

Jan-Ole Schiemann

Les fleurs du mal à la tête

October 28 — December 04, 2021

Almine Rech Brussels is pleased to announce Jan-Ole Schiemann's first solo presentation with the gallery, *Les fleurs du mal à la tête*, on view from October 19 until December 4, 2021. The exhibition will feature new paintings and paperworks.

Jan-Ole Schiemann's gestural abstractions and poetic exits bear witness to oscillation: from figurative to abstraction, cut-ups to hazy mists, cartoonish to existential, tumbling carefree kinetics to the political. Undeniably, Schiemann's approach is different: he asks the canvas to deal with everything and nothing at the same time. It's this psychological splitting, this spirited, layered approach that erupts boldly, unshrinkingly in collage, reminding us that our perception of depth is very much within our control.

In the flapper jazz guise of an early Betty Boop, Schiemann wanders through the sticky tenets of gestural abstraction and histories of 20th Century animation, wondering through ghostly apparitions of his own maybe-conscious references. He frequently begins with seemingly disparate sources: cut-out vintage cartoons, economic theory, architecture, adverts, his own meticulous sketches. Fragments collaged onto transparent slides and projected upon thirsty, unprimed, blank canvas— a vigorous methodology that reminds us of our own shallow projections and assumptions from the very start. A technique of playful insinuation placing prickly Midsommer wreaths on our head, convicting spirals of *fleurs d'épine*: it forces us to reevaluate just how we judge depth. And Betty Boop is, surprisingly, deep:

"I'm 97% sure you don't like me. But I'm 100% sure I don't care. Boop-oop-a-doop!"

It's this idiosyncratic, rebellious vocabulary that Schiemann puts into his work in 5/4 time, pioneering an art movement all of his own: visual scatting. A delineating, phlegmatic aesthetic guided by shifting shadows, thin layers of acrylic, improvised charcoal and oil stick, untamed draftsmanship that commands us to look, *and look again*, at our conception of depth. Scatting, in music, is vocal rebellion, insurgency, antagonistic soliloquy, a departure from what's traditionally expected. The singer improvises new melodies, rhythms, narratives in overlapping scores of frisky, sparkly flourishes. Musical quotations that are uniquely layered, unreplicable, kinetic energy of striking nuance and complexity. Schiemann visually replicates the playful embellishments of scatting with technical and artistic prowess: tonal gradations, stratified acrylics, flats, condensations, fumes of fog, unpredictable compositions. Creating *grey areas* with grey areas. Ocular arrangements that crease art goes with wit, architectural refrains, lyrical mirage, and topographical pizzaz— we metaphorically (or literally) keel over. (It's unsurprising Jan Schiemann is from Kiel)

Schiemann has become one of the most prominent young artists of his generation due to an unwillingness to conform to the terminal boredoms of any one type of aesthetic activity. Untamed logic where attitude is everything. His work sieves our ideas of tradition, depth-perception, of flashy, overlapping realities through grafted oscillations that loathe to stay the same. Inky compositions thick with humor and incursions, the headache of conviction, schematics bravely trailblazing something new, fervent, uncategorizable. Canvases that stand up even before they're mounted. With graphite pencil and a floret of lime and lilac wildflowers, Jan Schiemann writes his name into the art history canon, rubs it out with the side of his hand, and stencils it back in roaring hyper-font.

It takes all kinds of brave to remind us how to see the command we just might already have.

- Estelle Hoy, writer and art critic based in Berlin