

## GALERIE ANDREA CARATSCH

### **Charlotte Leimer, "Standby Bystander", 6.2.2020–10.4.2021**

Following her 'Sacred Relations' exhibition shown until last month at our gallery, Charlotte Leimer (b. 1985) continues to explore her investigation of the mother and child relationship. These new works on plywood are painted with intense emotion as she recollects the memory of early childhood, in search of meaning and understanding.

The young artist ponders the point of growth where your environment is made up of curious phenomena articulated by sound and colour. Through parenting, education and experience these sounds and colours start to attain meaning and are given context. This experience in turn creates language, both internal and external, within the context of the self; eventually bleeding into all relationships and communications.

In the womb, in the foetal state, one is on standby. Waiting for life to occur, to begin. Once we are born into this world, we grow from being situated in a position as bystanders, hopefully to become active adults. As children, we are completely placed in a state of passivity, no power at hand.

Through the artist's allegorical style, conceptual yet expressive, she dissects how language forms one's belief system, sense of self and one's relation to the external world. These are all themes that shape the letters and words that melt in the paintings and surround the 'floating foetus'. These paintings, with multiple semiotic layers, continuously provoke new feelings of surprise, discomfort and confrontation.

There is a spiralling, floating quality to the composition, a film in slow motion, an unravelling of some abject concept, some haunted reality, some ugly past. - Large enough to become swirls of abstract concepts, the red neon letters provoke the paintings from an unreachable depth. These neon sculptures, forming desperate truths, merge with the paintings on the wall to create a mesh of light and colour, texture and aura, forming an enigmatic bond.

In her first endeavour working with neons, Leimer has selected a formal typography, first learnt at school, as a means of conveying the beginning of controlled expression and thought. The way a child begins to write 'properly', an emotional and independent language is tailored to identify less with the self and to compare oneself to other children. The neon red, disruptive yet enticing, comments on the "school of suspicion" coined by Ricoeur (1965). The artist questions how one then ought to do the work to unravel and explore the self in an alphabet dictated by letters that dictate words, to come out, graded according to one's ability to mimic the 'perfect typography', to fit in a 'perfect society', a lack of self is evident.

The strong ties to her last show "Sacred Relations" are epitomized by addressing painting in the same explorative manner; capturing the conversation through a raw wooden frame that dissolves into the centre surface, continuing to spin, torment and tease these large scale works. Leimer dives further into the first trauma one might experience in life, the trauma of birth. These paintings and neons capture that in-between state, the time between connection, a relationship, a dependence in the womb to the self, the individual, the one who must become "I".

Born in 1995 in Hong Kong, Swiss artist Charlotte Leimer has lived in London, Madrid, Zurich and Mexico. The artist has strong personal ties to the Engadine Valley, where she currently lives and works. Leimer is enrolled in a Masters of Fine Arts program at The Parson's School of Design in New York.