

Ellen Gronemeyer

Affentheater

September 7-October 20, 2012

Kimmerich is pleased to present *Affentheater*, the inaugural exhibition by Berlin based artist, Ellen Gronemeyer. This will be Gronemeyer's first solo presentation in New York.

Affentheater includes paintings and drawings never before exhibited, though production on some pieces began as far back as 7 years. Created by methodically layering oil paint on canvas and board, Gronemeyer gradually builds up heavily textured surface. In the end dense, uneven, rock like paint incrusts it's supports, giving the finished work the look of something archaic or a natural occurrence. The often predominately black outermost layers are imbued with instances of bright color, which are scratched out of previous layers or flecked on to highlight and define forms that become her subjects. Her motifs emerge through this long process, as she works images out of the material substance of the paint itself.

Gronemeyer's imagery focuses on figuration, combined and merged with abstraction. Figures in her paintings are cartoon-like with suggestive, exaggerated features and a flattened perspective, evoking the grotesque. It is apparent that these creatures are not individuals, but placeholders for the imaginary. In recent works they are partaking in absurd or childlike behavior, and presented in portraits with an abrupt frontal perspective awkwardly gazing out at the viewer. With numerous psychological implications, the motive behind Gronemeyer's work remains moderately ambiguous. While some seem to resonate with personal meaning, others appear to possess a cool, ironic distance.

Along side these better known works, Gronemeyer introduces a new style of painting of faster execution and an all-over approach. Still of the same spirit and themes, these paintings are looser, flatter and lighter. In these scenes atmosphere has collapsed, and the figures press haphazardly against the surface of the canvas, they overlap and dissolve in and out of one and other and their surroundings, becoming almost totally obscured. One painting can have several focal points. It's beginning and end are nearly impossible to distinguish.

The term Affentheater, or "ape theater", originated in the second half of the 19th century, when Ape theaters were quite popular in Europe. Clothed Apes performed acrobatic shows and impersonated human behavior at fairs, inns or theaters. A common but dated German expression, it is informal and disparaging, used to characterize exaggerated or ridiculous behavior.

Born in 1979, Ellen Gronemeyer lives and works in Berlin.