

TRUDE VIKEN

Midnight Theater

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FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE

21 East 3rd St. NYC

In some of Trude Viken's self-portraits, there is a woman. In others, there is a shadow. Others, a blur, a cavern, a bulge of pigment, colors swirled into a marshland of liquified features. Sometimes, a thick red cross interrupts her brow. Sometimes, she is only a wall of viscous hair, in queasy emerald. Eyelashes stream down her face, violet mouths swell into illegible expressions, skin froths and glows. Each tucked into a compact A-4 canvas, her 'Diary Notes' series tremble at the edges of the category of self-portraiture, tethered by a certain trust: Viken says these are all images of Viken, and so we believe her. The repetitive nature of the project mirrors but inverts the continuity management we are all tasked with. Every morning, I wake up, and re-create a woman that is recognizable as the one I and others know, one that can be called to mind under a singular name. The inevitable transformations of time, harm, or desire must not be too sudden. Change must unravel gently; I rely on the echoes of yesterday to coalesce into a person today. We mimic what we remember ourselves to be, coming into being through articulated habit. Viken, however, wakes up and mixes color, seasick lavenders and dusky oranges, and re-re-re-creates a face unrecognizable to the day before. Again and again, drenched in yellows, another emerges.

Yet, the people that are all one person in these paintings don't seem light, new, handily sketched or birthed in ease. All the paintings are clogged with duration: ochre sours, cobalt leaks and greys. They are like those blotchy, colorful 'aura' photographs you can buy, but if the aura was made of glue. Layers of oil paint grow over the drawing like moss over a fallen trunk; generations of microbiomes bloom and die in the distance between image and viewer. The paint looks alive, wet and murky and reproductive, as if the painting itself is churning out new expressions. Nothing has grown a shell, and it is this vulnerability that kindles the momentum behind the work. When describing a piece, Viken observes, "I process it until the shapes are dissolved and the images meet my intentions and requirements... Almost everything is allowed." The materials are twisted and coiled, knotted up into effortful distortions, but appear mercurial, fluid. Tension hovers in the outline of the women's hairdos. Their faces may have flooded, detached, floated away, but often, Viken's selves have firm bouffants, Farrah Fawcett curls, or two sinewy braids. Fantasy curdles. Femininity rises to the surfaces, un-drowned. In full, the paintings demonstrate the fitful work of allowing oneself to be and change. Over many small glimpses, she is almost everything. - Text by Audrey Wollen

Trude Viken (b. 1969, Lødingen, Norway) lives and works in Oslo, Norway. Viken's first solo exhibition in New York was at Fortnight Institute in 2018, and her first solo show in Los Angeles at M + B in 2019. Viken's work has been included in group shows at Buer Gallery and the Bærum Kunsthall in Norway in 2020. Viken's work is currently on view in a museum solo exhibition in Norway at the Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, through September 2021.



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