

Artist: Gina Beavers
Venue: Neuer Essener Kunstverein
Exhibition Title: Autofiction
Curated by: Moritz Scheper
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Text:

The term *autofiction* pretends to be nothing more than it is, a merger of autobiography and fiction. And yet this still young literary genre is never actually defined on the basis of idiosyncrasies or criteria, but always along names. First the gay forefathers Jean Genet, Hans Henny Jahn, Hubert Fichte, Hervé Guibert, then Guillaume Dustan and above all Chris Kraus, who made the bed for authors like Tao Lin, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Natasha Stagg, Ben Lerner. If there is a commonality, it is that a very present 'I' is central to autofiction. Those seeking a cultural sociological explanation for the advent of autofictional storytelling in recent years will find the beginnings of an explanation in the self-promotion culture of social media. It is well worth considering the two together, because both autofiction and social media use authenticity as currency. However, an extremely fabricated kind of second-order authenticity, where the artifice lies in creating the sensation that there is no artifice.

Which brings us directly to the work of Gina Beavers. Her acrylic reliefs have long been concerned with the excessive, saturated image culture of our social media-configured world. Affect-hungry images for quick consumption, often from clickbait contexts, form her trove of material; manicured nails, full lips, and posing bodies are leitmotifs throughout her work. She mainly uses images in which someone pretends to tell about themselves, but in doing so only fills in standardized image formulas. Beavers has always emphasized such glitches between assertion of authenticity and realization by physically modeling what was initially flat imagery. Admittedly, this 'blowing up' of photographs can also be understood as a formal correspondence to their excessive subjects.

It might be said that authenticity and excess are reordered in Beavers's 'autofiction' paintings. What can be noted is an increase in compositional excess with diverse pictorial levels that interlock with each other. What interlocks, however, has now sometimes become detached from the source material. The artist still plunders the treasure trove of motifs that have accumulated over several years of practicing painting; sneakers, lips, nails but also couches or an album cover of the New Zealand band Broods are alternately crossed with each other or nestled within each other, so that they function as personal but empty signifiers. Signifiers which place individual images in correspondence with previous works by Beavers, where they appear differently phrased and contextualized. In a sense, each of these empty but versatile signifiers functions like the 'I' in autofiction: it twists, turns, transforms, and refracts, yet remains a mysteriously

mutable entity.

Gina Beavers (b. 1974) lives in Orange, NJ. She has had numerous solo exhibitions, most recently at Various Small Fires, Seoul, Marianne Boesky, New York, Gnyp Gallery, Berlin, and MoMA PS1, New York.