

RAPHAELA SIMON

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Interview with Raphaela Simon and Natalia Gonzalez Martin
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Raphaëla Simon



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Interview by: Natalia Gonzalez Martin

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your background? How did your time in the Kunstakademie influence your work?

I grew up in a small village in the Black Forest, surrounded by fields and trees. There are many "Wirtschaften" (old taverns) to stop off. I still enjoy eating a "Wurstsalat" (special sausage salad), skiing in the winter and drinking schnapps with my father. My mother is a wonderful cook. She prefers to eat spaghetti very soft.

The Düsseldorf Art Academy is an old building. It is a place where many different people come together. Mondays have a completely different meal than Tuesdays. You will never get any fresh strawberries there.

Tell us a bit about how you spend your day / studio routine? What is your studio like?

I get up early in the morning and make a big breakfast with eggs, butter, cheese, tomatoes, cucumber, jam, curd cheese, cake, coffee and hot lemon. Then I ride my bike to my studio in Charlottenburg and work until evening. My studio is very nice. I work on paintings and sculptures. My lunch is uninteresting. Sometimes I go to sports and to the sauna to regenerate the muscles and get rid of the turpentine. After a long day of work, this can do wonders.

Then I drink champagne or beer with Jannis.



'Erdbeeren' install shot at Michael Werner Gallery



'Erdbeeren' install shot at Michael Werner Gallery



'Erdbeeren' install shot at Michael Werner Gallery

You are currently showing a new series of work at Michael Werner Gallery. This is your first solo show in London, can you tell us a bit more about this exhibition? As we enter the gallery, we are faced with large canvases illustrating ordinary subjects, a bowl of blue spaghetti, a trashcan, a puffer jacket. Shown without context they become almost abstract... What is the selection process for the subject of your paintings?

I thought a lot about the Michael Werner Gallery, its Winter Garden, the two levels with stairs and its location in London, Mayfair. There are four businessmen in suits, two

I select fabrics for every detail and look for a way each part can be realized with this fabric. How hair, eyes, ties, clothes, shoes, glass, animal fur can be sewn.

My experience in painting helps me a lot with this translation.

I paint objects that I can imagine well on the canvas and that I absolutely want to see on it. Sometimes it takes a long time to know how to get them there. They are objects that interest me and that are familiar to me. Sometimes I already have them around me or have wanted them for a long time. I have a relationship to the object that changes with painting it.

dogs, and a kissing couple. They are all sculptures that arose from formal and content considerations and now look as they stand there.

The sculptures are created from the inside to the outside. First, I build a wooden frame. I already determine the posture, gestures, movements and weight distribution. Then I form the body with cotton wool over this structure: muscles, hands, bellies and head shapes. With human figures, the last layer is a fabric with a skin tone that can vary. Here I make lineaments, scars, and wrinkles. The necessary seams can be used in different ways.

Next I want to paint a "Wurstsalat". A kind of declaration of love.

It is the same with the clothes of the sculptures. I am very interested in fashion, cuts and fabrics. Even if I admire tailoring and Haute Couture very much, what I do is something else and I am interested in this difference.





'Erdbeeren' install shot at Michael Werner Gallery



'Erdbeeren' install shot at Michael Werner Gallery

Visitors are forced to share the gallery space with life-size fabric sculptures of various characters, caught in different daily actions. How do these sculptures relate to the paintings?

The sculptures are very similar to the paintings: differently colored fabrics are brought into different shapes. sewn

Your titles are in German, which brings to the table notions of identity and nostalgia - your work shifts from the autobiographical to the universal. What is the balance between the two?

The titles are German because it would feel arbitrary for me to choose a language other than my mother tongue.

together and placed on top of

sculptures are a continuation of my paintings. They can stand anywhere in the room and have a different effect on the viewer when they appear. They are closer to life because of their size and the replication of suits, bags, and bodies, which is more to scale.

I had the need to use beautiful fabrics with which you can build something: Oil paint and fabrics are very malleable, soft, with different surfaces and can always be combined again.

The sculptures help me get further in painting and the other way around. I tend to see things that I can't imagine at first.

Without being nostalgic, I find it boring that so much has to take place in English today. It is true that I often long for the Black Forest to speak dialect there.

I think the autobiographical is the universal and the other way around.

Simon's show at Michael Werner Gallery, London ran from 22 November 2019 through to 18th January 2020. For more information on the show please [visit here](#).

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RAPHAELA SIMON
Morgan Sykes, "A German Artist's Minimal Blue Masterpieces"
The Cut, February 4, 2018

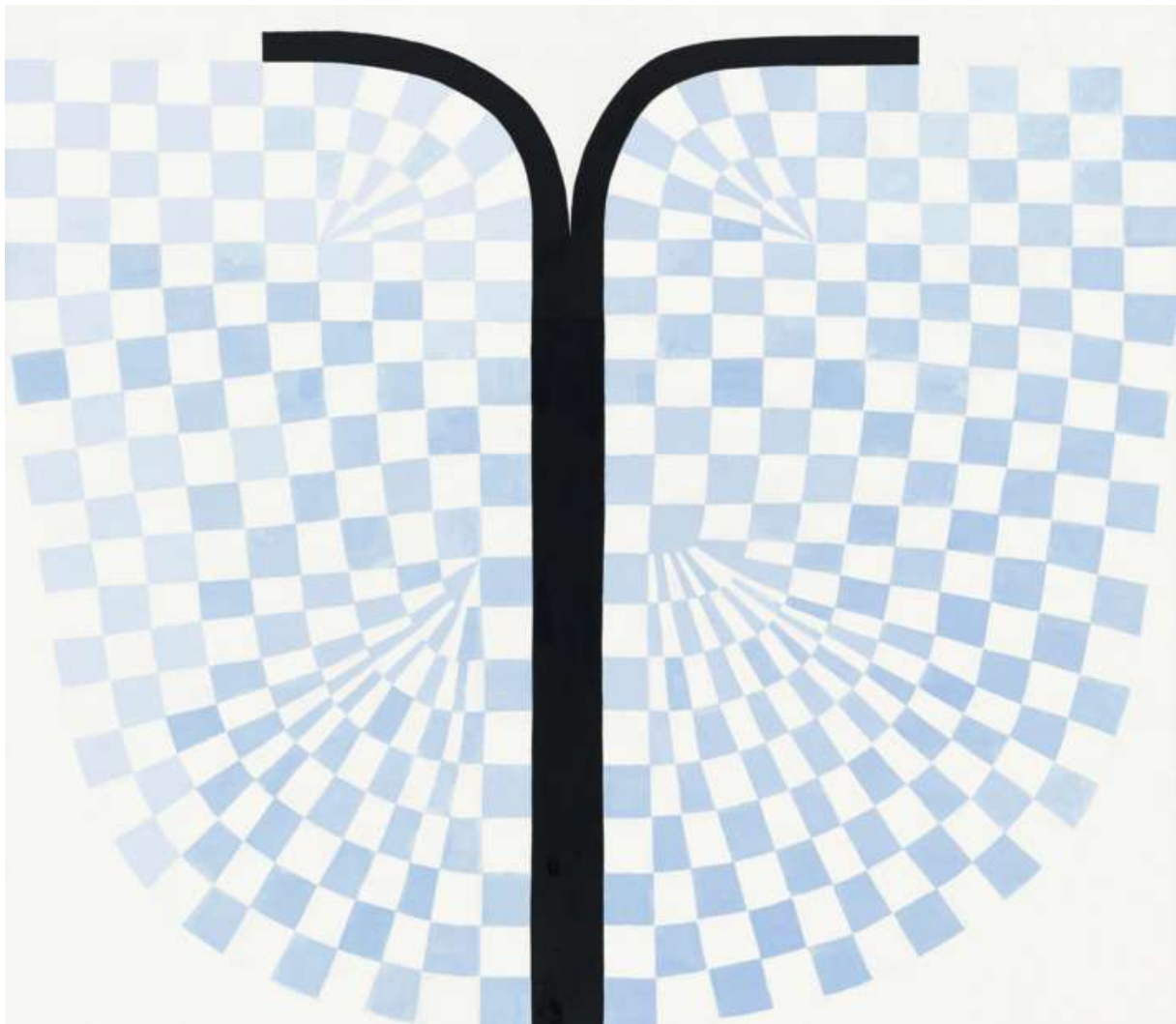
THE CUT

GALLERY

FEBRUARY 4, 2018 8:00 PM

A German Artist's Minimal Blue Masterpieces

By Morgan Sykes



"Schmetterling (Butterfly)", 2017. Photo: Michael Werner Gallery and TRAMPS, New York and London

The German painter Raphaela Simon's *Karo*, her first solo exhibition in New York City, features dreamy deconstructions of snow globes, elephant trunks, and butterflies, as well as abstract renditions of concepts like "comfort." The

<https://www.thecut.com/2018/02/raphaela-simon-paints-minimal-blue-masterpieces.html>

canvases feel like a surreptitious, playful peek into someone else's childlike memories.

Simon, born in 1986, explores recollection and association, with layers of oil paint, added and subtracted to create texture and nuance. According to the show's press release, "The resultant works are both structural and impermanent, as mathematical as they are abstract."

She works with disciplined precision — squares and lines merge together to bend and twist into rounded edges, resulting in simple but sophisticated patterns. These huge nostalgia-scapes are rendered mostly in soft, delicate blues (with an occasional shriek of red) aligned in alternating vertical bands recalling Agnes Martin's stripes, flipped on their side.

In *Karo*, a fountain's arcs of water recall a lock. A pillow is reduced to lines that still suggest softness. Lovers collapse into one another in a minimalist-modernist rendition of Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* (by the same name), and the aforementioned elephant is a bold, alphabetical icon. This exhibit also is a fun opportunity to test-drive some great German vocabulary, like *schmetterling* (butterfly) and *schneekugel* (snow globe). Simon has previously exhibited in Berlin, London, and Los Angeles. Get in this week before the exhibit closes on February 11.

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RAPHAELA SIMON
Roberta Smith review of Karo at Tramps and Michael Werner
Gallery
NY Times, January 17, 2018

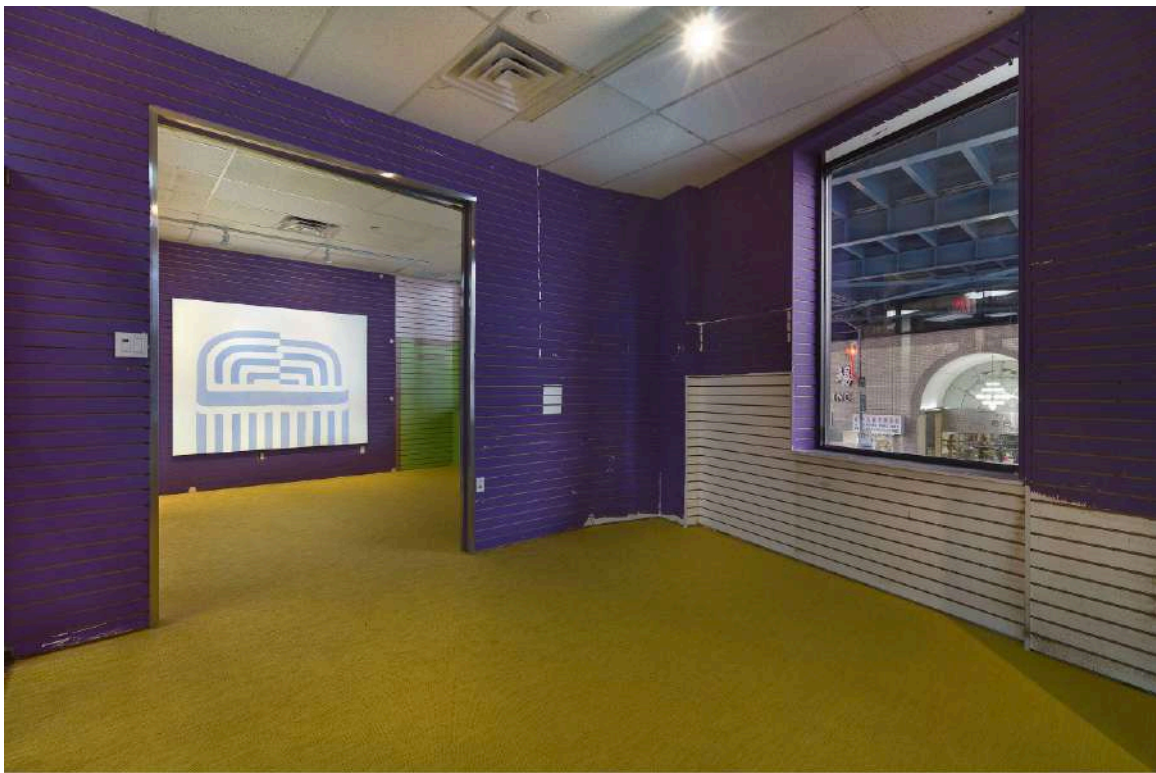
What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By Roberta Smith, Jason Farago, Martha Schwendener and Will Heinrich

January 17, 2018

Raphaela Simon

Through Feb. 11. Tramps and Michael Werner Gallery, 75 East Broadway, second floor, Manhattan; michaelwerner.com.



Raphaela Simon's striped abstractions, with "The Kiss" (2017) framed in the doorway. Credit: Mark Woods/TRAMPS and Michael Werner Gallery

"Karo," the New York solo debut of the talented young German painter Raphaela Simon, is an energizing twofor of art and setting. It proves that the old — in this case striped abstraction — can be made new again and that necessity remains the mother of invention for young art dealers.

The Tramps gallery is a shoestring operation run by Parinaz Mogadassi (who founded the first Tramps in London) in collaboration with the Michael Werner Gallery (her day job). It occupies a series of about 10 tiny glass-walled shops on the second floor of a mall in Manhattan's Chinatown. Their slat-wall paneling and

often strong colors (purple, green and pink) are usually unchanged, and they work well with Ms. Simon's midsize squarish paintings. On this occasion, she explores the territory between representation and pure abstraction with compositions that mostly center on blue and white vertical stripes with bits of black. She cherry-picks ideas about simple geometries (and stripes) from Peter Halley, Frank Stella and Agnes Martin, but filters them through her own notions of wit, scale, materials and abbreviation. It is of utmost importance that her oil surfaces are layered, which gives them solidity, and that the edges of her many stripes rarely seem ruled, which gives them life.

The multispace installation is marvelous. Each little shop isolates one or two paintings, as if in their own pavilion or vitrine, with others always visible through the glass walls. Especially emblematic of Ms. Simon's sensibility is a work installed on a purple wall (the ocher yellow vinyl floor is one of Ms. Mogadassi's few additions). The painting's vertical blue-and-white stripes are interrupted midway by a wider horizontal band above which the verticals resume, bend toward one another and meet. This is "The Kiss," a kind of corporate-seeming homage to [Brancusi's famous sculpture](#), but a sweet one, with matching pajamas. Ms. Simon's other compositions justify, without being too reliant on, titles like "Elephant," "Pharaoh," "Mole" and "Carpet," which features a morphing blue-and-white checkerboard. The paintings' airy serenity seems unfazed by their setting. Does this mean they might never look so good again, or that they're now seasoned, ready for any environment fate throws at them? Either way, Ms. Simon's paintings, in Ms. Mogadassi's variation on the white cube, are something to see.

ROBERTA SMITH