

Amelie von Wulffen  
PRESS



Review: Amelie von Wulffen, Aspen Art Museum  
By Catherine Taft

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## Aspen, CO Reviews

### Amelie von Wulffen

ASPEN ART MUSEUM



Amelie von Wulffen, *Untitled*, 2012, oil on canvas, 19 5/8 x 15 3/5".

Amelie von Wulffen's first solo museum show in the US comprised fifteen canvases that surrounded a conspicuous architectural intervention: The main gallery's ductwork had been handpainted green and connected to the gallery floor by four green-striped faux columns that looked like so many oversize maypoles. Although this sculptural appendage seemed a curious choice—prominently emphasizing the gallery's worst preexisting features and clashing with the artist's markedly intimate canvases—the spatial tension it created was precisely the sort of visual and symbolic conflict von Wulffen aims to provoke. Indeed, the artist's paintings and collages have long thwarted viewers' expectations of how such mediums (and their standard genres) should behave, muddying strict notions as to what constitutes photography, portraiture, even caricature. But here, von Wulffen engaged the larger architectural frame itself.

In making the fifteen canvases on view—nine while in residency at the Aspen Art Museum, the remaining six for her 2011 show at Greene Naftali Gallery in New York—von Wulffen pulled frenetically from the history of painting, creating stylistic mash-ups that cross-pollinate references as disparate as Biedermeier painting, psychedelia, Expressionism, illuminated manuscripts, fan art, Color Field painting, Romanticism, Surrealism, Impressionism, and various landscape traditions. Yet her quotations are direct and deliberate. *Untitled (Lion and Tiger)*, 2012, for example, borrows a Delacroix drawing of the exotic animals fighting, establishing this motif as the focal point of a swirling, brushy pastel-hued ground. A completely abstract painting (also made this year) rendered in watery India ink and oil paint is evocative of a Gerhard Richter squeegee painting. Still other works here portrayed likenesses of famous artists themselves, as with another canvas from 2012, in which two van Gogh heads peek out from behind the large painted petals of a floral still life.

While fourteen of the canvases on view were exactly the same size (just over six-and-a-half by four-and-a-half feet), one painting was considerably smaller—just nineteen inches in height. A cameo version of Goya's *Self-Portrait in the Studio*, 1790–95, this work portrays the artist from the shoulders up, wearing his top hat, against a wash of pinkish-white brushstrokes. In von Wulffen's iteration it is unclear as to whom the "self" in this portrait might be: The face depicted in the remake is more softly articulated than that by and of the Spanish master. As self-portraiture often factors into von Wulffen's work, we might take this painting to show the painter herself—an allegorical portrait of the artist as a maker of pictures slipping between real and imagined identities.

While the referent figures and art-historical movements von Wulffen cites are predominantly male or male-centric, her representations of them are typically formed with a dreamy, feminine aspect, in a palette of pinks, purples, blues, and pastels, appearing alternately quaint, eccentric, untamed, or fluid but rarely aggressive or brutish. This is likewise the case with the artist's handling of the Aspen Art Museum's building: She took a functionally specialized feature of the architectural infrastructure and rendered it mutable, newly receptive to painterly intervention. In all of these gestures, von Wulffen opens new spaces, cracking our ingrained conceptions of general hierarchies.

—*Catherine Taft*