

GALERIE FRANCESCA PIA, Zürich
September 9–October 7, 2016

Heike-Karin Föll's exhibition nests within Rochelle Feinstein's concurrent, longer-running show at Galerie Francesca Pia. The pragmatic arrangement suits, because modesty is Föll's camouflage, starting with the conditions of the exhibition. At the gallery entrance are 4 notebooks in a vitrine, while the remainder of the works are in a side gallery: 2 works from 2014 made with pressed plants; 5 larger paintings; and a grid of 27 works on paper, each sheet A4.

Taking the paintings to be top of the hierarchical tree by the standards of the traditional canon, the first encounter is with *refresh* (2016), roughly a square meter and a half of calm black scrubbing, pulling color across the canvas, with occasional moments of relief in scratches and uncovered areas where delicate blue, yellow, or violet can be made out. A copy of *British Vogue* collaged to the right of the canvas is obscured but for the headline "refresh," which can be read vertically. Magazine clippings and the imprint of an N floating towards the top of the canvas are the kind of text that circulates throughout Föll's works, sometimes typed on a computer, sometimes written, often in transfer letters. This text is portable and inconclusive; letters toy with the chance that they might regroup or be reiterated.

refresh is the exhibition's darkest painting, its title a typical Föll contradiction. It doesn't cleanse the palate, nor enter a key combination for a fresh start, but is filled with matter. References to screen interfaces recur. In *shade* (2016), for example, the canvas is bare white ground but for three horizontal, spray-painted lines that bleed off the left side of the canvas, the bottom line striking through the title written in transfer print; those lines echo fingers drawn across an iPad screen. In German, you can use the word *Oberfläche* (literally "surface") to denote user interface. Föll's paintings are planes that rely on exchange between several surfaces, that relate to the variability and the impermanence of the messages we read continually, to the way in which media surfaces are flat yet infinitely interactive and meaningful. Föll also uses "painterly" gestures; in the work *it's all about me deal with it* (2015) there are dark inky drips and more dilute grey, pink, and blue brushstrokes that might be spelling the brush-off the title suggests, as well as the egocentric language of rapid online communication.

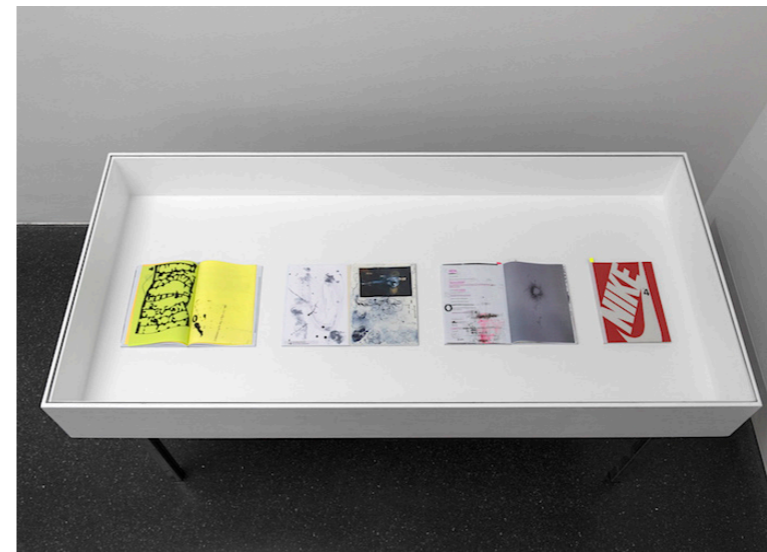
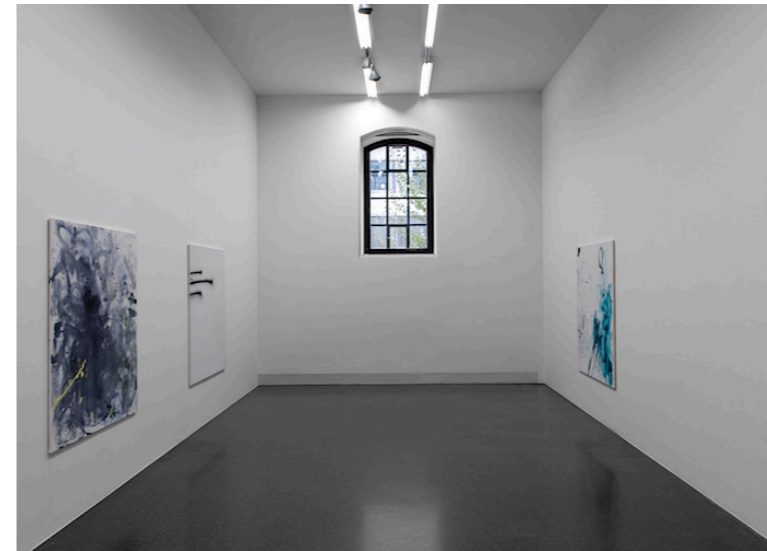
In 1968 Henri Lefebvre argued that everyday life should be appreciated as the nexus of a society. Back then he could describe ivory towers of abstract culture in which the "cultivated" kept their distance from urbanity. In the meantime, digital life has added new dimensions to the quotidian; inner life is distinct from physical engagement with the world around us, and screens and devices offer yet further realms with which to simultaneously engage. Föll's work is not overrun with post-internet digital impressions, but these impressions are among her quiver of arrows, so if *shade* could relate to a screen interface, it might equally reference graffiti and its course in and out of high art, Lucio Fontana slashes, or light through a slatted blind. She teaches on

a course on socially embedded art at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, and her own work describes an ability to record those coexistent dimensions of the everyday.

The notebooks exhibited prove to be Föll's immediate collection of ideas and motifs, which are already in process as they hit the page; words are typed, printed, annotated, sketched around; drawings are scanned in, references pasted in, too, and marks rehearsed. n° 93 the weather in Proust (2016) is open to a page of ink marks. At the foot of the left-hand page her lines "Or.. as a drug, pulverised/ A city of a funky smelling tree" underlined in red. On the opposite page a postcard of Thomas Gainsborough's 1779 portrait The Blue Boy, its title in transfer letters, the page echoing the ink marks, this time imprints from a bottle base.

The grid of drawings, Schraube locker [Screw loose], (2016) demonstrates the transfer between scales. Hung beside the paintings, there are marks and gestures in common and shared materials. One page is marked twice with a stamp of the artist's name, date filled in by hand, gesturing to the importance of the archive and confidently stated authorship. In that transfer from paper to canvas the movements remain light, just as Föll takes references lightly. She seems unperturbed by the weight of historical precedent, of all those who have dripped, splattered, marked, and just plain painted before her. Her paintings are in a dialogic relationship to those historic precedents of painting and the contemporary, and given their lightness and spaciousness, are not fixed but allow for evolution. It makes me think of how the idea of delicacy and prettiness clings to the word "poetic," despite poetry's potential to be caustic and violent. Föll's modesty of means, like poetry's thinness on the page, disguises its heft.

Aoife Rosenmeyer is a critic, translator, and occasional curator based in Zurich.



Heike-Karin Föll, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich, 2016.