

Birgit Megerle
Who decides?
January 31 – March 8, 2025

In her third solo exhibition at Layr, Birgit Megerle presents eight new paintings, as well as drawings from the 2000s. The subjects expand the thematic constellation of previous exhibitions, mostly portraits and (flower) still lifes - a framework already employed in *The Painted Veil* (Kunsthaus Glarus, 2017) and *Soft Power* (Galerie Neu, 2018). Megerle's works were primarily approached through portraits of well-known, befriended artists or public figures, or by exploring the (painterly) relationship with them. The focus centers primarily on questions of how portraits as a genre can be re-approached, the regimes of gaze, and the representational value of portraiture.

The subjects of the current works range from photographs staged with models (*Centre*, 2024; *Profile*, 2024) to found imagery (*Checkpoint*, 2025; *Bow*, 2024) and reworked floral motifs (*Stars*, 2025; *Scrub*, 2024). Interestingly, for the current portraits, neither resemblance nor psychologizing plays a central role.

While the depicted individuals represent role models or institutions, they appear strangely distant, and questions regarding representation are relegated to the background in favor of painterly operations.

Here, the depicted subject serves less as a purpose of representation, as in previous exhibitions, but as starting point of the work. *Who decides?* gradually and significantly shifts the focus away from the meaning of the subject toward the positioning of processes that are entirely focused on painting as a conceptual model (of practice). These processes, in turn, are subject to reciprocal relationships and interdependencies.

Not only do the works visibly trace the process of their production, they also remain in specific stages of development, openly revealing their construction. The drawings, some with grids, others with a study-like character, further amplify this effect. Approaching the present state of Megerle's practice through the exhibition means adopting a particularly subtractive approach, questioning which categorical framework these works specifically do *not* conform to.

Attempts to categorize the works within familiar frameworks such as abstraction, gesture, figuration, appropriation, or mimesis seem to evade classification upon closer inspection. The new works renounce the "painted veil" (J. Welter) that characterized earlier works by the artist. *Who decides?* is primarily a question directed at one's own agency.

The positioning of the subject representations in the pictorial space is mostly frontal and direct. The coloring of the background is clear and open, while the gestures are structured. The all-over composition of the surfaces is almost devoid of spatial perspective. The image carriers are positioned distant to each other, defining an in-between space that they intentionally leave *undirected*. Birgit Megerle's new works unveil the depicted subject and leave most of its secrets exposed.