my hot rolls. You have to eat and keep going. Eating is a small, good thing in a time like this,’ he said.”<sup>6</sup>

1 Mark Greif, *Against Everything* (London/New York: Verso), 43.

2 Lucy Kumara Moore, “Casa dolce casa,” *Vogue Italia*, December 2019, 81.

3 Sabrina Tarasoff, “L’esprit De L’escalier: On (Marriage) Affairs of Art and Architecture,” *Mousse* 50 (October–November 2015): <http://mousse-magazine.it/sabrina-tarasoff-escalier-2015/>.

4 Franco “Bifo” Berardi, “Cronaca della psicodelfazione,” *Not*, March 16, 2020, <https://not.neroeditions.com/cronaca-della-psicodelfazione/>.

5 John Cassidy, “The Coronavirus Calls for Wartime Economic Thinking,” *New Yorker*, March 16, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-coronavirus-calls-for-wartime-economic-thinking>.

6 Raymond Carver, “A Small, Good Thing,” in *Where I’m Calling From: New and Selected Stories* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988), 424.

53 Gina Fischli, *Schloss Steinsberg*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London.

54 Gina Fischli, *Comlongon Castle*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo: Theo Christelis

55 Gina Fischli, *Capitol House*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo: Theo Christelis



# Mousse, 2020



# Mousse, 2020



# Mousse, 2020



Sleek, 2020

# SLEEK

Essay

## The icing on the cake: Gina Fishli's domestic spectacle

The Swiss artist's fantastic cake sculptures and glitter paintings of everyday objects enact a childlike desire to makes things better—By Kathryn O'Regan

*6 May, 2020*



Gina Fischli, *Schloss Herzberg*, 2019. Photography Theo Christelis, courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London.

In 17th century Dutch vanitas still lifes, the inclusion of wine was intended

# Sleek, 2020

to remind viewers of the futile nature of material life. Wine represented vanity and the pointlessness of earthly pleasures, when, after all, human life is ephemeral. In an ongoing series—currently presented [online at David Zwirner](#) through to 15 May—London-based Swiss artist [Gina Fischli](#) renders a tall champagne flute out of glitter painted onto plywood (a twinkling wine glass with a pool of plummy liquid in the bowl and a stamp of red staining the rim can be seen on the [artist's Instagram](#)). While empty and half empty wine glasses may be staples of the still life genre since its beginnings, Fischli's renditions glint more so with tongue-in-cheek desire than they do with dread for our inevitable demise.

On first glance, this series of household miscellanea—a clunky tumbler rippling blue, a cigarette, or two, smouldering in an ashtray, a sad squashed armchair—seem to be opposed, on account of their ordinariness, to Fischli's most recent body of work: an assortment of dreamy cake sculptures, teetering with turrets and marshmallows, which are concurrently on view at New York's 303 Gallery's [online viewing room](#). Interestingly, Fischli's clay confections take their names from German and English castles—*Schloss Babelsberg* and *Comlongon Castle* are just two examples. A castle is an exquisite thing—a structure synonymous with childhood fairytales and innocence, co-opted by a linchpin of American consumerism—Disney—as much as it is an icon of monarchical rule, power and grandeur. But if we think of Fischli's sculptures as cakes, as opposed to castles, then, the two might have something in common: they both demonstrate a transformation of mundane items—a cake, a glass—into mini monuments and talismans, emanating a kind of magic significance. But it's not just that it is an attempt to make them special—it's a childlike attempt: the cakes are cutely coloured and crudely rendered, jovially crowned with ice-cream cones; the wine glasses and ashtrays recall pre-school arts and crafts, simple make and do, sprinkling glitter on everything to make the world more beautiful and glamorous and spectacular than it really is.



# Sleek, 2020

Gina Fischli, *Together*, 2020. Photography Theo Christelis, courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London.

While Fischli has been working on these glitter-encrusted still lifes since 2018, they are befitting of our current mood. They are homey and familiar in a way that might be regarded as touching, recalling the little acts we do to make things better, or at least, *appear* better. An ashtray with two nearly smoked cigarettes resembles a fairytale battlement in its own right; a glass of water holds a whirlpool, a motion, a possibility.

Among the most stirring in the series is a candy-pink birdcage, bars wrought out of olive green glitter. Much like the wine glasses or the armchair, it's empty, grains of food still in the feeder, no bird to be found. As an object, a birdcage suggests the loss of freedom, of being penned in, confined to narrow surroundings. Is it weird then that Fischli has chosen to call the work, *House*? While it would be wrong to ascribe too much of our current situation onto an artwork (particularly one that has not been made during the current pandemic), it is difficult not to be reminded of quarantines and lockdowns, where our houses have become cosy cocoons at best and grim cages at worst.



Left: *House*, 2018. Right: *Comlongon Castle*, 2019. Photography Theo Christelis, courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London.

Circling back to 17th century Dutch painting, the presence of a birdcage in a scene represented love or sexuality—a bird in a cage, for example, often symbolised virginity, and consequently, the vacant cage as an indication of its loss. Taking this further, in Victorian art, the birdcage was a heavy-handed metaphor for women's constricted place in society. Perhaps the same could be said of a frosted cake—baking, much like sewing or other household tasks, has long been considered a traditionally feminine act, and therefore, a symbol of domestic confinement. “Most often, you bake a cake for someone you love,” says Fischli in the press release for her exhibition at 303 gallery. Like a cascade of glitter on a wine

# Sleek, 2020

glass, layering a burnt or misshapen cake in marzipan and icing sugar is an attempt to conceal its flaws (or, for that matter, unsettling histories laden in a castle's walls) and whip it into something fantastic; something that is worthy of display, praise, veneration; something that is worthy of love.

Gina Fischli *hosted by David Zwirner runs through to 15 May online.*

*By Kathryn O'Regan*

## Gina Fischli

Written by Zoe Koke



When I first saw Gina Fischli's cakes, simplistic thoughts sprung to mind—wondering if they could be eaten, *The Great British Bakeoff*. And then a question: what are the implications of making delectable stand-ins for regal structures for a privileged art audience? Also, "Let them eat cake!" Cakes being symbolic of privilege. I had been gifted a chocolate, Mom-made castle cake on my 15th birthday (maybe too old for such a want) with turrets and detailing similar to that of Fischli's creations. A castle cake, like a castle-as-living-quarters, is purposefully demonstrative. Fischli's, specifically through their titles, reference a real history of regal living standards. However, maybe these cartoonish re-enactments ask to dethrone this mode of living with their ever-so-subtle wonkiness. Whatever joke is being played, it's on us. *The Great British Bake Off*, with its repetitive-yet-serious conversations about flavours and over-the-top food themes, has continuously planted me in the pit of escapism this globally tormented political moment requires. Returning to childish desires, interests and instincts (like the need to see a cake's rainbow interior) could be considered protective, if not a mechanism for coping, which I think these sculptures call for, while conjuring up more sophisticated commentary. I have perhaps simplistically classified art these days, as either ominous and answering to the chaos of today by depicting some sort of lived darkness, or cartoonish and representative of soft relics of childhood, active in cushioning the artist and viewer from our current socio-political moment. Good art often leaks between these camps. I believe that Fischli's cakes, while leaky, take the latter route more seriously: a route of tantalizing removal from the present, couched in the allure of possibility that makes the evils of lived reality vs. fantasy more visible. Solid constructions of fantasy seem to bring our own delusional attachments into glaring view. It happens first through looking, in a preliminary form of mindless questioning: are these cakes real? Then, can we eat them? From there flows the existential questioning around any possibility of ascension, or what we consider unattainable. At the end of the day, these sculptures reposition us again in a space of myth. Made of clay and created for an art context, they deny specific celebration, they are stand-ins for decadence, they are not competitors in a baking show, they deny our consumption, they are handmade, delicious and haunting reminders of the semiotics of success.

"YUM!"

Images Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London.  
Photography Theo Christelis.  
Clockwise: *Capital House*, 2019, Fimo clay and plywood, 60 × 60 × 72 cm  
*Comlongon Castle*, 2019, Fimo clay, 40 × 30 × 63 cm  
*The Tower of London*, 2019, Fimo clay, plywood, 38 × 38 × 47 cm



# The Editorial Magazine, 2020



## Casa Dolce Casa

Le torte-scultura di Gina Fischli nascono sul confine tra arte e buon gusto. E sembrano create da madri ipercompetitive.

di LUCY KUMARA MOORE



Aperta fino a metà febbraio 2020, la mostra collettiva *A House Is Not a Home*, al Fri Art di Friburgo, in Svizzera, presenta il lavoro di 14 artisti che esplorano l'identità e l'architettura domestica. Molte delle opere in mostra provocano una sorta di straniamento, e l'atmosfera è allo stesso tempo scherzosa e inquietante. Le sculture di torte che sembrano castelli dell'artista svizzera Gina Fischli non fanno eccezione: sembrano disegnate da uno stravagante architetto, ma alludono anche all'ossessività di madri ipercompetitive.

Fischli costruisce le sue opere partendo da materiali d'archivio o attingendo alla sua immaginazione. «Alcune sono nate pensando prima di tutto all'architettura, e solo in un secondo momento si sono trasformate in una torta. Altre invece rimandano immediatamente alle torte, ma la loro decorazione fa comunque pensare a delle abitazioni». Tra le opere in mostra, anche la gigantesca scultura di una borsetta in fake-fur con ciondoli dorati. Sia le torte sia la borsetta affrontano la questione della performance: quella della festa di compleanno di un bambino, quanto quella di chi segue la moda. Ma a Fischli interessa anche l'aspetto performativo dell'essere artista: «Esiste una connessione naturale tra la figura dell'artista e la pressione che ci porta a competere e fare una mostra. Ma appena acceleriamo per stare al passo con il ritmo dei tempi, accade qualcosa di comico, come in un film di Buster Keaton, dove tutto va leggermente troppo veloce per essere serio».

E, dal momento che queste sculture ci fanno tornare in mente le fiabe, che dire del racconto del Natale? Ben più commercializzato di quanto non fosse, afferma Fischli, «il Natale è il tempo della decorazione, in cui è lecita la sospensione di ogni "buon gusto". Dopo i lutrini e i bicchieri di troppo, guardare un pavimento ricoperto di carta da regalo alla fine di un grande pranzo natalizio di famiglia ha qualcosa di sincero. E fa passare la sbornia».

DALL'ALTO A SINISTRA. In senso orario. "Schloss Steinsberg", 2019. "The Tower of London", 2019. "Glamis Castle", 2019. "Comlongon Castle", 2019.





In München: Aysel Boston, „Silence“, handgezeichnete Kissenhülle, gefüllt für 480 Euro – In Bremen: Gerald Domenig, „Olme Titel“, Fotografie, 55 mal 45 Zentimeter, für 550 Euro

## Champagner, Äpfel, Mini-Auto

### Jetzt heißt es, schnell noch Mitglied zu werden in dem Kunstverein, der unter seinen Jahresgaben ein Werk hat, das man begehrt. Eine kleine Revue verlockender Angebote

Wie wäre es zum Beispiel mit Hamburg? Dort sind Arbeiten von Oscar Marillo zu haben, einem der vier Turner-Preis-Kandidaten dieses Jahres, die du aben, gemeinsam ausgezeichnet zu werden, und Ehre und Preisgeld nun teilen. Die Kunst des Kolonialismus, der in seiner aktuellen Ausstellung in Hamburg-Kunsthallen eine raumfüllende Installation mit lebensgroßen Puppen und Leinwänden zeigt, verzeichnet enorme Preise auf dem Markt. Dort nun gibt es 21 Zeichnungen in Ölkreide und Graphit auf bedrucktem Japanpapier, für je 6500 Euro. Fast alle deutschen Kunstvereine halten zur Vorweihnachtszeit Jahresgaben parat und bieten ihren Mitgliedern damit die Chance, Kunst zu vergünstigten Preisen zu kaufen. Nicht anders hält es der Kölner Kunstverein: Und er setzt noch eins drauf, indem er an eine nette Geste früherer Zeiten anknüpft, als manche Kunstvereine ihren Mitgliedern als Dank für deren „bürgerliches Engagement“ jährlich eine Edition überreichten. Seit ein paar Jahren bitten die Kölner international bekannte Künstler um eine solche „Vereinsgabe“, diesmal war es Candida Höfer. Mit der Handkammer nahm die Fotokünstlerin in einem Randhaus in Südostchina „Jwo Doors“ auf, neben denen Tafeln historische Ereignisse auflisten. Gegen den kleinen Produktionskostenbeitrag von fünfzehn Euro können die 2500 Vereinsmitglieder ein Exemplar bekommen – aber nur sie!



In Essen: Gina Fischl, „Champagne“, Glitzer, Kleber auf Holz, 24 mal 7 Zentimeter, für 1000 Euro – In Köln: Rachel Whiteread, „Edition Ex-Libris #14 – M. Sasek – Mike and the Model-makers (1970)“, mit Zinnsguss für 2600 Euro (Auflage 40)

Bei den Jahresgaben im üblichen Sinn geht es in Köln exakt zu. Nehmen wir die Arbeit von Rachel Whiteread, die übrigens 1993 als erste Frau den Turner-Preis erhielt: eine orangefarbene Box und darin ein kleiner nostalgischer Schatz. Das erste Londoner Atelier der berühmten Abstraktkünstlerin stand gegenüber der Firma Lesney, bis in die siebziger Jahre Produzentin der „Matchbox“-Autos. Wie so viele Kinder hatte auch Whiteread mit solchen gespielt. Das schrieb sie über die im Jahr 2007 aufgetragene Schachtel, die ein Foto des längst abgestorbenen Lesney-Gebäudes enthält, dazu das alte „Matchbox“-Buch „Mike and the Modelmakers“ vom Illustrator Miroslav Sasek und selbstveröffentlichten Abguss – einen kleinen Betonmännchen in Zinn (das eine verfügbare Exemplar aus einer Auflage von 40 kostet 2600 Euro).

## Schneller sein als der eigene Geschmack

### Starke Kondition: Erling Kagge erklärt auf seine Art, wie das Sammeln von zeitgenössischer Kunst funktioniert

Der Norweger Erling Kagge, Jahrgang 1963, ist ein Mann mit bemerkenswerten Eigenschaften. In den vergangenen Jahren marschierte er hintereinander zum Nordpol und zum Südpol und dann dem Mount Everest hinauf. So etwas braucht Kondition und einen starken Willen. Derzeit ist er studierter Jurist erfolgreicher Verleger in Oslo, auch seiner eigenen Bücher, zu zuzet, „Gehen. Weiter gehen. Eine Anleitung“. Er lässt es inzwischen etwas langsamer angehen. Den Eindruck macht Kagge allerdings überhaupt nicht, wenn es ums Kunst sammeln geht.

Einmal beiseitegelassen, was denn „große“ Kunst sei – und übrigens auch „kleines“ Geld –, ist das Buch mit seinen zahlreichen Abbildungen zuvörderst ein Schauerstück für Kaggés eigene Sammlung. Wobei er es bestimmt nicht nötig hat, die Künstlerinnen und Künstler, die seine rund 700 Werke umfassende Kollektion bestücken, für den ohnehin heißen Markt weiter aufzuheizen (weshalb wir hier auch keine Namen nennen; einige sind ohnehin langweilig). Charmant sind Kaggés Kommentare zum Thema. Er ist in Pflaunderszene, gepunktet mit vielen lustigen, auch entlarvenden Zitate von Teilnehmern der Kunstwelt (die nirgends belegt sind) und mit seinen eigenen Erfahrungen in diesem Zirkus. Er erzählt freimütig – und da hat er wirklich einen Punkt –, wie entscheidend es ist, nicht einfach nur dem eigenen Geschmack beim Künstlerwerb zu folgen (da alte Leier: Sammeln, was einem

gefällt). Sondern dem Geschmack voraus zu sein, bis sich durch Anschauung die Erkenntnis eines Werkes einstellt. Er gibt sich zerknirscht, wo es um pekuniären Gründen zu früh kapituliert (ein Sammlerklassiker). Und er rät Bescheidenheit, gleich im ersten Kapitel, wenn er anfänglicher hatte, wie beim amerikanischen Konzeptkünstler Richard Prince. Kagge kaufte früh für (relativ) Kleines Geld ein Bild aus dessen später marktorientierter Krankenschwestern-Serie, für 50 000 Dollar die „Surfing Nurse“. Vier Jahre später verkaufte ich das Bild für fünf Millionen Dollar. Zwar liebe ich es noch immer, aber bei dieser Summe würde ich schwach.“ (In der „Nurse“-Preis-Parade liegt die „Surfing Nurse“ derzeit auf Rang 21.)

Die Kapitel machen ganz wuschig, allerdings wiederholen sie Kaggés Markt- und Sammelmantra in gefühlten ein paar hundert Schließen, bis es auch der letzte Adept an der Schwelle zur Gegenwartskunst verstanden hat – unter Überschriften wie „Wann man einen Künstler kaufen sollte“ steht die Wahrheit in ihrer binsenweiseithaften Nacktheit: „Die Geschichte heißt Folgendes: 1. Die Avantgarde wird fast immer assimiliert; 2. Junge Leute werden älter; 3. Die meisten Künstler, auch die, die einmal als herausragend galten, werden vergessen.“ Ein Menge Geld unterwegs gewesen sein – und verlorengegangen.



## Das Aus für die Berliner Art

Von Georg Imdahl

Das Berliner Art Forum war bei seiner Gründung 1996 für eine Weile eine scharfe internationale Messe – damals, als sich Berlin als Kunstmetropole in Institutionen selbst erfand. Bald vorur das Forum seinen Nimbus, wurde 2011 eingestellt, gefolgt von einer experimentellen „ABC“, die dann ebenfalls die Segel streichen musste. 2017 die Kölnmesse überraschend die Art Berlin aus dem Markt hob. Sonderlichen Weiblich bewies dieser Schnellschuss nicht, wie die Messgesellschaft jetzt selbst in einer dünnen Mitteilung verhalten lässt. Mangelnde Planungssicherheit gibt Köln als Beweggrund an, die Berliner Art einzustellen, „vorerst“, der Vorbehalt darf als rhetorisch betrachtet werden. Zur Erinnerung: Das Engagement in Berlin galt als Trotzreaktion auf die Umtriebe der Messe Schweiz, die sich 2017, direkt vor der Kölner Hausitur, bei der neugegründeten Art Düsseldorf eingeklinkt hatte. Als die MCH Group, ihrerseits ökonomisch unter Druck geraten, ihre Anteile im folgenden Jahr wieder abstieß, hatte sich der Quell des Kölner Zorns in Luft aufgelöst. Die Ursachen für das Berliner Scheitern mögen „multifaktoriell“ sein, wie Matke Cruse, bislang Leiterin der Art Berlin, hervorhebt. Denkbar sind sich alle Beteiligten in der Einschätzung, dass die Stadt Berlin (genauer: das Land Berlin) es sträflich an Unterstützung habe fehlen lassen. Während

alle Messen, die nicht in der globalen A-Liga mitspielen – wie Madrid, Turin, Wien oder Düsseldorf und Köln – auf den Bestand ihrer Kommunen zählen könnten, verweigerte ihr die deuten in Hauptstadt: Jegliche Kontinuität für die Austragung der Art Berlin in den maroden Tempelhofer Hangars habe die zuständige landeslegene Gesellschaft schiede in der Schweiz beilassen. Abermals umzunutzen käme aber für die Messe einer Art Rock 'n Roll gleich, dem selbst in Berlin kaum Erfolg beschieden wäre. Just in dem Moment, als die Köln in der Hauptstadt auf den Plan getreten sei, hätten sich die Mietpreise vervielfacht, gibt Daniel Hug zu bedenken. Der Direktor der Art Cologne sieht das Aus in Berlin „neutral“, Verlust und Schaden für die Stadt möchte er darin nicht eigentlich ausmachen (sicherlich einen Vorteil für Köln). Unterm Strich verspricht sich die Gemengelage im Sinne derer, die ohnehin viel zu viele Messen überall am Werk sehen; das Rheinland hat deren Zahl; die Hauptstadt nun keine mehr. Eine höhere Vermutung spricht aus diesem Resultat nicht. So bleibt also der „Berlin Art Week“ nur die Satellitenmesse „Positions“. Aber vielleicht generiert Berlin ja eine neue Idee für den Herbst und damit ein Pendant zum Gallery Weekend im Frühjahr, das hierzulande den Hotspot für zeitgenössische Kunst darstellt. Dann könnte sich der jüngste Messerest für Publikum als Gewinn erweisen.

## Albert Anker bleibt Spitze

### Ergebnisse: Schweizer und moderne Kunst bei Koller

Als Koller jetzt in Zürich seine Schweizer Kunst auktionierte, war Albert Ankers Ölgemälde „Der Gemeindefischer“ das unumstrittene Spitzenlos: Es handelte sich dabei um die fünfte Fassung des Sujets, die 1899, kurz nach Vollendung des Bilds, in die Sammlung Bohny für 700 Franken verkauft wurde. Anschließend befand es sich in einigen bedeutenden Schweizer Privatsammlungen, um nun mit dem Zuschlag bei 600 000 Franken in die nächste Kollektion in der Schweiz zu wandern. Taxiert war das 62 mal 49 Zentimeter große Bild auf 600 000 bis 900 000 Franken. Gottardo Segaminis romantische, marktrische Landschaft „Maloja Passaggio paradisiaco“ von 1920 wechselte für 120 000 Franken (Taxe 100 000/150 000) den Besitzer. Das Pastell „Die letzte Mühe des Tages“ von Giovanni Segantini blieb jetzt mit einer Erwartung von 150 000 bis 250 000 Franken, wieder unverkauft (F.A.Z. vom 30. November). Auch die beiden schönen Landschaftspanoramen von wiederum deckten Schweizer Maler Peter Robert Berni (Taxen von 50 000 bis 100 000 Franken) fanden keine Abnehmer.

Am selben Tag reüssierten in Kollers Auktion mit Moderner Kunst Paul Cezannes rarte Stilleben „Bol, bol, a lat et bouteille“, das ein chinesisches Bieter erwarb, mit dem Zuschlag von 450 000 Franken (300 000/500 000) und Henri Matisse' sene Kolliezeichnung „Nymphes“ von 1945 mit 190 000 Franken (120 000/180 000). Zwei Ölgemälde von Pierre-Auguste Renoir, die atmosphärische „Paysage à la hauteur et fond de montagnes“ von 1900 und ein Stilleben mit üppigen Rosen, das als Provenienz die Sammlung Beyerle nennt, überstiegen deutlich ihre Taxen (von 100 000 und 160 000 Franken) mit 230 000 und 220 000 Franken. Die 1938 entstandene, vierzig Zentimeter hohe Bronzebüste „La Regodias (Renée Regodias)“ von Germaine Richier vervielfachte ihre Erwartung; Auf 10 000 bis 15 000 Franken geschätzt, fiel der Hammer für die marktrische Skulptur erst bei 68 000 Franken.

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### Art Fairs

## 7 Emerging Artists to Watch at FIAC and Its Edgier Sister Fair, the Paris Internationale

We scoured the city to find the best still-unknown names to look out for.

Naomi Rea & Nate Freeman, October 17, 2019

### Gina Fischli at Soft Opening



Installation view of Gina Fischli at Soft Opening. Photo by Nate Freeman.

**Who:** Fischli is a master of making sculpture that plays with ideas of scale. And her work, which often poses as something sweet, tends to have an undercurrent of menace.

**Based in:** London, UK

**On View:** FIAC

**Why You Should Pay Attention:** Fischli is a graduate of the Urs Fischer studio.

**What to Look Out For:** One of the more eye-catching works at the fair is Fischli's *The Roberta* (2019), a five-meter-wide faux fur purse that fills the entire booth. Hanging from it are gigantic Parisienne tourist-bait trinkets, done up in gold leaf.

**Prices:** Around €3,500 for a small castle sculpture, and €30,000 for the large purse.

**Up Next:** The bag is going to the new [Fri Art](#) kunsthalle in Fribourg, Switzerland, later this year, and next year Fischli will have her first institutional solo show at 80 WSE in New York.

## Numéro

18  
OCTOBRE

# Les incontournables de la FIAC : sac géant et sosie d'Eminem

### ART

Frénésie au Grand Palais : depuis le 17 octobre, l'immense bâtiment parisien accueille la 46e édition de la Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain (FIAC), avant-dernière dans ses locaux avant qu'ils ne ferment au public pour d'importants travaux. Cette année, 199 galeries participent à la foire et représentent vingt-neuf pays dans le monde, un record. Focus sur les stands à ne pas manquer.

Par **Matthieu Jacquet**



Vue du stand de la galerie Soft Opening avec Gina Fischli à la FIAC 2019, Grand Palais, Paris.

### Le sac géant de Gina Fischli chez Soft Opening

Au premier étage du Grand Palais, impossible de manquer l'énorme sac en velours noir qui domine le stand de la galerie londonienne Soft Opening. À ses côtés, des châteaux miniatures en pâte Fimo rappellent étonnamment des gâteaux d'anniversaire, décorés comme des pièces montées. Jouant avec les échelles et l'absurde, la jeune artiste britannique Gina Fischli déploie ici un univers décalé puisant dans l'imagerie de l'enfance. Représentation manifeste et hyperbolique du sac à main de luxe, son immense sculpture questionne avec humour et kitsch le consumérisme et le matérialisme de notre société.

# Elephant, 2018

## ELEPHANT

24 Jul 2018

STUDENT SHOWS

### Ten Artists to Watch: MA and MFA Shows 2018

Across London the graduate shows presented an exciting mix of emerging artists. These are the ten names you need to know, chosen from Goldsmiths, Royal College of Art, Royal Academy Schools and the Slade, featuring everything from wild giant legs and ominously “unattended items”. Words by Martha Horn



Issy Wood and Gina Fischli, Royal Academy Schools, 2018. Photo: Andy Keate

#### 6. Issy Wood and Gina Fischli, Royal Academy of Arts

In the middle of Issy Wood and Gina Fischli’s sprawling collaborative installation is a table set for a dinner party, with objects including wax teapots, ceramic shoes and dentures. This indicates the surreal array of artefacts that constitute the installation. Luxury is played within a human-sized foil swan, alongside an alluring painting of a silver dinner dish by Wood. As is the nature of collaboration, play and experimentation run riot throughout; further paintings are created on velvet, which sit next to low-fi images of macaroons and unsuspecting gallery visitors.

# The Telegraph, 2017

## The Telegraph



Gina Fischli, German Shepherd for Burlington House, 2016

### Stars of the future showcased at the RA

Visitors to the Royal Academy are being confronted in the courtyard by an 11-metre photograph of a German Shepherd hanging above the main entrance, and a slightly dilapidated Chevrolet at the bottom of the steps. They are artworks by students at the Royal Academy School's Premium exhibition, designed to give students a public project halfway through their course.

The works are for sale and attract the attention of gallerists, collectors and curators. The dog by Gina Fischli is £4,700, and inside, Roland Carlines's Robert's Army, made from materials acquired during the time he spent as a community artist, is £2,700 pounds. But the students are refreshingly detached from market pressures.

"Selling the work is not my primary concern," says Carline. "I see this as an opportunity to become a better artist, not to contend with my own self-promotion." The exhibition runs until Sunday.

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