

In search of idyll

Katrin Piile in Tütar Galerii

In the practice of searching, I imagine a set of eyes. Moving back and forth, left and right, they scan their surroundings. Another approach might be to lift something, or to move an object around the room. Seldomly, one smells (unless a hint is given that the object sought is food related), weighs or rubs. Our most reliable partner however, the one we turn to at first, is that pair of eyes.

One search that is engraved in our cultural history was written by Marcel Proust. For several decades, the Frenchman attempted to trace a time passed. His fragment about the madeleine is highly referenced material; the perfect quotidian example of involuntary memory, where the taste of the pastry brings him back to his childhood.

*A la recherche du temps perdu* (or, *In Search of Lost Time*) is principally a life's work. However accurate the description of the madeleine, the book's relevance is much more. It is a highly accurate account of the nature of searching, an activity which often lacks a finish line. Katrin Piile's artistic practice is similarly an intense dedication to a search that is likely to never fully resolve. At Tütar Galerii, the artist aims her search towards a moment of pause, towards a breath of air, towards peace and stillness. This is intrinsically connected to the medium of painting, with its connotation to still life or *nature morte*.

Nothing is completely still. Every inanimate object contains action one way or another; it has a history, is sorted, is exhibited and rediscovered. Bringing together several pieces, Piile's exhibition features the active process of creation. Drops and buckets give us a glimpse into the artist's working methods. I am most intrigued by the restlessness in Katrin Piile's artistic nature. She seeks confrontation with the medium of photorealistic painting. During this heated, passionate discussion with her own process, the artist inserts imperfections into a hyper-realistic medium. Neatly squared canvasses contain images of wrinkled paper, connected to a wall with various pieces of masking tape. Such thorough investigation and self-reflection creates a sense of urgency. It makes the work both relatable and confident.

If eyes are our trustworthy companion, Piile employs this sense vividly. Through enlarging and depicting, she invites the viewer to join her in taking a pause. Another notable technique is the practice of layering and copying. I would like to call it paraphrasing: she takes a picture, paints it, and then paints that new picture once more, from a footstep further away, or a tiny bit to the left. This becomes a pathway of translations. In this exhibition, one finds paintings of wallpaper. This material is a depiction of its own (leaves, roses or other patterns), but one that is often rather clumsy and mass produced. I would like to call her method paraphrasing, as nothing is identical.

What happens in the space between these images? I find questions about functional, domestic objects, their multitude of interpretations and the influence of context on the subject.

*In search of Idyll* tastes like calmness with a hint of restless manoeuvre. It showcases the relationship between practice and exhibition. Katrin Piile presents us with a break, a pause, a moment of rest. This moment is the result of a relentless circle of creation and dialogue with the medium. And so, the artist presents the exhibition as a still life.

Laura De Jaeger, May 2023