

PROVENCE

I like it picasso!

Melanie Akeret

15 April – 20 May 2023

EN

In 1976, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term *meme* – an amalgamation of mimesis and gene – to refer to any unit of cultural transmission. Designed for exchange through copying, memes, like emoticons, remain linked to this idea of abstract unity of information form. As visual artefacts, they are replicated, modified and redistributed across multiple media.

In her solo exhibition *I like it picasso!*, Zürich-based artist Melanie Akeret adopts the circular image strategies of meme culture as opposed to submitting to the unfulfilled demand for originality and creativity. The motifs (lobster, piano, flowers, etc.) that stretch across the canvases are as readable as they are interchangeable. Compositional hierarchies are subverted, such as the piano, which occupies the canvas not in front of the pictorial background but as a blank space. However, precisely because the works do not relinquish their decorative role when exhibited in a bourgeois entrance and dining area, they assume their position as formal ciphers of painting.

Existing imagery is appropriated and modified, including the title of the exhibition that is borrowed from a viral TikTok 2022 video that corresponds to the expression of a passer-by reacting to an art project (a decorated car). Instead of referring to the Spanish painter, the artist's name becomes the vessel for a stylised notion of artistic authorship, whereas the linguistic expression takes on a new interpretation depending on the context and the synchronisation of the audio with a new video. Akeret demonstrates this ambivalence between exhaustion and simultaneous potential of emptied terms in the painterly investigation of access, visual language and artistic subjectivity.

The possibility of 'open access' through emoticons, in its condition of being publicly available and economically free, essentially leads to a levelling practice of Akeret's own. As she removes structuring elements of visual legibility from unequivocal valuation by economic and historical conditions, the experience and determination of works is relegated to aesthetic and material issues. In her critical text *Hacker Manifesto* (2004), writer McKenzie Wark attributes the crucial potential of hacking to this ability to mutate, alter and recombine existing cultural material. Akeret creates access to an existing system, as it were, using its gaps to both expose the conventions and artificiality of art while maintaining a frame of reference for art as a field of possible self-assertion.

Céline Matter

DEKO-LONIAL
Series of 7 ceramic vessels
by Alfredo Coloma

Alfredo Coloma is a conceptual artist interested in the interactions between aesthetics and politics. In early 2023, he founded the FPK et al. ceramics workshop in La Paz to finance his artistic practice by producing ceramic vessels. As part of the exhibition *I like it picasso!*, Melanie Akeret is showcasing the series *DEKO-LONIAL*, which consists of seven unique pieces with a bronze-like finish.

The work's title, while referencing a politically charged term, fails to capture the complexity of the phenomena it seeks to describe, losing all its explanatory power. The title is mirrored in the ceramics, which, devoid of context in the exhibition, testify to their use as empty vessels.