

DERDIEDAS / THETHE THE

JEFF HALLBAUER / VANCOUVER



AUGUST 25 – SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

## CONVERSATION WITH JEFF HALLBAUER

SF: The title of your solo show – *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* – that marked the end of your 2-month residency at DAS ESSZIMMER seems to reflect the language shift on one hand, but at the same time makes a perception shift visible, that comes along with the fact that meanings in German language are tied to a gender, in opposition to the English language where everything is a *the*.

This playfulness can also be found in the exhibited works. Is that something new to your work approach?

JH: When I discovered in German that objects are gendered based on the demonstrative pronouns, I found it charged

the objects around me with animism; all of a sudden, the table, chair and pens and pencils came alive. After some thought, I found this related to my interest in *pareidolia*<sup>1</sup>, a phenomenon where you see other things in things which is also a way of animating inanimate objects. I feel that this animating of objects is similar to making art. When you make art, all the subjectively of who you are, really your soul, is imbued into art.

SF: In the new works that appeared during your residency, it seems you are using the (digital) image archives of our days as some kind of a toolbox or a brush. By applying a simple image transfer technique as well as digital drawing/painting

Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe, I am a Potato* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 2022, 61 x 99 cm, Edition





Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe*, Kermit Kelley (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric, 192 x 145 cm, Jeff

you seem to appropriate the found footage and make it your own. – Is this what you mean by animating objects?

JH: Yes, and no. The images I choose, especially the ones of other artworks, is because I appreciate how their semiotics operate. I can load the appropriated artwork's content and history immediately. I also get to be closer to the artwork. Rather than just look at it, I can internalize it through my process of creation, so that it becomes a tool for learning. The artworks I reference become touch points for storytelling, so the content can be quite rich. My artworks themselves become a vehicle for these stories. I have been thinking about this evolutionary way of making work, which could feel related to the idea of animating objects. The artworks take on a great amount of subjectivity through the gestural acetone transfer process, and it is a kind of direct translation of my physical being into the work and my abstract painting practice.

SF: In comparison with your abstract painting practice you mention, that was your dominant work approach when we met 3 years ago in Athens... your new works seem to be – on a first glance – the contrary of abstract...

JH: I appreciate the ambiguity of abstraction and in many ways, it is a language I'm more comfortable with. I like to challenge myself between dichotomies and I don't want to stop experimenting. It's important to develop this ability. It moves my work forward.

I find I will work in one way and commit to it until it feels resolved and through the process discover something new. Then I often shift to a polarity of working to develop a different sensibility, operating between different modes of making pictures. This is maybe out of something that I saw was missing or something I admire. It's similar to the ways art operates in how it tries to show us something new, something we weren't aware of. Making art is emotional and self-reflective; the process reveals these things. I find after some time I come back to an earlier way of working with this new sensibility and it changes the work. It's the worst feeling when you realize that you've made the same painting twice.

When you look out into the world everything in its formality is really quite abstract: our bodies, architecture, social structures -- none of it really makes any sense. It's kind of weird; I just think why? A representational painting is already abstract in nature, it is not the real thing it's depicting.

I don't want to restrict things through language, these





Exhibition view: DerDieDas / TheTheThe, Lillith (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric, 91 x 210 cm

things should be fluid. Holding truth to a word can be very limiting. Similar to representation I have found it problematic specifically when representing people. Who do you represent, and how, is something I'm hesitant to crystallize into art.

In Vancouver, you can't get away from its photo history and people think a lot about how „to make a picture“. It still has a strong hold on the community and how it thinks through art. So that influence has trickled into my work. I've made aesthetic comparisons to the photo-conceptualists, such as Ian Wallace and Vikky Alexander and the painter, Steven Shearer. Similarly, I'm interested in Warhol and Rauschenberg, who had a queer perspective. It's also interesting to shift away from that, away from the photo conceptualists, towards abstract painting histories. I've been pressured in the past to make postmodern images but have always struggled with the idea, specifically through a purely painting approach. I didn't really see the value of rendering something realistic in paint, not that I am dismissing the idea. It seems more interesting to incorporate both painting and photo strategies to arrive at a representational painting.

SF: Could you explain a bit more what for you means a representational painting?

JH: It's a strange question to think about; It makes me think about my own subjectivity towards it. I would think it is a painting that tries to represent something more accurately than abstractly, but that almost seems too obvious. Representational painting to me seems really important when you consider who wasn't represented. Also, in light of the arrival of other mediums to represent such as photography, as a painter, it is important to consider how the representation is done. As in, why paint an object or a person, when you can take a picture of them or a video of them? With the image transfers, I incorporate this aspect of photography as a way of tackling representational imagery.

SF: So is it a form of appropriation? – To make all these foreign images your own, digest them in a way and create a new, different universe of your own?

I was also wondering what mechanisms you applied to find, select the images in this huge image universe.

JH: I've been borrowing directly from the language of appropriation with the use of the Marlboro Man, Richard Prince famously lifted. My interest in the images was because I became aware of the artist Norm Klassen who originally photographed the ads co-opted by Prince. I thought by reappropriating the image, I could talk directly to Norm Klassen over Prince. I feel as though I transform the images through colour, process and form. Recombining them to create new meaning, but the appropriation still exists although fragmented in new compositions.

I've always been interested in trying to understand the factors that frame art outside of art, because they are so intrinsic in producing the meaning within art. I'm interested in how time and place can re-contextualize an image. Where, when and how an artwork is seen changes its meaning. Appropriation in a way an act of colonization; the image of the cowboy is another symbol of this in the west.

When I first arrived in Germany I was researching the laws around the morality of borrowing others' artworks as these laws change from place to place. So there was this tension between my desire to create this work and the bureaucracy of the government and the laws for capitalizing images. This reconfirmed to me why art is important to challenge these modes of operating and create discourse even if controversial. My desire to create overruled my trepidation. Many of the images I really respond to and love I don't actually use, because they are in a way too close and they become problematic quite quickly and get edited out. Although I like to dissect how their semiotics work and why I respond to them.

What would it actually mean to make an artwork completely devoid of reference? Completely developed out of an uncorrupted originality of your own making? Is that possible? What would that look like? We are conditioned from the moment we are born and we become all the parts of what we create for each other. Authorship has been dead for a long time and we don't live in a vacuum. I've been thinking about evolution in how art develops. For example my art has a different quality now after participating in the residency. Having this dialogue with you and the others I've met and the work I've seen while in Germany has created a different sensibility and reference points within my work, It's been the best experience. You can also see this when you focus on subcultures of artists. I've noticed this particularly of the painters in Vancouver and how they reference each-other and develop a visual language based on exchanges whether they are aware of it or not and this keeps shifting and becomes a signifier of place. A senior artist from the west coast, Michael Morris, uses a symbol he calls the hand of the spirit. I remember being captivated by this symbol and then later seeing it in historical and contemporary artworks from different places around the world. There was this continuum and if you looked closely enough you could find clues within these cultural texts that try to explain our existence and shared humanity.

We live in a postmodern post-net world where information and images are impressed into our subconscious through technologies as unaware users. Our consent is really disregarded through these forms. We can recirculate and repost images online through apps like Instagram Twitter and Pinterest without repercussion which glean our data to feed it into links of promotion. Why isn't this demonized to the same extent as the act of physicalizing an image within art.

There are a variety of ways I've collected the images some of which are accessibility sourced from the internet through research. Although, I've been finding it quite difficult discovering new images that excite me online. The algorithms of my searches become restrictive and the images become stock photography which creates archetypes that lack nuance. I'll take casual snaps from life while wandering around or look at past photos on my phone

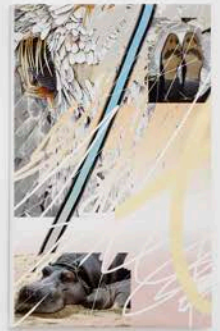
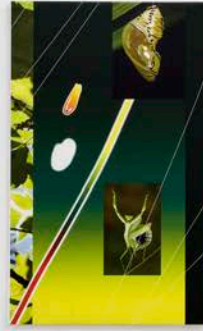
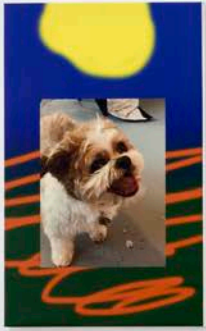




Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* (from left to right), *Cookie Classen* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric, 134 x 145 cm / *Kermit Kelley* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric, 192 x 145 cm / *Piggy Predator* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 239 x 210 cm / *Anna Paradolia* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 160 x 160 cm







Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* (from left to right), *Tucker* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Cowboy* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Cocoon* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Wings* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition

which hold memories for me that find themselves into the work. Many of the images of art I've come across while visiting museums and re-photographed the images are not exact copies and have been filtered through life and experiences of looking. The green section of the painting *Kermit Kelley*, for example, was inspired by a Mike Kelley installation *Confusion* I saw while visiting the Museum Abteiberg. It came at a moment where I was trying to resolve the green painting I was stuck on. When I saw Kelley's installation which was a similar colour to the painting I was working on I thought to incorporate images from the installation and images of frogs which led me to Kermit the Frog which then later to *Miss Piggy*. I try to stay open in life and usually it will show me an answer that I'm looking for.

*Footnote:*

- I *Pareidolia* is the tendency for perception to impose a meaningful interpretation on a nebulous stimulus, usually visual, so that one sees an object, pattern, or meaning where there is none. Common examples are perceived images of animals, faces, or objects in cloud formations, seeing faces in inanimate objects, or lunar pareidolia like the Man in the Moon or the Moon rabbit. The concept of pareidolia may extend to include hidden messages in recorded music played in reverse or at higher- or lower-than-normal speeds, and hearing voices (mainly indistinct) or music in random noise, such as that produced by air conditioners or fans. Scientists have taught computers to use visual clues to „see“ faces and other images.  
(source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia> )





\* 1986, lives and works in unceded territory, Vancouver (CA)

#### Education

2009 BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design

#### Residencies

2023 Upcoming, Kölnischer Kunstverein Studio Program, Köln/GER

2023 Upcoming Similkameen Artist Residency, Keremeos BC Canada

2022 DAS ESSZIMMER – space for art+, Bonn/GER

#### Solo Shows (selection)

2022 *DerDieDas/TheTheThe*, DAS ESSZIMMER – space for art+, Bonn/GER

2021 *Weird Kid*, Deluge Contemporary Art, Victoria, BC

2020 *Chromatic Feelings*, Olympic Village Theatre Center, Vancouver, BC

2019 *Fruits*, Chernoff Fine Art, Vancouver, BC

2017 *At the Hour of Closing Summer*, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, BC

2010 *Maddy*, Gam Gallery, Vancouver, BC

Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe Anna Paradolia* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 160 x 160 cm



#### Group Shows (selection)

2022 *Like a Child*, New Art Dealers Association, curated by Daonne Huff

*Bumblebee and Ducky*, duo show with Barry Doupe, WAAP, Vancouver, BC

*Chromatic Feelings*, BMO Theatre Center, Vancouver, BC.

2021 *Peanuts*, Peanuts Gallery, Vancouver, BC

2020 *What Remains, Epiphany and Apopenia*, The Kitchen Aufderhöhe, Basel/SUI

*Butterfly Farm*, Yard Perdo, San Pedro, CA

2018 *Elastic River, Axis Mundi*, curated by Max Galyon, Vancouver, BC

*A Salve of Sorts, Vacation*, New York, NY

2017 *Art Toronto*: WAAP Booth, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, ON

*NADA*: WAAP Booth, Skylight Clarkson North, New York, NY

*Material Art Fair*: WAAP Booth, Expo Reforma, Mexico City

2016 *Towards a Fictional History of Colour*, Burrard Arts Foundation, curated by Elliot Albrecht, Vancouver, BC

2015 *GIF (4th edition)*, Coaxial Arts Foundation, curated by Gillian Zillion, Los Angeles, CA

2014 *Art Toronto*: WAAP Booth, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, ON

*A Spectacle and Nothing Strange*, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, BC

*Maiden Mother Crone, The Economy of Women's Bodies*, Toast Collective, Curated by Adriana Lademann, Vancouver, BC

2014 *Radical Spirits*, Astorinos, Vancouver, BC

*The Seasons Have Changed but We Have Not*, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, BC

*Free Print Show 2*, Little Mountain Gallery, Vancouver, BC

2013 *Juror's Choice*, Ferry Building Gallery, West Vancouver, BC

2012 *Celebrate*, Leo Koo Gallery, Vancouver, BC

*Free Print Show*, Little Mountain Gallery, Vancouver, BC

2010 *Blood and Culture*, Gropps Gallery, Vancouver, BC

2008 *Paper Works*, TheBrow, Vancouver, BC

*Manifesto Show*, Concourse Gallery, Vancouver, BC

#### Press, Collaborations, Writing, Workshops, Talks and Links

2022 *DerDieDas/TheTheThe*, DAS ESSZIMMER, exhibition publication,

2022 KubaParis, <https://kubaparis.com/submission/240484>

2022 Talk with Jan Phillip Nuehlen, DAS ESSZIMMER

2022 Alex Gibson, *DerDieDas/TheTheThe*, exhibition text

2021 Lauren Fournier, *Weird Kid* exhibition text

2021 Pareidolia, Relssue <https://reissue.pub/articles/pareidolia>

2020. Preforming Negotiations with Dawn Nilo part of the Swiss Art Award, Monk Contemporary, Basel Switzerland

2020 Queer Arts Festival, Flash Collective by Avram Finkelstein with Claire Love Wilson, Tajliya, Jamal, Jackson Wai Chung Tse, Shane Sable, Kyla Yin, Chhaya Naran, Alex Gibson and Joshua Lam curated by Jonny Sopotiuik

2019 RBC Emerging Artist Program at the Audain Art Museum Live collaboration with band Strawberry Barry Doupe and Dennis Ha, Artspeak Radio Digest

2018 Jayne Wilkinson, "A Salve of Sorts," Canadian Art, Fall

2017 *Art Together*, Organized by Simranpreet Anand, Surrey Art Gallery

*Joseph Rohit*, Super Cool Tuesdays, Disorder Magazine. Nov

Alex Bowron, WAAP exhibition text

*Super Cool Tuesdays*, Organized by Adriana Lademann Inter-urban Gallery, Vancouver BC

2015 <http://hyperallergic.com/221901/artx-la-52/>

2015 Nancy Lanthier, *Towards a Fictional History of Colour*, The Vancouver Sun





Exhibition view: *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* (from left to right), *Piggy Predator* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 239 x 210 cm / *Anna Paradolia* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 160 x 160 cm

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#### Front:

Exhibition view front room, *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* by Jeff Hallbauer; from left to right: *Tucker* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Cowboy* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Cocoon* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Wings* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Eye and Ear* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition / *Rococo* (2022), Pigment Print on Linen, 61 x 99 cm, Edition

#### Back:

Exhibition view back space, *DerDieDas / TheTheThe* by Jeff Hallbauer; from left to right: *Piggy Predator* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 239 x 210 cm / *Anna Paradolia* (2022), Laser Inkjet Transfer on Fabric and Water Colour, 160 x 160 cm

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