

16 BRANCHES HIGH

Karolina Albricht

11 MARCH - 8 APRIL 2022

STUDIO WEST is proud to present '16 Branches High', a solo show by London-based Polish painter Karolina Albricht. Thematically, the pieces on show are a continuation of Albricht's investigation of both formal and metaphysical concerns, including color, space, the body, movement, and gesture.

The exhibition title, '16 Branches High', comes from the lyrics of Nick Cave and The Bad Seed's Spinning Song. The phrase has been pasted up in Albricht's studio for months, watching over and influencing the many facets of the artist's ever-developing practice. Music, syncopation, and rhythm underpin Albricht's practice. Often working to playlists, the organic line and irregular shapes seen throughout the works in the show mirror the dissonance and indeterminacy of many of Albricht's 'Studio Playlists'.

As part of Albricht's process, studio detritus is recycled to create textured surfaces and additions. Sometimes anthropomorphic, the artist uses shredded jute as 'hair,' dried paint fragments, and aptly named 'other stuff' (pumice, sand, grit, and calico, among other things) to fashion work that escapes the expected boundary of two-dimensional painting.

'I use a variety of materials and strategies to disrupt the image and force myself to 'unsee' it, re-examine it, re-configure it, and locate it again. It's vital to me to keep the paintings open and alive, keep the curiosity and search for potential going.'

Albricht investigates the relationship between the body and the canvas. The movement of her body can be observed in the works, both small and large. Colour shifts, jagged lines, and nearly recognizable forms overlap each other to generate a sense of visual potency. Her largest canvases are like realms to be entered, dwarfing the body of the viewer as they stand and observe. The smaller works, meanwhile, contort shapes, objects, and reality, creating paintings that burst out from their own seams, breaching conventional constraints of the canvas.

"The different scales require diverse treatments and approaches both physically and psychologically. Making the large paintings involves moving my entire body, creating a sense of the canvas and myself as two people sharing space."

Her newest venture, small scale sculptural works, recall the apertures of Barbara Hepworth's forms. The textural amalgamation of 'hair', hessian, and other materials suggest Meret Oppenheim's surreal, fluffy objects. For Albricht, these pieces are not a ruptured break with her painting practice but instead continue the three-dimensional thinking that is essential to her methodology across her creative output. The sculptures further emphasize the importance of physicality in Albricht's practice and the intimate relationship of material and artist. One can sense Albricht's hands manipulating the Papier-mâché Clay surface to create her gang of strangely anthropomorphic assemblages.

The exhibition thus captures Karolina Albricht at a pivotal moment in her career, as she experiments with the realm of three-dimensional thinking. The exhibition extends her established painting practice and invites the viewer into a constructed world where painting and sculpture collide.

In response to Karolina Albricht's exhibition '16 Branches High,' and in collaboration with Portobello Dance Co., dancers Leila Wright and Stanley Young will choreograph and perform a unique presentation in the gallery space on the evening of the 24th of March. Through movement, Wright and Young will translate and react to Albricht's engagement with shape, color, and surface.

This project furthers Studio West founder Caroline Boseley's aim to bring together community groups, local people, charitable projects, and diverse forms of creation. She welcomes local people and creators of all disciplines into the sometimes-exclusionary art sphere, inviting genuine collaboration and forging sustained connections.

STUDIO WEST

Unit 1, 216 Kensington Park Road, London, W11 1NR

Nearest Tube: Ladbroke Grove / Notting Hill Gate

@studio_west_gallery | www.studiowest.art

Press Enquiries: bella@studiowest.art

Sales Enquiries: admin@studiowest.art

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216 KENSINGTON PARK RD, LONDON, W11 1NR