

Public program

Book launch with reading by Dean Kissick
22 June 19, 3 pm
Venue: KW's courtyard
In English

In case of bad weather the event will take place in the studio at KW's front house.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art
KUNST-WERKE BERLIN e.V.
Auguststraße 69
10117 Berlin
Tel. +49 30 243459-0
info@kw-berlin.de
kw-berlin.de

Opening hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm
Thursday 11 am–9 pm
Closed on Tuesday

Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €
Combined Day Ticket KW / me Collectors Room Berlin
10 € / reduced 8 €
berlinpass holder 4 €
Free admission to visitors under 18, holders of the KW Lover* card, and on Thursday evenings from 6 to 9 pm

Guided tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibition during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-132.

Colophon

Curator: Maurin Dietrich
Public Program and Outreach: Sabrina Herrmann
Head of Production: Claire Spilker
Technical Management: Wilken Schade
Head of Installation and Media Technology:
Markus Krieger
Installation Team: KW Installation Team
Registrar: Monika Grzymislawska
Press and Communication: Karoline Köber,
Katja Zeidler
Interns: Lutz Breiting, Daniela Nadwornicek,
Sarah Wessel
Text and Editing: Maurin Dietrich, Krist Gruijthuisen,
Friederike Klapp, Katja Zeidler

© KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin.
All rights reserved.

Senate Department
for Culture and Europe | **berlin** Berlin

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is institutionally supported by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin.

KW

Heike-Karin Föll *speed* 22 June – 1 September 19

Heike-Karin Föll
speed
22 June – 1 September 19
Opening: 21 June 19, 7 pm

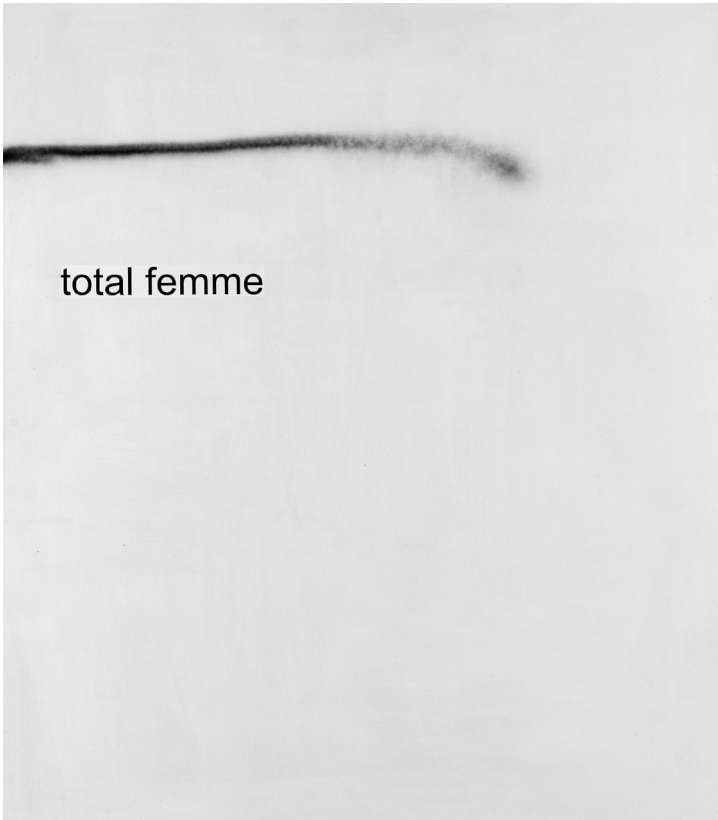
Berlin-based artist Heike-Karin Föll (born 1967, DE) works on the materiality and mechanisms of drawing, painting, and writing. The exhibition *speed* at KW Institute for Contemporary Art is her first institutional solo show and presents an overview of various groups of work. Her work interacts with everyday media reality and styles, analogue and digital texts and displays. Föll works “post-post”—emerging from no longer solid, former postmodernist strategies such as appropriation, quotation, and repetition. Drawing, and therefore also its smallest unit, the line, are prominent in this context. From here, different artistic formats unfold: a page of a book, a sheet of paper, a canvas, all becoming seemingly translucent towards digital screens. The individual works are embedded in a structure of correlation that blurs their respective boundaries.

KW’s existing architecture forms the artist’s response, with internal walls and light filters on the front windows especially designed for the show. In the space, seemingly neutral modes of presentation such as tables of contents and lists become part of Föll’s praxis. The categories are terms like *painting*, *money*, and *seconds of liberation*. Subcategories are formed by constellations such as *social ivy* or *warm bodies*, which hold the entire oeuvre together in a network of references. Despite its discontinuity, this structure is linked in all directions, subject to acceleration and deceleration, and provides information through linguistic images. Föll’s books are a material that excludes a restricted meaning: everything is edited, cut, time is organized elastically. Concepts are introduced through additive procedures or extended in meaning; entries are paraphrased, or undergo further editing processes years later.

The multiple-part series *my brain* (2014–) is installed in the first part of the room. Here, the conceptual gesture of selection and constellation is central to its drawings and notations, as is their emphasis and objectivization in the form of a grid. The drawings are related to research matters, and thus to something exterior that can be named and accessed. Their delicate line, taken from the realm of art and introducing an early historical reference to the visual media of the magazine and the book page, also indicates minor genres such as fashion drawing. The style of 1980s fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez is a reference point for these works, along with visual materials taken from the first internet live stream of a fashion show, Steve McQueen’s collection *Plato’s Atlantis*, with its scaly “armadillo” shoes, and iPad gestures of scrolls and swipes. In this context the line is deprived of its assumed autonomy; it dissolves into something that is no longer only a line, but also a sign, an *in between*.

Apart from digital indices, Föll has an extensive compendium of typescripts in the form of hand-bound books. These numbered volumes are arranged thematically, not chronologically, and Föll’s artistic and academic areas of work and occupation intersect within them. The material ranges from texts by the artist to art-historical references, fashion photography, and gestural markings that criss-cross or overlay complete pages. On the diagonal wall, a selection of thirteen of the artist’s books with titles such as *n° 55 Übergangsobjekt*, *n° 68 fame*, or *n° 70 to hide and to expose at the same time* are installed as part of a visual register in several plexiglass cases with only their covers visible. The content and display of the books—in themselves an interconnected system of references—depict the provision and simultaneous withdrawal of information.

Although in *it paintings* (2014–), an ongoing series of large-format paintings on canvas, the works do not emerge directly from the books, they have their counterpart in them. Their overlapping layers of ink, gouache, and oil paint are completely absorbed by the only partially grounded canvas, and the aesthetic reflection of the painting process questions the categories and constraints in which this practice is embedded. In these 140 x 160 cm paintings—exactly the size the artist can still handle herself—Föll questions how expressive dimensions of the body can be coded, formed, and transferred in painterly gestures and poses.



Heike-Karin Föll, *total femme*, 2016
Courtesy the artist



Heike-Karin Föll, *Anita Pallenberg*, 2014, Courtesy the artist

The 11-part drawing series *spatial concepts* (2017), shown here in excerpts and enlargements, features reproductions of Lucio Fontana’s iconic paintings entitled *Concetti Spaziali* with the addition of text passages, status updates, and short statements in simple fonts. The use of monochrome copies of Fontana’s paintings is a reference to a male painterly concern with space, which for centuries was simulated through perspective and chiaroscuro. Cutting the image carrier literally gives the canvas a new dimension, turning the paint itself into a spatial element. In transferring these artifacts back into two-dimensionality through their simple reproduction onto an A4 page, Föll reassesses and comments on the monumentalizing ambitions of the medium of painting. If being a painter means expressing a certain self-conception, in *linguistic operations/spatial concepts* this is primarily directed at the dimension of emancipatory confrontations.

The work *Anita Pallenberg* (2014) is installed on the narrow plexiglass wall at the rear of the exhibition. Taken from the nine-part series *Kafka’s gymnastics*,

its lettering is made up of urban plants. The materiality of the flowers and grasses seems to resist the rigid sequence of an alphabet. Names play the leading roles in these works: elective affinities and the presence of specific muses, such as Anita Pallenberg, who was initially famous as a groupie, indicate a possible counter-canon—are there other models of relations not based on inclusion or exclusion, or that overwrite binary and heteronormative systems?

Between the digital screen, canvas, and (book) page, the exhibition continually recontextualizes examinations and confrontations of styles, possible spaces for action, and the dialectic of readability and refusal.

Parallel to the exhibition *speed*, Montez Press is publishing an artist’s book of the same name that includes a specially composed selection of pages from the artist’s books central to the exhibition at KW.

Heike-Karin Föll: Speed

In her first institutional solo show, the German artist plays on the fast fickleness of commodification, trend and fashion



KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin

22 June – 1 September 2019

by KRISTIAN VISTRUP MADSEN

Darboven hated Richter's paintings. So, at least, claims the title of a work by Heike-Karin Föll, which introduces her exhibition [Speed, at Berlin's KW Institute for Contemporary Art](#). Föll's work, also a painting, about 1 metre x 1 metre, is from 2016, and shows a thick black line. It begins at the left edge of the picture about three-quarters of the way up, and loses force as it approaches the middle.

Whether Hanne Darboven hated Gerhard Richter's paintings, I don't know, but Föll asks the viewer to speculate. If so, it might have had something to do with how Richter portrayed history; solemnly, piercingly. Considering, for instance, his German landscapes, the Baader-Meinhof suite and the 48 portraits completed for the German Pavilion at the 1972 Venice Biennale, he did not necessarily lay claim to truth, but something about the concision of these works, their dedication, insinuates an aspiration, at least, towards credibility. Darboven, too, was dedicated, but manically so. Take Bismarckzeit and Ein Jahrhundert ABC, in which she made absurdly comprehensive attempts at capturing the reign of Germany's first chancellor in the former, and a whole century in the latter, by means of countless drawings, hundreds of frames. For Darboven, history is flickering and insane, grand and impossible.



Heike-Karin Föll, Artist books (unique). Installation view (detail), Speed. KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2019. Photo: Frank Sperling.

Föll's painting tells us very little about Richter or Darboven, other than what her single line suggests of her own investment in opacity. As such, on the matter of history, I would say she is more with the latter than the former. Still, where Darboven relies on quantity, Föll presents rather a choreography of concealment; an allure sourced from scarcity, editing and exclusion.

Accompanying that work almost like a diptych, *Made of Violence and Light* (2014), in spite of its epic title, is similarly vague: as if tracing the flight of a bumblebee, a doodle loops across the canvas. In these two works, the surface of the painting is an interface; gestures over a touch screen, but with the content of the screen excised; alive and interactive, but ultimately flat.

Quinn Latimer, *The Delphinium Version*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, in: ARTFORUM, Januar 2013, S.222-23.

BASEL

Heike-Karin Föll

ELAINE

“Now, / About what to put in your poem-painting,” John Ashbery suggested, in a neighborly fashion, in an old poem: “Flowers are always nice, particularly delphinium.” And so he gave Elaine Scarry part of the subtitle, if not the seed, for her ravishing essay “Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis (Particularly Delphinium).” I found a photocopy of the essay underneath a window in an exhibition of Heike-Karin Föll’s subtle, disarming works at the (aptly named) Elaine project space in Basel. Across the room from numerous spotlit white tables carefully laden with the Berlin-based artist’s open handmade books was yet another incarnation of Ashbery’s line: an enormous bouquet of bluish purple delphinium, spilling out of a turquoise plastic bucket. At the pedestal’s foot casually sat a six-pack of Evian water bottles wrapped in bright pink plastic with the word HOME emblazoned across it, a kind of poetic fragment encapsulating the strange familiarity of this beautifully hued mise-en-scène.

Accented by wavelike shadows spraying against the white wall behind, this piece—*Delphinium-Bouquet and Elaine Scarry* (all works cited, 2012)—read (and felt) like a poetic image come miraculously off the page, or out of the mind. As such, it suggested Föll’s more customary medium—those aforementioned volumes—in which she uses the white page as an affective approximation or architectonic equivalent of the literary imagination. *Delphinium-Bouquet*’s expert employment and convergence of color and writing—the brilliant stains and impressions they both leave—thus pointed to Föll’s larger literary-minded practice, most often embodied in affecting, collage-filled books or singular drawings in

Heike-Karin Föll, *Delphinium-Bouquet and Elaine Scarry*, 2012, foam, plastic sheet, pack of Evian bottles, plastic bucket, water, wire, fresh delphiniums, 70 7⁄8 x 31 ½ x 31 ½".



which both color and its lexical equivalents pop up with alacrity. Take the volume *n° 55 the writers / the imaginary as the right to lie*, here opened to a spread that reads (verso): “I went / to / see / L / and took a dozen / large shaggy flowers / like / purple / and white cat’s fur.” The recto page features a black-and-white photo of Föll’s face emerging from shadow, a yellow sticky note scrawled with the word KISS underneath it. On another table nearby, *n° 68 fame* was open to a page reading FAME, with bloodlike red spots splattered coolly around it, while others offered scribbled litanies of female writers’ names or more obscure accounts. A complicated feminism emerged: There was Föll’s oblique embrace of feminine signifiers (flowers, pastels, handcraft, female forebears) in works that nonetheless resisted the personal-confessional “female” narrative the spectator-reader might (embarrassingly) expect. It amounted to a kind of “bathing in the no,” as Clarice Lispector once put it.

The effect of the show was at once ambient and specific: the larger and diffuse idea of books, writing, and imagemaking versus the actual material specificity of the volumes, words, or drawings. Dabs of color on certain pages articulate the “frames” (that is, the page margins) that hold them. Thus emerged the idea of the book itself, as a series of frames that one might flip through, as one normally moves through the pages of a book. But Föll refutes this idea by taping down the pages. The book becomes unusable in its ordinary sense—there is no reading forward. Equally subversive, but in the opposite manner, was the book that Föll scanned, printed out in a vast grid, and hung on a gallery wall. The entire volume’s pages became visible, electrifyingly, at once. “The flower has the feature of forever shattering into scores of specified surfaces,” Scarry writes in her essay. So it goes with Föll’s works: one book (and the imagination behind it) “shattering into scores of specified surfaces,” and then another.

—Quinn Latimer

Martha Schwendener, *metal*, in: The New York Times, 2016.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/03/arts/design/art-galleries-nyc.html>

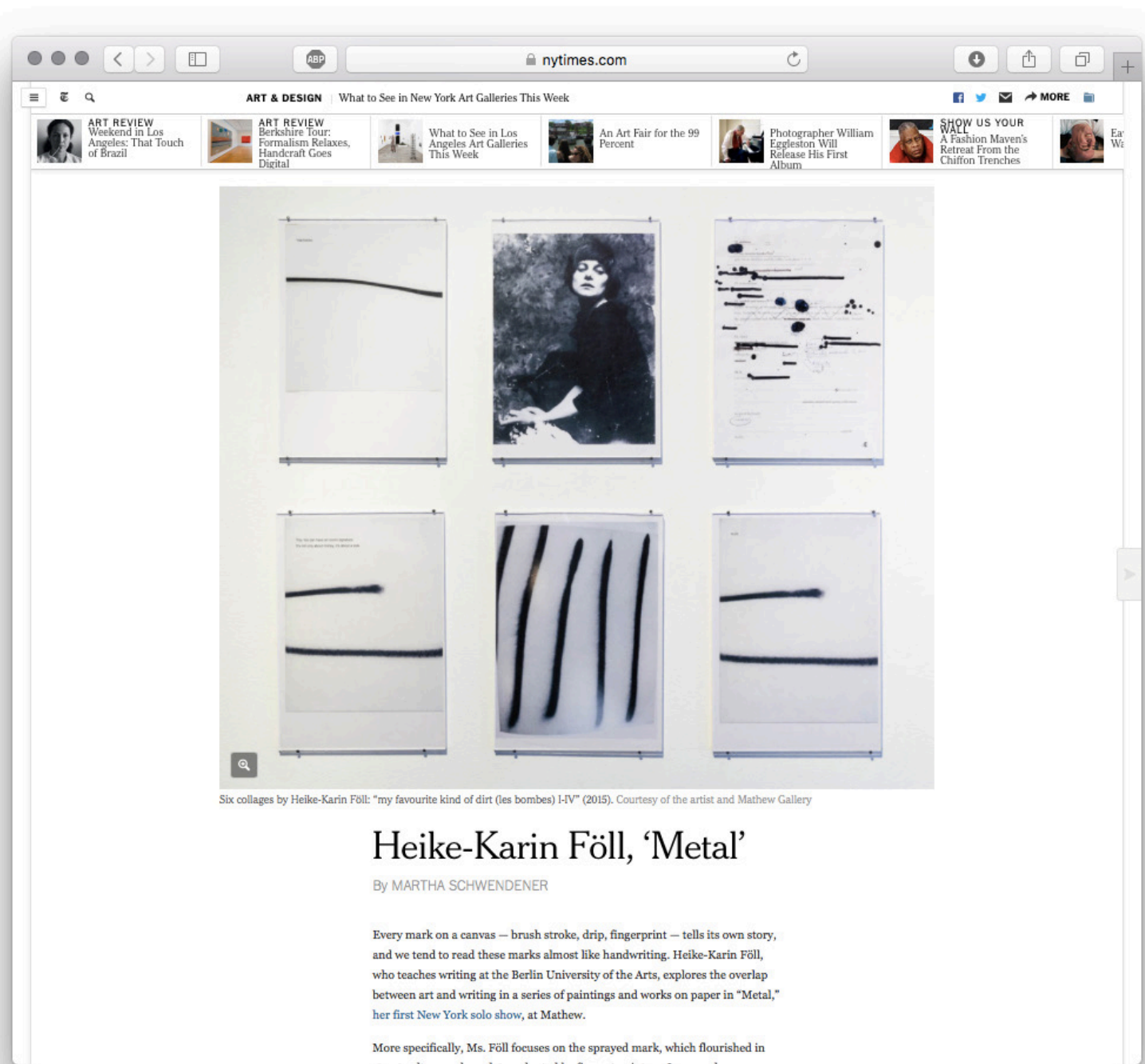
Heike-Karin Föll, ‘Metal’
By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Every mark on a canvas — brush stroke, drip, fingerprint — tells its own story, and we tend to read these marks almost like handwriting. Heike-Karin Föll, who teaches writing at the Berlin University of the Arts, explores the overlap between art and writing in a series of paintings and works on paper in “Metal,” her first New York solo show, at Mathew.

More specifically, Ms. Föll focuses on the sprayed mark, which flourished in street culture and was later adopted by fine-art painters. In several canvases here Ms. Föll isolates the sprayed aerosol mark so that it looks like elegant calligraphy. Other works exhibit the dashed-off casualness of artists like Michael Krebber or Merlin Carpenter, who have pushed the boundaries of painting with ultra-minimal gestures and marks.

And herein lies the crux of the show. For while men can get away with aggressively nonchalant art gestures (Marcel Duchamp is the archetypal example), women rarely can. Ms. Föll makes the gendered aspect of the mark clear in one canvas, which has “total femme” printed on it, and in a series of works on paper that includes a picture of Emmy Hennings, a member of Zurich Dada and a patron saint of the radical European art lineage, who, nevertheless, is often overshadowed by her husband, the artist Hugo Ball.

Underlying any discussion related to the graffiti mark are the African-American and Puerto Rican teenagers who pioneered aerosol art in New York in the 1970s. They aren’t mentioned here. But that is another story of marks and their making.



GALERIE FRANCESCA PIA, Zürich
September 9–October 7, 2016

Heike-Karin Föll's exhibition nests within Rochelle Feinstein's concurrent, longer-running show at Galerie Francesca Pia. The pragmatic arrangement suits, because modesty is Föll's camouflage, starting with the conditions of the exhibition. At the gallery entrance are 4 notebooks in a vitrine, while the remainder of the works are in a side gallery: 2 works from 2014 made with pressed plants; 5 larger paintings; and a grid of 27 works on paper, each sheet A4.

Taking the paintings to be top of the hierarchical tree by the standards of the traditional canon, the first encounter is with *refresh* (2016), roughly a square meter and a half of calm black scrubbing, pulling color across the canvas, with occasional moments of relief in scratches and uncovered areas where delicate blue, yellow, or violet can be made out. A copy of British Vogue collaged to the right of the canvas is obscured but for the headline "*refresh*," which can be read vertically. Magazine clippings and the imprint of an N floating towards the top of the canvas are the kind of text that circulates throughout Föll's works, sometimes typed on a computer, sometimes written, often in transfer letters. This text is portable and inconclusive; letters toy with the chance that they might regroup or be reiterated.

refresh is the exhibition's darkest painting, its title a typical Föll contradiction. It doesn't cleanse the palate, nor enter a key combination for a fresh start, but is filled with matter. References to screen interfaces recur. In *shade* (2016), for example, the canvas is bare white ground but for three horizontal, spray-painted lines that bleed off the left side of the canvas, the bottom line striking through the title written in transfer print; those lines echo fingers drawn across an iPad screen. In German, you can use the word *Oberfläche* (literally "surface") to denote user interface. Föll's paintings are planes that rely on exchange between several surfaces, that relate to the variability and the impermanence of the messages we read continually, to the way in which media surfaces are flat yet infinitely interactive and meaningful. Föll also uses "painterly" gestures; in the work *it's all about me deal with it* (2015) there are dark inky drips and more dilute grey, pink, and blue brushstrokes that might be spelling the brush-off the title suggests, as well as the egocentric language of rapid online communication.

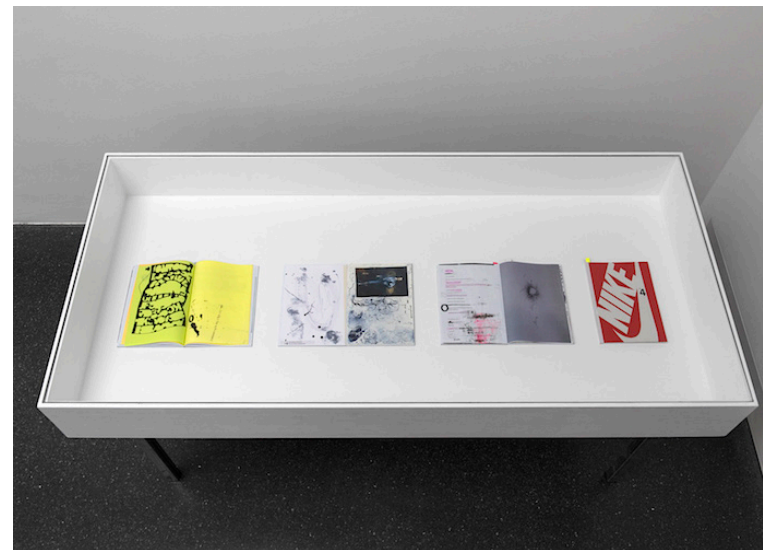
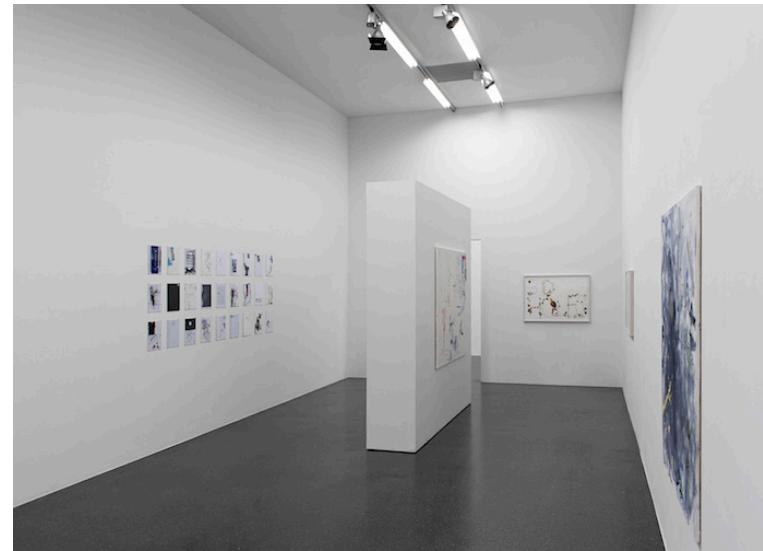
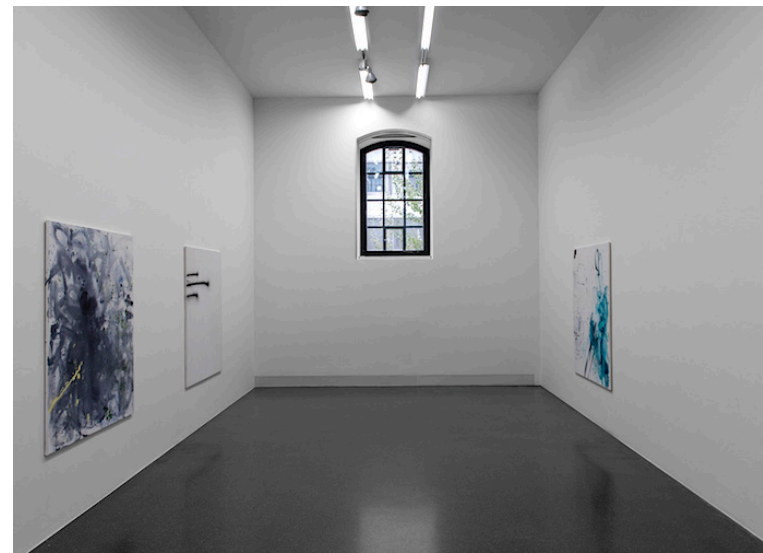
In 1968 Henri Lefebvre argued that everyday life should be appreciated as the nexus of a society. Back then he could describe ivory towers of abstract culture in which the "cultivated" kept their distance from urbanity. In the meantime, digital life has added new dimensions to the quotidian; inner life is distinct from physical engagement with the world around us, and screens and devices offer yet further realms with which to simultaneously engage. Föll's work is not overrun with post-internet digital impressions, but these impressions are among her quiver of arrows, so if *shade* could relate to a screen interface, it might equally reference graffiti and its course in and out of high art, Lucio Fontana slashes, or light through a slatted blind. She teaches on

a course on socially embedded art at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, and her own work describes an ability to record those coexistent dimensions of the everyday.

The notebooks exhibited prove to be Föll's immediate collection of ideas and motifs, which are already in process as they hit the page; words are typed, printed, annotated, sketched around; drawings are scanned in, references pasted in, too, and marks rehearsed. n° 93 the weather in Proust (2016) is open to a page of ink marks. At the foot of the left-hand page her lines "Or.. as a drug, pulverised/ A city of a funky smelling tree" underlined in red. On the opposite page a postcard of Thomas Gainsborough's 1779 portrait The Blue Boy, its title in transfer letters, the page echoing the ink marks, this time imprints from a bottle base.

The grid of drawings, Schraube locker [Screw loose], (2016) demonstrates the transfer between scales. Hung beside the paintings, there are marks and gestures in common and shared materials. One page is marked twice with a stamp of the artist's name, date filled in by hand, gesturing to the importance of the archive and confidently stated authorship. In that transfer from paper to canvas the movements remain light, just as Föll takes references lightly. She seems unperturbed by the weight of historical precedent, of all those who have dripped, splattered, marked, and just plain painted before her. Her paintings are in a dialogic relationship to those historic precedents of painting and the contemporary, and given their lightness and spaciousness, are not fixed but allow for evolution. It makes me think of how the idea of delicacy and prettiness clings to the word "poetic," despite poetry's potential to be caustic and violent. Föll's modesty of means, like poetry's thinness on the page, disguises its heft.

Aoife Rosenmeyer is a critic, translator, and occasional curator based in Zurich.



Heike-Karin Föll, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich, 2016.

Calla Henkel und Max Pitegoff, *Zürich Zürich Zürich*, in: dies., *Berlin Zürich London*,
Motto Books 2016.

Zürich
Zürich
Zürich
Zürich
Zürich
Zürich

Installation views: *Oity*, Heike-Karin Föll,
Hacienda, Zürich, April 2015



The apartments for rent or for sale in Berlin, London and Zürich were usually empty during our visits except for the other viewers, sometimes many of them, often staring blankly, assessing value, testing poetic fluency in taps and light switches. We exhibited the silver gelatin photographs of the apartments in grids pasted on paper, the periodic bodies in the frame creating a rhythm of intrusion into the spaces they imagined owning, strategizing the ease of a private routine. These public private moments seemed to be eating away at the cities from the inside in a tangle of taste and speculation.



When visiting Zürich, we stayed overnight at Hacienda, an exhibition space with a temporary lease in a medieval building that had been a children's daycare center—a Kita—until a few months earlier. Heike Karin-Föll's exhibition *Oity*, titled after a term made up by Zürich squatter friends to describe the moneyed tourist area of central Zürich, had opened just the night before our arrival.



Take the stairs from the tram stop nearest to the Wasserkirche, then wind past the church, the ancient stones and spitting fountains. The building was built in 1500 and remodeled into a daycare center in what must have been the 1970s. Due to its historical significance, the building renovation had spared only the room in which Huldrych Zwingli wrote his theses on the Swiss Reformed Church in the early 1500s; a low-ceilinged room with beams running towards the street and a view of one of the fountains. Zwingli died in battle at the age of forty-seven while protecting the canton of Zürich against the Catholic cantons resisting reformation, his legacy seemingly forever shadowed by that of Martin Luther.



We arrived at night, the key waiting on a shoestring in the mailbox. We proceeded to punch on light switches to reveal a series of oddly shaped rooms and small doors and Heike's artworks. Her pressed-flower pieces served as name cards for each room, the greenery flattened into crudely shaped words. Twig paintings stretched the yellow walls and towered over the surreally scaled children's fixtures. At the end of the hall on the first floor was Zwingli's room, a UNESCO heritage site filled with wildly packed boxes and Heike's makeshift studio.

Several Swiss friends, in different octaves of earnest gravity, had explained that it is a well-known fact that a building is better off having any tenant than no tenant at all. So there is a governmental process, or rather a bureaucratic method, in which spaces are allocated to temporary tenants in the ghostly period after eviction and prior to renovation. In the long run, of which 1500 is well within, building owners had learned it is probably better to have someone tending to leaks and paying utilities. But, more directly, squatting is common and legal if an apartment is vacant, and if you follow certain steps and then hang a banner that reads BESETZT outside the newly occupied building, then it's yours, or yours until the police come, who probably already know you, as Zürich squatters tend to move from place to place and deal frequently with the same local police. So naturally landlords prefer this sort of bureaucratically mandated temporary tenant, the ones with plans to exhibit art, and with moving boxes waiting in the wings.



We eventually found the bed in a room in the attic, the door to the stairs hidden near the last room with Heike's works. We debated showering in the child-sized bathtub but opted against it, instead heading towards the refrigerator, pulling out two beers and a rind of cheese. And there was Zwingli. A ghost. He'd survived the plague. He'd stuck it out when everyone else had left for the hills. Can you even imagine? He looked out the window, eyeing his church across the street which he'd remodeled, or was it reformed?

The kitchen was rank with the smell of wine bottles, beer cans and hardened bread from last night's opening, the air stale with Denkmalschutz. To think Zwingli had been here in his room the whole time, poor children. The Kita was 115 years old (the oldest in Zürich), opened when Kitas were frowned upon, only used by working mothers, who were also frowned upon. Zwingli had amused himself with all those childhood traumas, but come next year, work boots and bags of new plaster and buckets of old plaster would form new condos for old or new money, it didn't matter. Zwingli would stay.

