

Gina Fischli,
Press

Flash Art

• 346 SPRING 2024, FEATURES

Gina Fischli: Ugly Feelings by [Margaret Kross](#)



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Gina Fischli, *Dreamy Dog*, 2022. Fabric, plaster, and wire. 42,9 x 21 x 31,9 cm. Photography by Dario Lasagni. Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY, New York.

Gina Fischli's work revels in unattractive feelings that commercial and art institutions consider invalid or just too small to matter: the pathetic, futile, embarrassed, anxious, nostalgic, and sentimental. Underlying Fischli's wry mischievousness is a nuanced callout to the defunct pageantry of the art world, of femininity, of motherhood, and of corporate responsibility that hungrily swallow intimate feelings in deference to optics. At times, Fischli's work likens the prospect of an art emergency to a competitive cooking show with contestants in hysterics over a failed meringue. We're told nothing is urgent in the art world, and, to a degree, this rings all too true. But if you've ever worked in a museum, you've probably cried in the bathroom.

Ultimately, Fischli's work reminds us that embodied emotions run deep for people who make art, view art, and labor in service of art — and that these emotions are something to hold close to the chest. As cultural theorist Sianne Ngai argues in *Ugly Feelings* (2007): "Affective attitudes and dispositions have become [...] the very lubricants of the economic [and social] system which they originally came into being to oppose." In centering feelings that fly under the radar, Fischli might just slip through the fingers of those who tend to liquidate our inner worlds to produce propaganda for themselves. With attention to what is usually considered irreverent and superficial, she flouts institutional and market preferences for work that is representational or legibly biographical in nature; the more traumatic and painful, the better for profits. In her mash-up of "girlish" DIY aesthetics and Neo-pop on Prozac, Fischli's cakes, pets, purses, and interiors enact an intentional, cheeky form of deception to outsmart this dynamic: will cuteness make them leave us alone? But also, how might a sweet face or nice platitude disguise — or reinforce — an imbalance of power? What do we need to feel comfortable with the fundamentally disturbed? A multitiered cake made of plaster, a glittery painting on plywood board — what are we celebrating, and what is underneath? Fischli's subject matter functions a bit like candy to make the medicine go down, a euphemism scholar Adrienne Edwards has adapted for art with a critical bite behind an ebullient surface. Like Mary Poppins or the late Mike Kelley, with whom Fischli's work was included in a two-person show at Galerie Hussenot in 2023, the artist loads up surfaces with a sugary spoonful (her cakes incorporate sugar and cement as materials) — and manages to sneak in a bitter pill to unsuspecting viewers.

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Importantly, this approach is not at all satirical. It constitutes a genuine consideration of how surfaces operate — within cultural constructs and the work itself — through Fischli's explorations of color, material, and processes of making that suggest it is both amateur and painstakingly crafted. In the spirit of Kelley's legacy, Fischli avoids seamlessness and fetish but isn't entirely homespun either. "I'm not interested in quick surface readings," Kelley once said. "This is especially important in relation to my works that have a socialized veneer that seems to be a reiteration of mass cultural tropes." Slightly askew and forlorn, Fischli's cake castles are over the top and about to topple over with a cheerful, smooth patina resembling icing. Steeped in pathos, her artworks taking domesticated animals as subjects are displayed on pedestals but hastily patched in used fabric scraps, earless or headless, torn and slumped, or crouching in a humanlike fugue state. The kind that leads to dissociative tendencies that attenuate pain without offering a total way out: an emotional support animal, retail therapy, binges of *The Great British Bake Off*.

Ngai's thinking is again useful in discussing the cycles that keep us trapped (under constant pressure to toil, to amass, to consume more, and to continue wanting) through the reinforcement vulnerability. With the withholding of rights, Ngai explains, social divisions are reinforced; Fischli cites gendered pay and associations with domesticity; through hyper-trite femme vocab points specifically to the devalued and misunderstood labor of motherhood as, at times, akin to a PTA bake sale. Her allegories of animals speak to the imposition of hierarchy. It's a system designed to naturalize certain biases — based in wealth and whiteness — that devour the health of this world whole. A collision of power and vulnerability is obliquely evident in Fischli's 2022 public work *Ravenous and Predatory*, featuring images of animals on banners along Cork Street in London. By substituting nation-state slogans or advertisements for cute critters and hunting predators, she lightly critiques the use of art as a kind of propaganda for "institution as community" — or civic beautifier, emphasized by the installation's placement in the city's primary gallery district. However, these repeated, stock nature photographs (of a mouse, a squirrel, a wolf) are not intended to be palliative. As the title suggests, these animals are hungry links in the food chain — recalling our unmet needs and their instrumentalization to perpetuate late capitalism's all-consuming myth of survival of the fittest.

In a conversation between us, Fischli references Nestlé as one example of animal imagery being used to smooth the edges of corporate cruelty — in this case, a company known for its human rights breaches branded with a sweet logo of two little birds in a nest under their mother's watchful eye. Adapted from Henry Nestlé's family crest, the cartoonish graphic is the picture of marketing innocence. As Orwell wrote, "Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend." In 1977, Nestlé was accused of marketing powdered baby formula in areas with severe water contamination, a wicked act disguised by its branding. That same year, Douglas Crimp organized his iconic "Pictures" (1977) exhibition at Artists Space. Introducing appropriation as a defined artistic strategy he described as a "processes of quotation, excerption, framing, and staging," Crimp's observations offer a parallel to the ways in which corporate schemes elicit and adopt actual signifiers for tag lines and mission statements. In turn, authenticity and authorship of our emotional landscape are threatened as always "[u]nderneath each picture, there is another picture." In the wake of this cultural history, Fischli and artists of her generation have reconfigured these tools to meet the accelerated speeds (and normalcy) with which images, selfhood, and reality layer, meld, and disperse. This, arguably, situates her practice among artists from Alake Schilling to Bunny Rogers to Maggie Lee who also traffic real feelings through various material and narrative ciphers that are both material and so-called immaterial as our inner lives are siphoned into tag lines and mission statements, but also shared with their peers via tender narratives or beloved characters.

As much as Fischli's work engages a keen sense of the politics of display and image culture, her work rejects the prefab conceptualism at the heart of the Pictures Generation (1974–1984) and slick appearances of that time. In an ongoing series begun in 2020, Fischli riffs on Josef Albers's "Homage to the Square" series (1950–1976), substituting his systematic Bauhaus exploration of color for a palette you might describe as "girly pop" — cotton-candy blues and peaches accented with glitter. She carries this technique into other self-aware, superficial images: giant dirty martinis (*You Have Won*, 2021), champagne flutes (*One last one?*, 2021), and Diet Coke cans. Apart from clear references to art-historical pop and minimalism, and despite the use of literal sparkles, her paintings refuse to glisten sleekly. Instead, Fischli's work is marked by dissonance: scrappiness and gleeful execution, alluring and despondent, excited by banal home décor with a lingering sense that something is wrong here and that the artist is trying to work through it.

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Gina Fischli, *Empire State*, 2023. Plaster paint. 53 x 53 x 95 cm. Photography by Aurélien Mole. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hussenot, Paris.

Expressions of tenderness — and its shadowy sides — abound in “No Rest For The Wicked” (2022) at Chapter NY, New York, where Fischli further probes the disquieting ways humans project onto animals. Pets as status symbols can be traced back to Queen Victoria’s attachment to dogs and their prevalence in reifying cultural values, such as “refined femininity,” with lapdogs as a must-have accessory of fashionable bourgeoisie women. The exhibition consists of collages and endearing sculptures of animals (puppies, kittens, rodents). Visibly injured with lumpy white plaster bandaging, some situated on hand-sewn pillows, Fischli’s pet sculptures long for reprieve and care. “I guess there is this weird cross between love and cruelty that is always visible in the ownership of pets,” Fischli said, “where maybe you make them pillows, and you style their fur, but there is this really dark oppression and cage-like life they’re living.” She continues:

There’s something similar, you wonder when you make art, too: you put all this love into the work, but sometimes art can be malignant. Especially in the last few years, you start to wonder what art can do and if it can do something. When is it helpful and when is it maybe hurtful?

Many of the works, such as *Dreamy Dog* (2022), fall somewhere in between; they resemble love-worn stuffed animals and taxidermized corpses, sewn up in a frenzy of messy stitches, torn denim, and other used fabrics, exuding a sense of futility while expected to compete and earn blue ribbons.

All of this levies a shrewd critique of consumer culture, the art market, the psychology of advertising, and how personal mythologies are inscribed (the traumatized childhood projected onto Kelley’s work, for example). It also burrows within such big topics and feelings, encountering the conflicting, paradoxical, and seemingly minor emotions associated with domestic and frivolous objects of desire. Fischli’s objects flicker in hybrid emotions, allowing contradictions in a way that “art as propaganda” does not. An element of delight might even characterize Fischli’s work, confectionary and soft, reminding us that art (and life) shouldn’t necessarily discount nostalgia and glimmers of comfort, especially amid inconceivable loss.

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As we've been confined to images of ourselves in many respects, we are ripe for the taking, for lifting and re-use jpegs free-floating. In "No Rest For The Wicked," Fischli uses photos taken by friends or design magazines — like those she flipped through with her mother growing up, imagining impeccable fantasy rooms — in oversized collages of dreary hotel entryways and other nondescript interiors: environments of luxe aspiration that read here as a hefty price tag for an empty life. In contrast to Karen Kilimnik's precise cat collages set in royal palaces, Fischli's haphazardly layered compositions of animal cutouts, decorative mid-century sconces, and beige wallpaper (*Concord (Five Star Series)*, 2022) mimic the absurd, exuberant fragmentation of how media is consumed (and how we, too, are constantly consumed by it) — all while retaining the earnestness of a sentimental tween bedroom-style vision board that predated algorithms sleuthing you on Pinterest.

In an adjacent series of photographs of hotel interiors printed on large panels of wallpaper that read like bleak present-day frescoes in their dwarfing expansiveness, the viewer encounters scenes like *Untitled (2023)*: near-empty giant glasses of red wine in a deserted white-tablecloth dining room with ubiquitous centerpieces of red candles and tiny roses. Maybe there isn't an escape. You might say Fischli's work, at times, offers the mood of a handmade sympathy card reproduced in mass (see *Amore*, 2023, in which prints of a personally rendered dripping heart are tucked neatly into a store display rack), asking the important question that no one wants to ask: if it already feels like we're lifeless, our things, images, and words embalmed or broken, always anticipating their imaging and circulation only to be dead upon arrival again, what can art offer?

Maybe all an artist can do is to keep doing, allowing uncertainty to trickle in as part of the work itself. And I'd dare to claim that isn't pathetic at all. As much as there's a bleakness, her work equally has a measure of hope baked in — a way to whisper sincere affection in public, perhaps as the only possibility for keeping it safe. In its misshapen but caringly rendered forms, Fischli starts to imagine a provisional new kind of aspiration, one for repairing and protecting oneself and relationships and emotional states — especially the ugly ones.

ArtReview

Gina Fischli's Makeshift Pet Show

Tom Morton Reviews 23 April 2024 ArtReview



Gina Fischli, *Blanche*, 2024, wire, plaster, textiles, plastic, 24x50x40 cm. Photo: Tom Carter. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London

***Love, Love, Love* at Soft Opening, London stages the artist's animal sculptures as proxies for the figure of the emerging artist**

At first glance, Gina Fischli's animal sculptures feel like poor specimens. Not quite 1:1 scale, and crudely modelled from wire mesh and sloppy, off-white plaster, some of them sport pelts made from ragged fabric offcuts, in what might be an only partially successful attempt to disguise how far short their bodies fall from the creaturely ideal. Nevertheless, it's clear from the way they're displayed that somebody thinks they have potential. Eleven of the Swiss artist's critters parade down a low, U-shaped plinth-cum-catwalk, contestants in some kind of pet show, perhaps daydreaming of the pat on the head they'll receive should they be awarded a rosette.

The organisers of this competition appear to embrace diversity, at least in the matters of species and breed. *Thomas* (all works 2024) is a tartan-sheathed bunny rabbit, *Elizabeth* a leggy poodle and *Albert* a curly-tailed pug swaddled in pink, Issey Miyake-like pleats. These pedigree pets are joined on the catwalk by several animals that are commonly considered vermin. *Beatrice* the fox daintily crosses her paws, *Arthur* the mole stares blindly out of his gleaming, sequined eyes, while *John* the piebald rat sniffs at the ground, his long tail raised like a middle finger. Are these official participants in the show, or interlopers who've clambered up from their dark dens, tunnels and sewers, to feast on whatever morsels they can find here, be it a crumb of attention, or a half-eaten doggie treat?

ArtReview, 2024



Gina Fischli, *Elizabeth*, 2024, wire, plaster, textiles, 95x89x73 cm. Photo: Tom Carter. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London

The exhibition's title, *Love Love Love*, recalls a dashed-off comment beneath an Instagram post. As that platform's users will know, this affirmation might be applied equally to an image of a cat lover's new kitten, or to a painter's latest canvas ('#WIP'). An accompanying text draws a parallel between pet shows and the functioning of the contemporary art world, and the implication is that we should read Fischli's knowingly makeshift sculptures as proxies for the figure of the emerging artist – a fundamentally half-formed creature who's been given just enough grooming to pass muster as a contender. Looking at the catwalk, a space of both performance and of judgement, we wonder if it will be a pedigree pet who comes out on top, or one of the so-called vermin. In today's artworld, class advantage is an increasingly vital precondition of success. Then again, the industry's gatekeepers 'love love love' is an exception that proves the rule.

Needy, obedient, self-regarding and full of very human pathos, Fischli's competing critters hit their satirical target. What's missing, here, is a reckoning with those who pick the winners, and those who profit from the whole dog and pony show. Elsewhere in the gallery, a tall freestanding plinth supports *Florence*, the most abstract work in the exhibition – a globule of plaster, grey dishcloth fabric and Day-Glo orange feathers, which vaguely resembles a garden bird eviscerating a slug. We might cast her as the victor of a previous contest, enjoying her spoils on the podium while looking down her beak at the other, marginally less scruffy beasts flaunting themselves on the catwalk. Primped for public presentation, and hungry for approval, to her they must feel like gauche pretenders to her crown.

Love Love Love at Soft Opening, London, [16 February – 6 April](#)

Art & Exhibitions

Does the Art World Treat Artists Like Pets?

Gina Fischli's parade of urban animals comment on the market's "overbreeding, styling and accessorizing."

by **Verity Babbs** • February 22, 2024

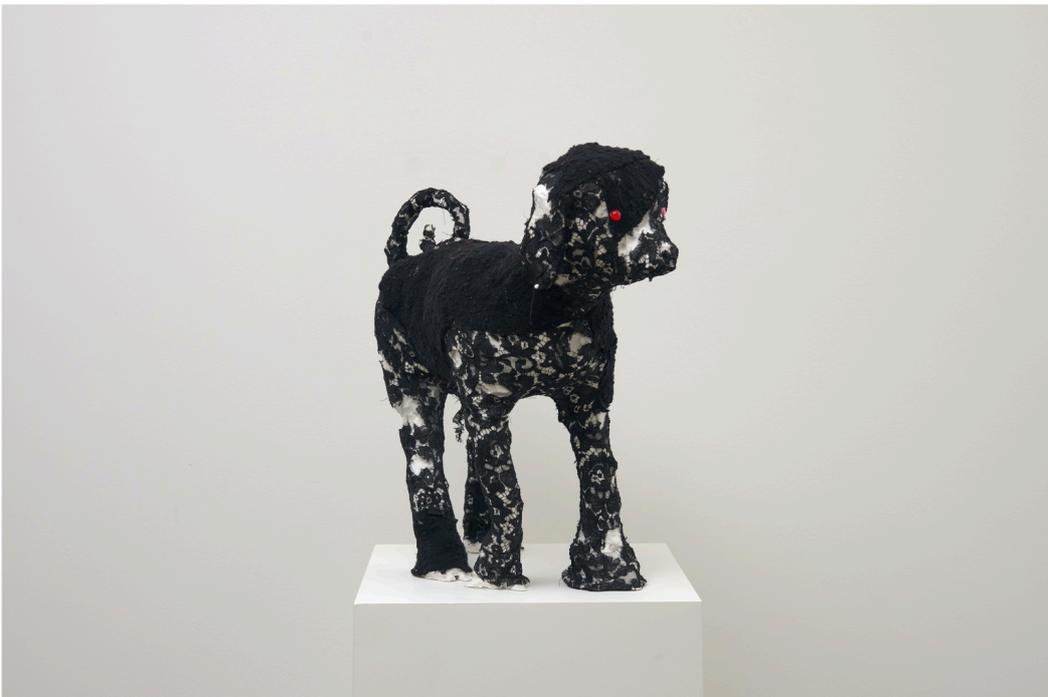


Gina Fischli, "Love Love Love" (2024). Photo by Tom Carter, courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening.

Zurich-based artist Gina Fischli had her first solo show, "Deep Water," with Soft Opening in 2021, having signed on with the London gallery in 2019, only a year after earning her MFA at London's Royal Academy of Arts. Now she's back with her latest exhibition, "Love Love Love."

Artnet 2024

A parade of urban animals—poodles, pugs, rabbits, rats, and foxes—prowls around a catwalk. Each seems to occupy an identity between puppet and individualized living being, and each has its own first name (which serves as each artwork’s title) including John, David, Ruth, and Agatha. By elevating the sculptures on a platform, Fischli creates an intense encounter between viewer and artwork. The largest of the sculptures, which are made from wire, plaster, and fabric, stands at over a meter tall. Some wear almost-human outfits, suggesting the way that we anthropomorphize animals when we make them our pets.



Sina Fischli, *Arabella* (2024). Photo by Tom Carter, courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening.

The exhibition examines humans’ relationship with animals, both domestic and wild, with the gallery describing in the press release how “the treatment humans extend towards domestic pets via overbreeding, styling and accessorizing evidences a conflation of love, care and control.” Soft Opening also says that “the parallels between these common attitudes towards animals and the purpose we give to the arts are uncanny,” referencing the pageantry of the commercial art world, and saying that this exhibition is the “story of pets, the story of art—and of us.”

Artnet 2024

Fischli (b. 1989) lives and works in Zurich. She has previously had solo and two-person exhibitions in Paris, New York, Riga, Amsterdam, Zurich, and Berlin.



Sina Fischli, "Love Love Love" (2024). Photo by Tom Carter, courtesy of the artist and Soft Opening.

Founded by Antonia Marsh, Soft Opening represents 12 UK-based and international emerging artists. The gallery's first opened in 2018 in Piccadilly Circus underground station and they then moved a year later to Minerva Street in East London. The gallery published the monograph *Good Service* in 2022.

Work in Progress: “I know a painting is done when it feels like it is eating itself”

We go behind the scenes with Gina Fischli and Willa Nasatir as they prepare to show new work at Frieze New York

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BY LIVIA RUSSELL, GINA FISCHLI AND WILLA NASATIR IN FRIEZE NEW YORK, INTERVIEWS | 22 APR 24



*For “Work in Progress,” we talk to artists bringing their latest works to Frieze fairs. Ahead of debuting new sculptures with Chapter NY at **Frieze New York**, Gina Fischli reflects on her joyful return to sculpture and the autonomous spirit of a work, while Willa Nasatir speaks about the hallucinatory edges of vision, memory and knowledge that frame her most recent paintings.*

Livia Russell How is your practice currently evolving?

Gina Fischli During COVID-19, I didn’t have a studio, so I only worked on flat surfaces, but now I’m really enjoying being able to make sculpture again. The work I will be presenting at Frieze New York will all be sculpture.

Willa Nasatir As of right now, I’m absorbed in painting. The relationship is in a very romantic place. I think my works are becoming more complex and harmonious, with the representational elements sinking deeper into the ground. I know a painting is done when it feels like it is eating itself.

Frieze, 2024



Willa Nasatir's studio. Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY

LR Are there any new sources of inspiration that are guiding your work?

WN I've been thinking about vision span – the concept that there are delineated edges of your periphery where the eye can and cannot register things – and where that idea meets memory, hallucination and other kinds of sensory recall. I like thinking about the instances that we know things are there without being able to see them.

GF Often the works inspire themselves. You start with something, or maybe an "idea," but the work is steering in a totally different direction.

Frieze, 2024



Gina Fischli's studio. Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY

LR Which part of your process are you devoting your time to in the studio right now?

WN In the beginning of the year I was making lots of drawings and now those drawings have become skeletal structures for the paintings I am in the midst of. Right now it feels like I am dressing and undressing those forms.

GF I don't think I have a clear process, per se, I just work. When I'm in the studio working, sometimes I take a walk.

Frieze, 2024

LR How is presenting new work at a fair different from a gallery show?

GF It's a very busy environment so people don't have a lot of time for individual works. It's more about impressions.

WN You're in an ocean of other work – personally, I love being in the ocean.



Gina Fischli's studio. Courtesy of the artist and Chapter NY

émergent magazine, 2023



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.

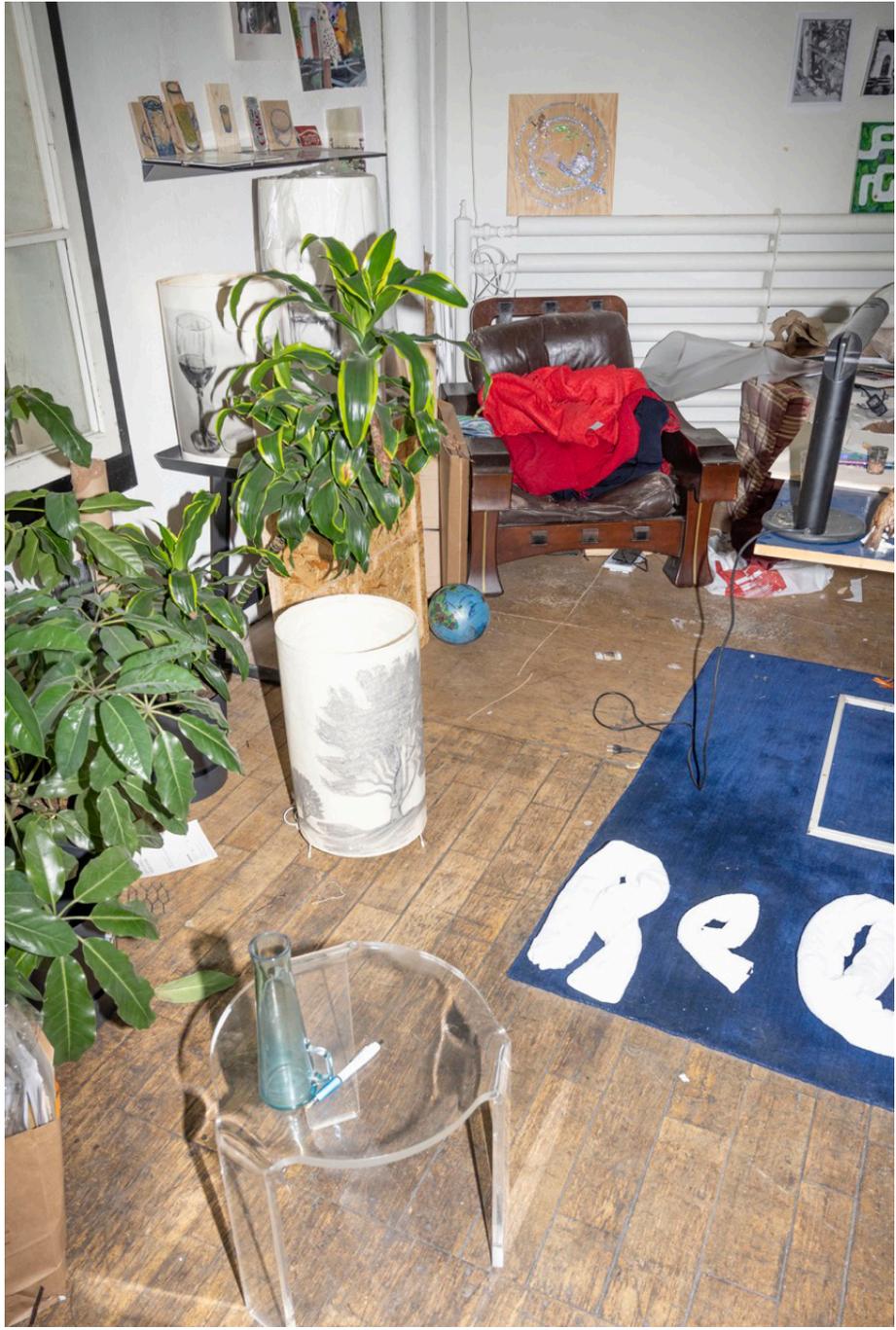
Do you have any specific ideas of a city or a place where you would like to see your work and make an intervention?

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 lookup.



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 250th 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*, Mammoth Gallery, London (2020); Geneva Biennale: Sculpture Park, Parc des Eaux-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.”¹ 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.”² 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.”³

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.⁴ 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.”⁵

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.”⁶

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

The Editorial Magazine, 2020

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

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Casa Dolce Casa

NO ORDINARY FAMILY

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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 Bostan, „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 darüben, 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 Südostschien „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 Fischli, „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 oblichen 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 aufgelegte 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 Betonmischer in Zinn (das eine verfügbare Exemplar aus einer Auflage von 40 kostet 2600 Euro).

700 Euro). Die Belgierin Nel Aerts überließ dem Verein eine Reihe von Sitzstühlen, auf denen das Publikum rasten konnte, um ihre Malereien zu betrachten. Jeder trägt ein anderes lustiges Gesicht auf dem Polster und am Bein angeklebt ein Künstlerbild (Unikat, je 1100 Euro; Zeichnungen und Collagen je 1400 Euro). Der Neue Essener Kunstverein bietet ein Glas Champagner an, mit Glitzer lässt Gina Fischli es verlockend auf Holz perlen (Unikat, 1000 Euro für Nichtmitglieder 1100 Euro). David Ostrowski, ihn kennt man als Künstler der Galerie Sprüthagens, steuert leuchtende Lackarbeiten auf Papier in seiner minimalistischen Façon (Preise auf Anfrage) bei. Wer es lieber schwarzweiß mag, kann in Bremens Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst (GAK) die klassisch analoge Fotografie von Gerald Domenig in Betracht ziehen, wo zwei Apfel mit der Aufschrift „Ja“ balancieren (Auflage 5, je 590 Euro). Denen, die Farbstichzeichnungen schätzen, seien in Bremen Resultate der phantastischen Bildnisse des in Lissabon lebenden Franzosen Mattia Denise empfohlen (je 600 Euro; schon mehrere sind verkauft).

Der Kunstverein München stellt seine Mitglieder wieder vor die Qual der Wahl: Von 97 Künstlern kommen bis zu vier Werke, was gute Chancen schafft, etwas vom Käuzchen zu ergattern. Mit seinen großen Jahresgaben schenken wir dem Verein die zeitgenössische Kunstszene der Stadt spiegeln. Wie die meisten Teilnehmer lebt auch die in Hamburg lebende Michaela Melán in München. Ihr „Weicher Kunstverein“ aus mit Polsterwatte gefüllten Leinen stellt das Münchner Gebäude dar – in dem, schöner Kontrast, Maurin Dietrich als neue Leiterin gerade begonnen hat, ein straffes Programm zu servieren (Auflage 10/5, je 500 Euro). Genährt hat auch Aysel Bostan, Künstlerin, Modedesignerin und Kostümbildnerin: Sie bringt ein handgemachtes goldenes Kissen mit der Aufschrift „Silence“ ein (Auflage 27, 480 Euro).

Anders als München konzentriert sich der Frankfurter Kunstverein, neben einer Reihe von Editionen, vornehmlich auf drei Unikate in Gestalt von Reliefs in Flammenform aus glasierter Keramik von Hanna-Maria Hammar, die im Frühsommer an der Gruppenausstellung „And This is Us – Junge Kunst aus Frankfurt“ teilnahm (je 900 Euro). Möglicherweise, auch ohne die Weltweitens sehr erswingliche – Mitgliedschaft an Jahrgängen zu kommen, halten fast alle Vereine offen. Nur wird es dann teuer, oder man muss mit dem Vorbehalten, was nach einer gewissen Frist unverkauft ist. BRITA SACHS

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 Kaggens 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 Kaggens 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 kapitulieren (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 Kaggens 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 recht 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.

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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 der Taufe 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 Trotterreaktion 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 einzig sind sich alle Beteiligten in der Einschätzung, dass „die Stadt Berlin“ (genauer: das Land Berlin) es sträflich an Unterstützung habe fehlen lassen. Während

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 handelt 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 Stille-

ben mit üppigen Rosen, das als Provenanz 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.

ANZEIGE REISS & SOHN Spezialauktionshaus seit 1971 für wertvolle Bücher, Antiken, Landkarten. Martin Luthers 95 Thesen Basel 1517 - Erste Buchausgabe. Erlös: 1.290.000 €.

Bei den Zeitgenossen am folgenden Tag blieb das Spitzenlos hängen; Jean Dubuffets lustig anzusehendes Acrylbild „Site avec 5 personages“ von 1981 war mit einer Taxe von 160 000 bis 240 000 Franken versehen. Ein unbettelter Holzball von Ai Weiwei lieferte seine obere Taxe von 100 000 Franken. Insgesamt setzte Koller in seinen drei Herbstauktionen mit Schweizer Kunst, Moderne und Zeitgenossen 8,4 Millionen Franken um; erwartet waren 6,4 Millionen. FELICITAS RHEAN

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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