

JUSTINE OTTO

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ARTIST STATEMENT

In my paintings, I draw on traditional genre concepts of Western art and transform them into new interpretations. A general theme is the human condition and group dynamics, viewed both through the lens of past eras and in light of the current world situation. A central question is how 'heroes' are generated and why so many people follow them. This led to my „Heroes“ series, inspired by old black-and-white photographs from the Imperial era. I abstracted these images of generals and soldiers, transforming them into cubist-like heroes that question the cult of masculinity and the creation of heroic images.

These themes also form the background of my current „Crowds“ series, where crowds are partially recognizable but overlaid with abstract layers that often resemble decorative elements and patterns. These layers merge in the painting process and have both destructive and creative effects, with continuous references to classical and modern painting.

My work moves between abstraction and figuration. Both elements are closely interwoven and appear equal. My painting process usually begins with drawings and collages that serve as a framework or idea, brought to life through painting. The themes develop like a red thread from one painting to the next.

Technically, I employ various methods: spraying, wet-on-wet painting, masking, scraping, spatula work, dissolving with turpentine, and stamping. I have developed and refined a variety of tools and techniques over the years and incorporated them into my repertoire. I continually experiment with different supports and materials.

MULTIPLE PLAYER
160 x 130 cm
oil on canvas
2022

13000 Euro





MULTIPLAYER I 2022

oil on Canvas

50 × 40 cm 4000 Euro

EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 BODY COUNT, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance/Los Angeles
UNTITLED VOID, Seoul , Korea
KUNSTVEREIN WÜRZBURG
MUSEUM KÖTHEN
CCA ANDRAXT RESIDENCY, Baleares
TRANSIT, Ibiza
- 2024 ALL SHADES, ALL HUES, All BLUES, Hollis Taggart, New York (s)
ZOOM, The personal is political, Municipal Gallery ARSENAL Poznan, Poland
DISSONANCE, Stadtgalerie Kiel
DISSONANCE, National Museum of Art Bucharest, Romania
ALLEGORY OF REDEMPTION, curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud, Madrid, Spain
BORDERLINES, Brask HQ, Copenhagen, Denmark
SEX, DRUGS & ROCK'N'ROLL, Sammlung Wurlitzer, Berlin
NO ONE BELONGS HERE MORE THAN YOU, Kunsthaus Erfurt
THE COLLECTIVE II, Visionary Projects, New York
- 2023 NORDWESTKUNST, Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven
WOLF WALD WILDNIS, Museum Abtei Liesborn
REMINISCE, Hollis Taggart, New York
SLOW LEARNER, Alba Galerie, Vienna
VERMEER CONTEMPORARY, Europäischer Kunstverein e. V., Berlin
XCHANGE, Salle Jacky Vaclair, Clamart (France)
GYEONGNAM ART MUSEUM, Changwon, South Korea
ODYSSEE PRIVEE, Museum Gelnhausen
- 2022 NEW TRADITIONALISTS, Frauenmuseum Wiesbaden (s)
DISSONANCE, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin
FRAUEN! Erwerbung der Graphischen Sammlung, Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt
KICK LINE, Thaler Originalgrafik, Leipzig
HERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF WAY OUTTA HERE, Galerie Crone, Berlin
:INNEN MALEN, Kunstverein Familie Montez, Frankfurt
Dallas Art Fair with Hollis Taggart, New York
XCHANGE, 20-21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe, UK



Ausstellungsansicht/ exhibition view:
NEUE GALERIE GLADBECK
MIT SCHALL UND RAUCH

BLUE MULTISMOKER I 2020
Öl auf Leinwand / oil on linen
140 x 130 cm 13000 Euro





GREEN MULTISMOKER I 2020
Öl auf Leinwand / oil on linen
140 x 130 cm 13000 Euro



COWGIRL II
70 x 50 cm
oil on canvas
2024

6000 Euro

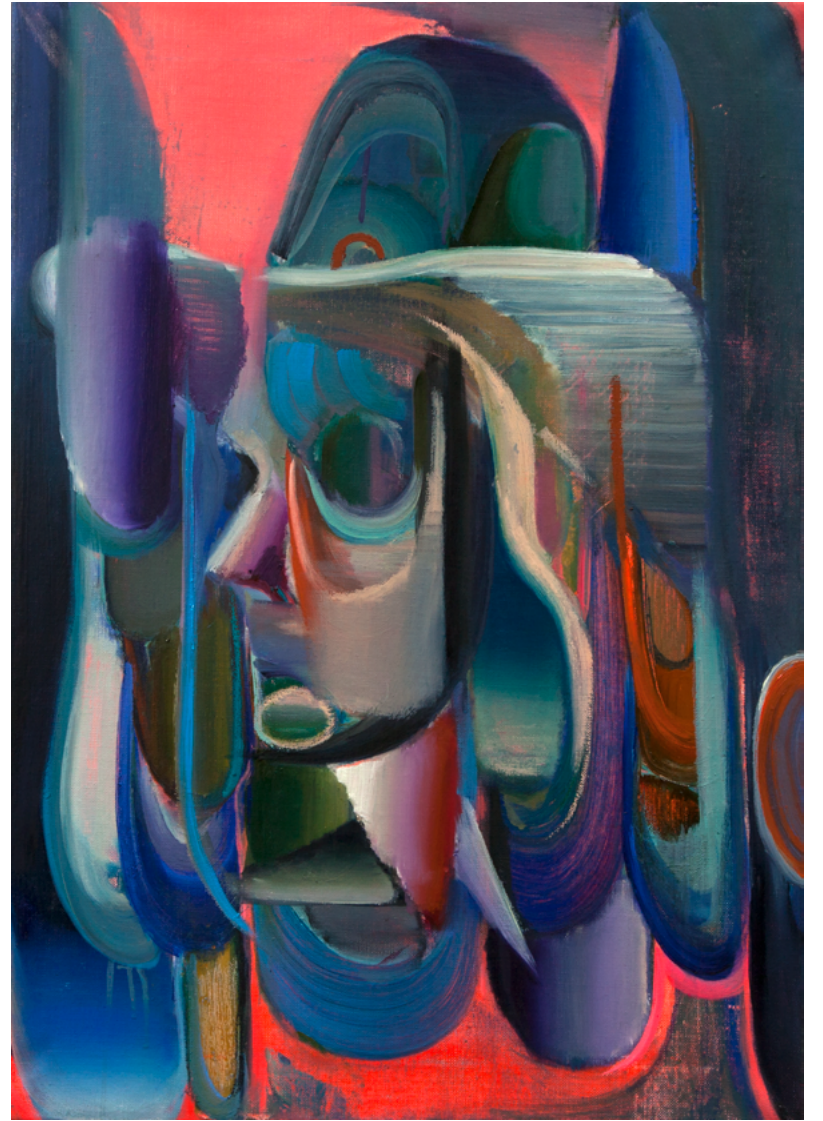


COWGIRL III
70 x 50 cm
oil on canvas
2024

6000 Euro

COWGIRL IV
70 x 50 cm
oil on canvas
2024

6000 Euro



GANG I 2024
oil on linen
70 x 50 cm 6000 Euro



GANG II 2024
oil on linen
70 x 50 cm

6000 Euro



FILOMENA 2025
oil on linen
70 x 50 cm

6000 Euro



GANG I 2024
oil on linen
70 x 50 cm 6000 Euro





CROWD | 2025
oil on linen
210 × 190 cm

18500 Euro



CHOREOGRAPHY OF LEGS I I

2025

oil on linen

18500 Euro

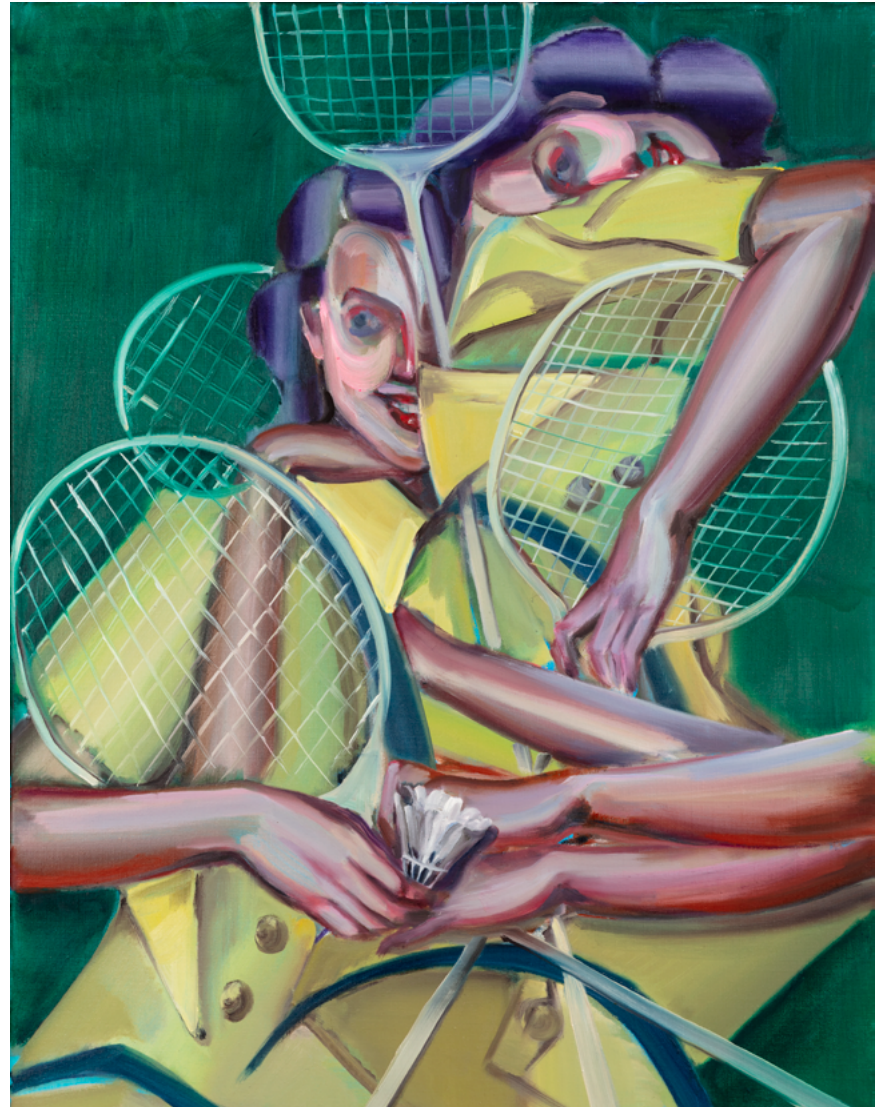


CHOREOGRAPHY OF LEGS III I

2025

oil on linen

18500 Euro



CHAMPIONI I 2025

oil on linen

90 × 70 cm

8500 Euro

COURTSHIP PRACTICE I 2026
oil on linen
200 × 140 cm

16000 Euro



ANTROCENTA I 2026
oil on linen
180 × 140 cm



14000 Euro



MATCHBALL I 2025

oil on linen

90 × 70 cm

8500 Euro

NEW TRADITIONALISTS

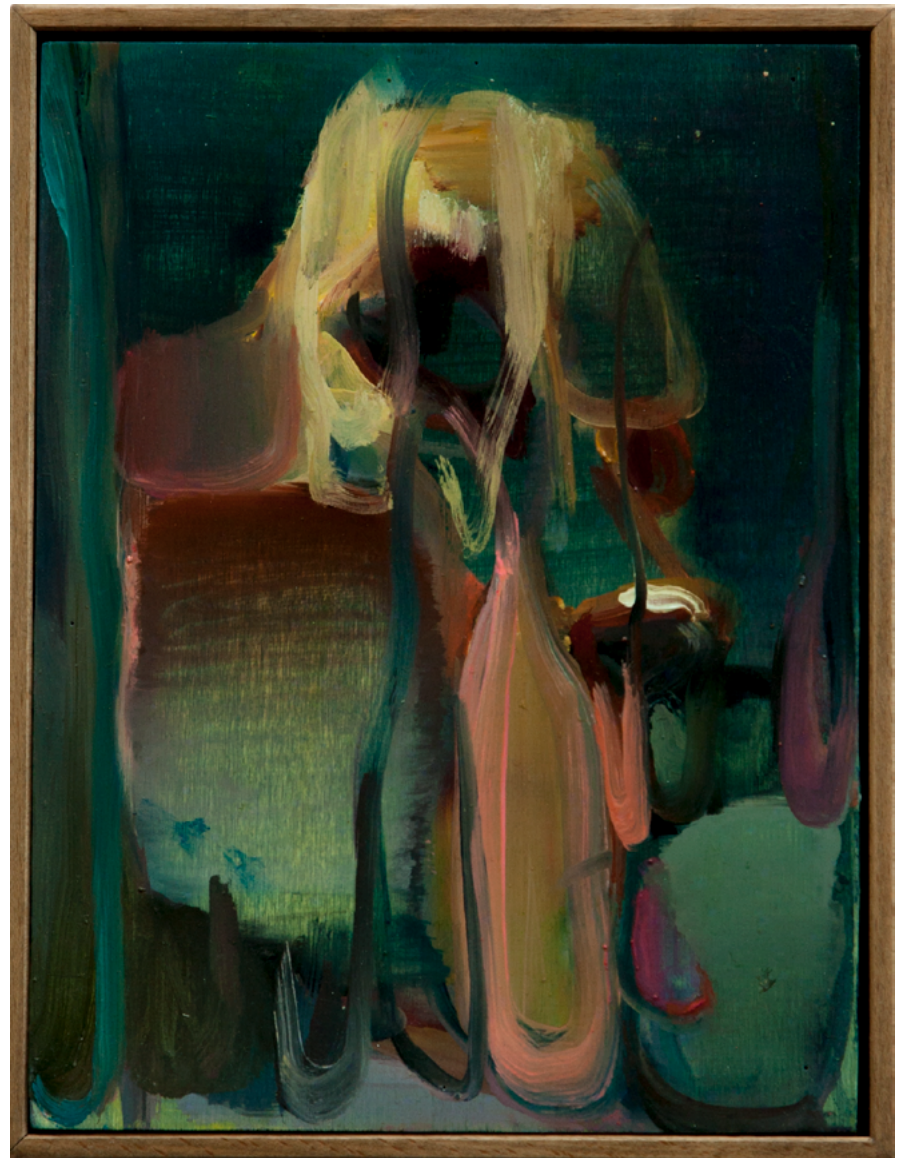
Saša Bogojev

The inconspicuous thematic and stylistic shifts which have marked Justine Otto's artistic practice over the years have been regularly commended. They were prompted by the compelling impetus of freedom: the freedom to choose subjects that resonate with a point in time, as well as the freedom to utilize paint and modify her technical approach to fit the atmosphere of a given moment. From working with female figures at the beginning, through a transition to masculine archetypes (heroes, leaders, or cowboys), to the most recent musician paintings, the Polish-born, German-based artist has harnessed the increasingly intense and motivating sensation of experiencing an artistic deliverance. And although they stemmed from different sources of inspiration and were energized by disparate intentions, each chapter of her ever-evolving practice pointed towards the next one, developing an oeuvre that, in a way, imitates the dynamics of life.

As a woman, working with female subjects felt like a natural initial step, but with time her interest moved towards the portrayal and reconstruction of male soldier and officer figures. Approaching these authoritarian archetypes in a more playful way, Otto was determined to take apart their almost mythical appearance, but only to reassemble them in an almost mischievous, highly painterly manner. Utilizing extraordinary fluorescent pigments beyond the standard oil palette and employing the viscosity of paint to depict volumes, forms, and their interaction with perspective and light, Otto reduced the faces of these supposedly imposing sitters to a rummage of strokes, and their outfits to mere contours. And while working with such particular imagery, her interest in more theatrical, dynamic scenes introduced the modern-day anti-hero that is the Marlboro Man, or a cowboy. As she thought about the likes of Roy Rogers and his Trigger, Otto's characters eventually transmuted towards the country music persona. Often portrayed in a larger, open setting, the lasso-spinning, horse-riding model followed the quietness of the world hit by the global pandemic and took a moment to rest in the company of a musical instrument. The resulting, current body of work, the musician paintings, finally made the connection with the artist's two biggest passions — music and painting — advancing New Traditionalists to a major milestone. From sharing her personal life with a musician, to allowing the atmosphere of favorite tunes to seep into her pictures, to borrowing song or record titles when describing her work (the title of the exhibition comes from a 1981 studio album by Devo), music plays a significant role in Otto's life. Reflecting on herself in moments of total detachment from the world around her, wielding her tools of the trade, semi-aware of decisions and moves, the artist strongly identifies with her tuneful muses. Further, life in the countryside influences the abstraction of the existing organic forms and the construction of a backdrop permeated with a sense of disconnection and absolute nonconfinement. In that setting, the subjects are depicted in moments of harmonious unity, with almost perceptible tunes emanating from their instruments. Flutes, harps, violins, guitars, or lutes are played both vigorously, with images capturing virtuosic hands in different positions at once, and in a leisurely way, with performers peacefully lounging alongside each other and their gear. As they blend in with their surroundings, with matching shapes composing both their bodies and the elements of the scenery, the emotional and pictorial harmony creates a profound ambiance in which freedom becomes the main subject of the story.

The positively energized atmosphere of these images is to some extent underlined by an absolute absence of black pigment. Allowing for traces of light to exist in literally every moment of the work, Otto emphasizes her expressive mark-making and overall driven approach to her process. Copying the dynamics of life, she is modifying the existing organic environment in relationship with the current and/ or desired state, layering gestures on top of each other, and removing the ones that feel redundant. Such crude technique informs the worn-out shades of certain passages which in combination with strong pigments create a striking, electrifying vibe.

At the same time, it reveals the artist's deep appreciation for paint as a material and painting as a medium, putting the creative process ahead of the content. Still concerned about the balance between the image and the technique used to depict it, the perfect unity of what is painted and how it is painted grows into an irresistible yet dubiously obtainable holy grail. Allowing painting to become a medium that captures both the moments of quiet, careful nighttime sessions, and the urgency and zest of spirited creative outbursts, the images ultimately teeter between these two ends of the emotional spectrum. Capturing that energy inside the paint itself, they become time capsules in which all relationships with the outside world are halted and only the flow of the process matters. Disconnected from conscious decisions, Otto's actions are driven by instinct, the gut, allowing for certain segments to move far away from the rules of tradition or reality. Alternating the plausible and experienced with an accent on the action itself, in the past four years, the musicians have become a metaphor for the artist herself as well as her admiration for the incomparable feeling of unconditional freedom.



ABS 1, oil on wood, 30 x 20 cm, 2024

2200 Euro



ABS 2, oil on wood, 30 x 20 cm, 2024

2200 Euro



ABS 3, oil on wood, 30 x 20 cm, 2024 2200 Euro