

Rebekka Steiger

wild is the wind

Exhibition in Lucerne: 14.2.–30.3.2019

Opening: Thursday, February 14, 5.30–7.30 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce *wild is the wind*, the second solo exhibition of Swiss young artist Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993, Zurich, Switzerland) with the gallery. On display are paintings and works on paper that were recently created in Lucerne and Beijing. The Lucerne exhibition follows *猫头鹰–virages nocturnes*, which was shown in Beijing and focused on Steiger's residency in Beijing, where Galerie Urs Meile runs its artist residency program. From March to November 2018, Rebekka Steiger painted extensively as a means to cope with the unknown environment she was plunged into, while new motifs as well as a more spontaneous approach to painting found their way into her practice. The artist also started entitling her work as well as mixing languages as a way to create a kind of "poetic chemical reaction" and unexpected associations between words.

From a compositional perspective, her work underwent a noticeable transformation, increasingly blurring the boundaries between background, middle ground and foreground. The result is a growing tension between abstract and figurative, as exemplified by the work *xibu* (2018, oil crayon and tempera on canvas, 240 x 180 cm) or *hanging in midair (above sea)* (2018, oil and tempera on canvas, 100 x 80 cm). The painting *xibu* also illustrates the artist's interest in polysemous words and the imperfection of translation: she chose to spell out the Pinyin version without pitch-accents – *xī bù* or *xì bù* – which correspond to two distinct combinations of signs (西部 or 细部). "Xibu" therefore translates into both "west" or "detail (of a drawing)/small part of a whole thing". Rebekka Steiger plays here with the loss of meaning inherent to the translation process, which allows her to leave the interpretation open and up to the viewer, upon which no pre-existing narrative is imposed.

The same goes for the recurring motifs that inhabit the work: Don Quixotesque riders, birds, erupting volcanoes, intriguing plants and insects, etc. Here again, the figures are not depicted to tell a story: this very personal "vocabulary of forms" allows for the mind to rest or freely wander in a universe composed of expressive and brightly colored brushstrokes. During the Chinese residency, some of these motifs underwent a metamorphosis, while new ones appeared in the work: a hint of a dragon (*untitled*, gouache and pastel on paper, 58 x 76 cm) or an owl (*cat-headed hawk (amor approximately)*, 2018, gouache and pastel on paper, 76 x 57 cm). The motif of the owl was actually inspired while the artist visited the Beijing antique market, where she acquired a bronze owl statuette. These free associations and "chance encounters", experienced both by the artist while making art and by her viewers while confronted with the work, are what make Rebekka Steiger's paintings so appealing and intriguing.

Concurrent to *wild is the wind*, the Kunst(Zeug)Haus Rapperswil, Switzerland will showcase a selection of Steiger's work in the solo exhibition *If you see her, say bello* (February 10 to April 21, 2019. Opening reception: Sunday, February 10, 11:30am). A "Walk & Talk" led by the artist and Petra Giezendanner, Head of Collection, will take place on Friday, February 15 at 6:30pm.

Rebekka Steiger was born 1993 in Zurich, Switzerland. She studied from 2013 till 2016 art at Lucerne School of Art and Design. Her solo exhibitions include: *猫头鹰–virages nocturnes*, Galerie Urs Meile Beijing, China (2018); *Sykomore*, Kabinettausstellung, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (2017); Helen Faigle, Zurich, Switzerland (2015). Group shows include: *Extended Ground*, Galerie Urs Meile Lucerne, Switzerland (2017); *Rebekka Steiger and Sven Egert*, Luzerner Kantonalbank, Lucerne, Switzerland (2017); *Jabresausstellung Zentralschweizer Kunstschaffen*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland (2016). She was awarded two prizes in 2016, an "Exhibition Prize" from the Lucerne Art Society and an "Advancement Award" from the Zeugindesign Foundation.