

Danica Lundy: bleach cologne

May 16th - June 27th, 2020

The logo for GNYP (Galerie Neue Kunst Berlin) is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font within a light gray rectangular background.

The motion is ceaseless. There is a lot going on, everywhere: tiny details, menacing gestures, surrealistic choreographies. It seems like the whole world is compressed in these canvases, squeezed in so little space. The perspective keeps shifting and the eye can't find a resting spot. What's going on here? Hastily, we look for something, not yet knowing what. We engage with the possible meaning of these paintings – to no avail, at first. Maybe we need to look closer, or from a distance. There must be an answer; the clue might be lying somewhere – the ultimate interpretation for what looks like a dream, a hallucination, perhaps just an ordinary event –, it's just a matter of finding it. But we stall. We feel claustrophobic, overwhelmed. And then the motion starts all over again.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Danica Lundy's paintings try to embrace a whole culture. From her influences – ranging from Michelangelo's sculptures to Kara Walker, TV series, and beyond – to her palette – with its radiance of darker tones –, that is, from her starting points and intentions to the form of her works, Lundy's art is about our shared world in all its complexity. It seems that, if not everything, there's a lot there: sexual tension, contemporary introspection, pop culture, the old masters' tradition, and, obviously, art itself. Immersed in this uncontrolled whirlwind of references, Lundy faces them relentlessly, paying homage to all she encounters through her cunning technical expertise. Nothing is left behind; hence our wandering gaze.

Nonetheless, even when the motion of colours, objects, and moods in Lundy's paintings reminds us that our culture is made of constant tension; even when this tension unfolds in a suffocating fashion and it seems that there is no way out, then, at this very moment, the artist gives us a helping hand: right there, reflected in the shade of the desk lamp we see her, painting, in complete control of the situation, apart in her own world. A world that is also our world, in all its chaos, confusion and beauty. We are in this together.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of artistic practice. On one hand, there are works whose ultimate purpose is to remind us of the gruesome reality around us, works whose premise is to wake us up through shock. Such was the poetics of, among others, the Dada movement. On the other hand, there are artistic practices that tries to make us forget about the outside world by pushing us for a hedonistic plunge into the endless world of colours and sublime attractiveness. Think of Yves Klein, for instance.

There is, however, a third way, a mixture of these two tendencies. It operates by showing us that however strange, there is interesting – and even beautiful – things in our everyday struggles. It brings awakening through stunning detail and gorgeous formulations, not by violent thuds (although that may arouse at some point). That's where Danica Lundy's work is situated. The hint provided by her paintings, if there is ever one, is that beauty and madness and the menacing rhythm of our contemporary world are intertwined. By accepting the chaos, we accept our condition, as depicted in these canvases.

by João G. Rizek