



Critics' Pick: Amelie von Wulffen
Galerie Barbara Weiss
By Elisa R. Linn

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Amelie von Wulffen

GALERIE BARBARA WEISS

Kohlfurter Strasse 41/43

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In Amelie von Wulffen's exhibition, homey table gatherings with borrowed motifs and eclectic styles, ranging from historical genre painting and modernism to faux-naïf, turn out to be oppressive, almost duplicitous scenes. Appropriating a rustic theme favored by painter Franz Defregger in one of her works (all untitled, 2016), von Wulffen replaces a cheerful peasants' meal with a group of grouchy, monstrous cats that bargain over their knotty inheritance—thalers or turds. These works defer illustration through an imaginative blurriness that provokes and rebuffs recognition. The artist allows her own chimeras free range in another group of grotesque paintings, where psychotic cuteness and gloomy, expressive tragedy speak to personal traumas and abysses. Crossed by cracks of hobby lacquer and seemingly puzzled together like a memory, a nightmare of a bourgeois nursery in aggressive neon pink shows von Wulffen's childlike alter ego lying paralyzed in bed, her overgrown nails saving her from the inflicted piano lesson.



Amelie von Wulffen, untitled, 2016, oil on canvas, 39 x 47".

The mood of repression and reminiscence in von Wulffen's work, often embodied by the coexistence of cryptic graphic lines and washy, gestural brushstrokes, hint at a conflict between individual versus collective morality and guilt. For instance, one painting depicts a get-together of Janus-faced thinker Martin Heidegger, entangled in the Nazi regime, and his adamant critic Martin Buber, along with the artist's young grandfather. The inheritance of complicity and double standards is what the show's title, "*Der Tote im Sumpf*" (The Dead in the Swamp), might be getting at. Hidden out of sight in the mud, however, these forces threaten to make their way back to the table, whether it be at an artist dinner or farmhouse parlor.

— Elisa R. Linn