

The background features large, flowing, organic shapes in shades of blue, white, orange, and pink. The blue shapes are the most prominent, creating a sense of movement and depth. The white shapes act as negative space, separating the blue forms. A large orange circle is partially visible on the left side, and a pink shape is at the bottom left.

Andréhn-Schiptjenko

STOCKHOLM PARIS

**Cornelia Baltes**

*Hub Bub*

Andréhn-Schiptjenko,  
Stockholm

May 4 - June 22, 2023



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Hob*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

210 x 150 x 4 cm

(82 5/8 x 59 x 1 5/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Lik*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

210 x 150 x 4 cm

(82 5/8 x 59 x 1 5/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Ehm*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

190 x 140 x 3 cm

(74 3/4 x 55 1/8 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Hon*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

95 x 70 x 3 cm

(37 3/8 x 27 1/2 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Heb*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

95 x 70 x 3 cm

(37 3/8 x 27 1/2 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**  
*Cen*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
70 x 55 x 3 cm  
(27 1/2 x 21 5/8 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Ell*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 40 x 3 cm

(19 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 1 1/8 in.)





**Cornelia Baltes**

*Tja*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 40 x 3 cm

(19 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Hib*, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 40 x 3 cm

(19 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Pek*, 2022

Acrylic and oil stick on canvas

160 x 120 x 6 cm

(63 x 47 1/4 x 2 3/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**

*Ko Au*, 2021

Acrylic and oil stick on canvas

180 x 130 x 3 cm

(70 7/8 x 51 1/8 x 1 1/8 in.)



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Waggle  
Dance*, Rodolphe Janssen,  
Brussels, Belgium, 2022

Photo: HV Photography



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Waggle  
Dance*, Rodolphe Janssen,  
Brussels, Belgium, 2022

Photo: HV Photography



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Public commission with Creator  
Projects, Silkeborg, Denmark, 2021



**Cornelia Baltes**

Public commission with Creator  
Projects, Silkeborg, Denmark,  
2021





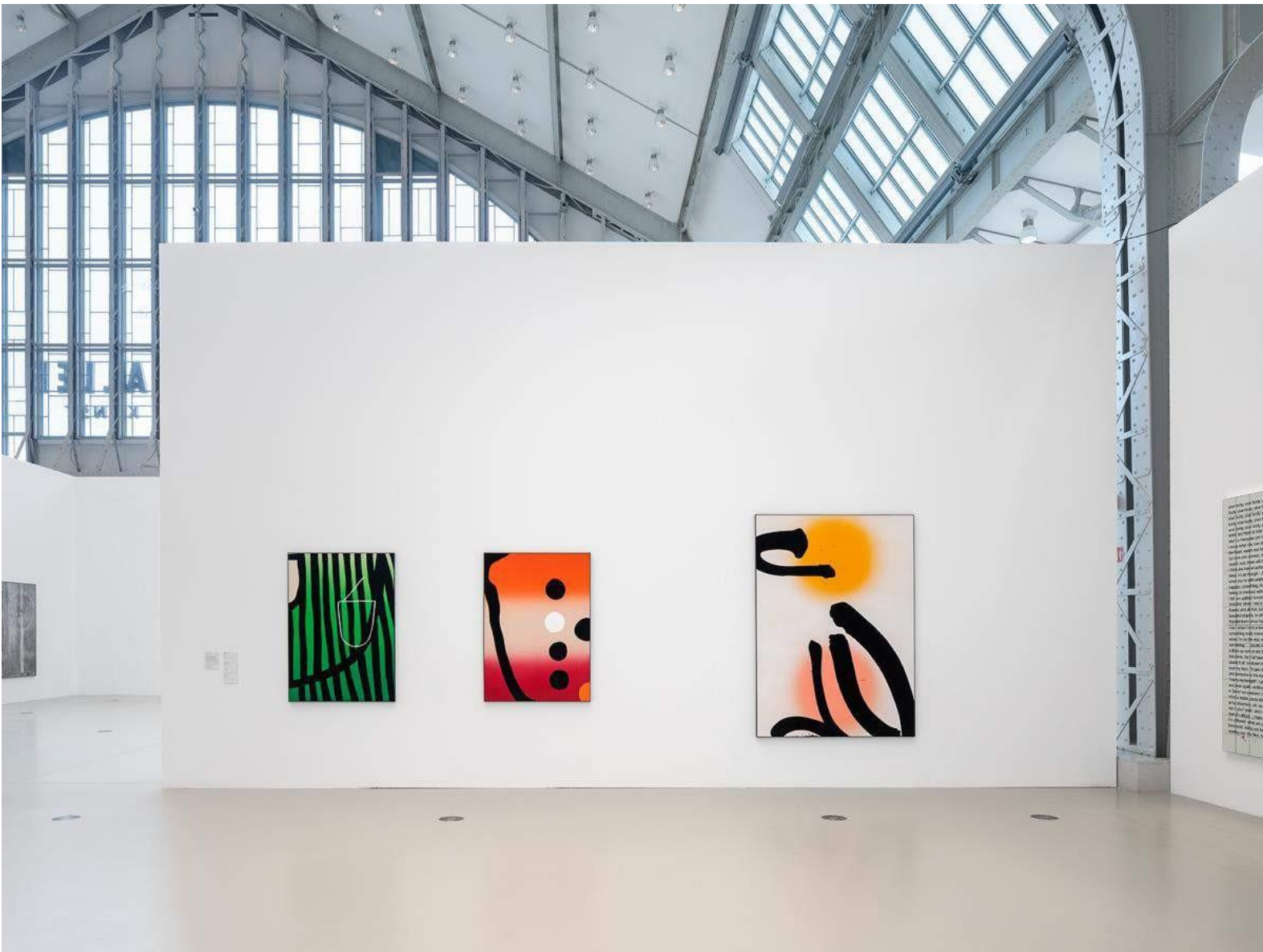
**Cornelia Baltes**  
Public commission with Creator Projects,  
Aarhus, Denmark, 2021



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Public commission with Creator Projects,  
Aarhus, Denmark, 2021

**Cornelia Baltes**  
Public commission with Creator Projects,  
Aarhus, Denmark, 2021





**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Now! Painting in Germany Today*, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany, 2020



**Cornelia Baltes**

Installation view, *Now! Painting in Germany Today*, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany, 2020



**Cornelia Baltes**

Installation view, *Jetzt! - Young Painting*,  
Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany, 2019



**Cornelia Baltes**

Installation view, *Jetzt! - Young Painting*,  
Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany, 2019



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, Chapter Arts Center,  
Cardiff, United Kingdom, 2018



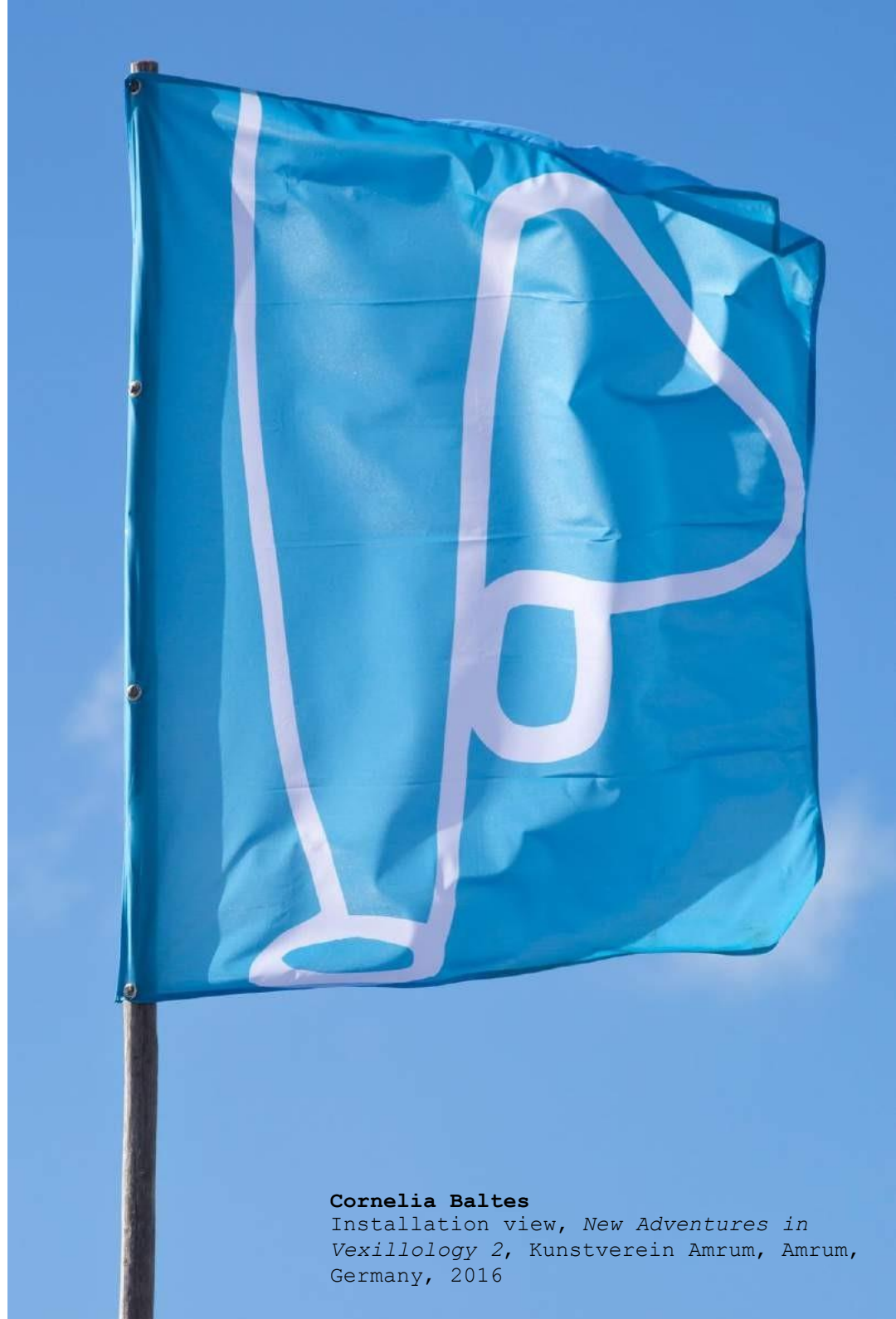


**Cornelia Baltes**

Installation view, Chapter Arts Center,  
Cardiff, United Kingdom, 2018



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, Chapter Arts  
Center, Cardiff, United Kingdom,  
2018



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *New Adventures in Vexillology 2*, Kunstverein Amrum, Amrum, Germany, 2016



**Cornelia Baltes**

Installation view, *Turner*, Northern Gallery  
for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, United  
Kingdom, 2015



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Turner*, Northern Gallery  
for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, United  
Kingdom, 2015



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Turner*,  
Northern Gallery for  
Contemporary Art,  
Sunderland, United Kingdom,  
2015



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Tiny Dancer*,  
Kunstverein Ulm, Ulm, Germany,  
2015



**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Tiny Dancer*,  
Kunstverein Ulm, Ulm, Germany,  
2015





**Cornelia Baltes**  
Installation view, *Tiny Dancer*,  
Kunstverein Ulm, Ulm, Germany,  
2015

# Andréhn-Schiptjenko

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## **CORNELIA BALTES**

Born 1978 in Mönchengladbach, Germany.

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

www.corneliabaltes.com

## **Education**

**2009-11** MFA, Slade School of Fine Art, London, United Kingdom.

**2003-06** Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen, Germany.

**2000-03** Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany.

## **Solo Exhibitions (selected)**

**2023** *Hub Bub*, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm, Sweden.

**2022** *Waggle Dance*, Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels, Belgium.

*Lazybones*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, USA.

**2021** *Eigenbrötler*, EIGEN + ART Lab, Berlin, Germany.

**2020** *Tit for Tat*, Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, Denmark.

**2018** *Teamwork*, Frutta, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

*Wallpaintings*, Chapter Arts Center, Cardiff, United Kingdom.

*Mingle Mime*, Bolte Lang, Zurich, Switzerland.

**2015** *Gone Fishing (mit Jean-Philippe Dordolo)*, Centrum Berlin, Germany.

*Tiny Dancer*, Kunstverein Ulm, Ulm, Germany.

**2013** *Schnick Schnack Schnuck!*, Limoncello, London, United Kingdom.

*There's a Light and a Whistle for Attracting Attention*, DREI, Cologne, Germany.

**2012** *HOOLOOVOO*, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

**2010** *The Great Loop Forward*, Tank Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

## **Group Exhibitions (selected)**

**2023** *NO ILLUSIONS - Painting in Space*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

**2022** *Trio Feminin*, Christine König Galerie, Vienna, Austria.

*Girl Meets Girl*, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Oslo, Norway.

*Neun Positionen der Jungen Malerei*, Landesmuseum Detmold, Detmold, Germany.

**2021** *Jahresgaben*, Kunstverein Reutlingen, Reutlingen, Germany.

*Schau...7*, Kunsthaus Kollitsch, Klagenfurt, Germany.

**2020** *Cadmium Lemon*, Galeria Pelaires, Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

*You Can Do Better - Bad Painting*, Elektrohalle Rhomberg, Salzburg, Austria.

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- Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland*, Deichtorhallen  
Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.
- 2019** *Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland*, Kunstmuseum Bonn,  
Bonn, Germany.
- 2018** *The Everyday and Extraordinary*, Birmingham Museum and Art  
Gallery / Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, United Kingdom.
- 2017** *Schau 4*, Kunsthaus Kollitsch, Klagenfurt, Austria.  
*An Eyeful of Wry*, Government Art Collection, Hull, United  
Kingdom.  
*You See Me Like a UFO*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, London,  
United Kingdom.  
*Jump*, Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
*Home is Not a Place*, German Embassy London, United Kingdom.  
*Every Line Tells Its Own Story*, Nathalie Halgand, Vienna,  
Austria.  
*31 Women*, Breese Little, London, United Kingdom.  
*Jump Ball*, Dio Horia, Mykonos, Greece.  
*Cinque Mostre*, American Academy, Rome, Italy.  
*Jokes on Painting*, Schau Fenster, Berlin, Germany.
- 2016** *Catherine Biocca, Cornelia Baltes, Rosalie Schweiker*,  
Mission Gallery, Swansea, United Kingdom.  
*Double Acts*, At Home Salon, London, United Kingdom.  
*Alice in Crisis*, Dio Horia, Mykonos, Greece.  
*New Adventures in Vexillology 2*, Kunstverein Amrun, Amrun,  
Germany.  
*Life Eraser*, Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy.  
*Your Swath, My Jab*, DREI, Cologne, Germany.  
*Inflatable Aesthetics*, Hawaii-Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal.  
*True Love Over Physics*, Coma Gallery, Sydney, Australia.  
*Wilhelm Screams*, The Landing Strip, Berlin, Germany.  
*Gestalt and Werden*, Feldbusch Wiesner Rudolph, Berlin,  
Germany.
- 2015** *Women's Art Society II*, MOSTYN, Wales, United Kingdom.  
*Oh, Of Course, You Were Berry Picking*, DREI, Cologne,  
Germany.
- 2014** *Feel the Discourse*, Guest Projects, London, United Kingdom.  
*100 Painters of Tomorrow*, Christie's/Beers Contemporary  
London, United Kingdom.  
*Off the Wall*, Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Nuremberg, Germany.  
*East London Painting Prize - Shortlist Show*, Bow Arts,  
London, United Kingdom.  
*VitalArts*, The Royal London Hospital, London, United  
Kingdom.  
*Apples and Pears*, DREI, Cologne, Germany.
- 2013** *Curiosity and Method*, Less is More Projects, Paris, France.

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- Carousel*, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, United Kingdom.  
*Nur Was Nicht Ist Ist Möglich - Malerei im Raum*, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany.\*
- 2012** *Zero Gravity*, Less is More Projects, Paris, France.  
*Chimera Q.T.E.*, Cell Project Space, London, United Kingdom.  
*P/N/7 The Summary Show*, Project Number, London, United Kingdom.  
*Summer Exhibition*, Royal Academy London, London, United Kingdom.  
*Curatorial Spotlight*, FordProject, New York, USA.
- 2011** *Young British Art II*, Dienstgebäude, Zurich, Switzerland.  
*Crash Open Salon Show*, Charlie Dutton Gallery, London, United Kingdom.  
*Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2011: In the Presence ICA*, London, United Kingdom.\*  
*Postgraduate Printmaking Exhibition 2011*, Clifford Chance, London, United Kingdom.  
*Helter Skelter*, UCLH Arts, London, United Kingdom.  
*Jealous Graduate Print Prize*, Jealous Gallery, London, United Kingdom.  
*Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2011*, Site Gallery/ S1 ArtSpace, Sheffield, United Kingdom.\*  
*MA/MFA Show 2011*, Slade School of Fine Art London, United Kingdom.
- 2010** *John Moores Painting Prize*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, United Kingdom.\*  
*Istanbul was Constantinople*, Hush Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey.  
*Slade Interim Show*, Woburn Research Center, London, United Kingdom.  
*Art in Focus: Black and White Flower Painting*, St. Mary's Hospice, London, United Kingdom.  
*Threads*, Tank Gallery, London, United Kingdom.  
*Exhibitionism*, Eastwing 9 The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, London, United Kingdom.
- 2008** *3 in 1*, Kunsthaus Essen, Essen, Germany.  
*Große Kunstausstellung NRW*, Museum Kunst Palast Duesseldorf, Duesseldorf, Germany.\*
- 2007** *Love Stories*, GAM - Galerie am Museum, Essen, Germany.  
*Ches Nouz*, Kunsthaus Essen, Essen, Germany.
- 2006** *Enface*, Diploma exhibition, Forum for Art and Architecture, Essen, Germany.  
*Pentiment - Show*, Summer Academy, Hamburg, Germany.  
Ruhrpuls Music and Art Festival, Bochum, Germany.  
*Herrengedeck*, Gallery Brave Lotte, Duisburg, Germany.

\* catalogue

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## Grants and awards

- 2020** Neustart-Kultur, Kunstfonds Bonn e.V.
- 2016** Working Grant, Kunstfonds Bonn e.V.
- 2015** Project Grant, Kunststiftung NRW.
- 2014** Marianne Defet Painting Fellowship (selected by Kunsthalle Nuremberg).
- 2014** Public Art Commission, VitalArts, London.
- 2011** Graduate Printmaking Prize Winner, Jealous Gallery.
- 2010** Finalist, John Moores Painting Prize.
- 2009-11** Hartmut und Lore Schuler-Stiftung, Wuppertal.
- 2006** Scholarship, Pentiment Academy Hamburg.

10 SEPTEMBER 2022

## INTERVIEW: CORNELIA BALTES

INTERVIEWS

ARTISTS  
CURATORS  
IN CONVERSATION

BY ANNA-LENA WERNER



Studio Cornelia Baltes, Photo credit: Cornelia Baltes

A bold and strong palette marks the surfaces of **Cornelia Baltes'** large paintings: The German artist and London Slade School alumni perfected the play between abstract and figurative motifs on intense colour fields. Gradients, spray colours and fine brushstrokes are applied in thin layers. A shape that we may recognise on the canvases could be a peach or a bottom, or perhaps a set of eyes – these forever undefined "characters", as Baltes refers to her paintings, convey joyfulness and humour. While preparing her solo exhibition "Waggle Dance" at **Galerie Rodolphe Janssen** in Brussels, we met in her Berlin studio to talk about how she defines titles for her works, about paintings as theatrical objects and about archives of ideas.

Anna-Lena Werner

Cornelia, what will be the title for the show at Rodolphe Janssen in Brussels?

Cornelia Baltes

It will be "Waggle Dance", which is the dance a worker bee does to tell the rest of the hive about the location of, for example, a new source of nectar.

ALW

Typically, your works and exhibitions have short titles. What do these words relate to?

CB

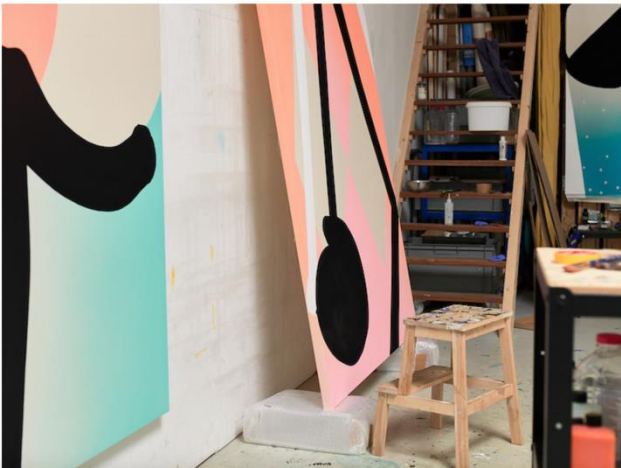
My paintings always feel like 'characters' or 'personalities' to me. The process of making them relates to a dialog. Installing them in a more site-specific way turns them into characters on a stage. For these reasons, I came up with a system of naming the works. I started with short Scandinavian first names, which morphed over time into abstract last names. It's basically a flexible framework which acknowledges the individuality of the works: there is often a process of trying to find a title that feels onomatopoeically 'correct' – that is, a word that immediately relates to an optical image. It would feel neglectful to me to leave them untitled.

ALW

Why do you never use German titles?

CB

Probably because I received my main art education in London, and I'm so used to all the contextualising and art-thinking happening in English. I like the lightness of the language but also the culture and art of the UK. I once titled one show here in Berlin in German and that felt – in retrospect – a bit rugged.



Studio Cornelia Baltes, Photo credit: Cornelia Baltes

ALW

The paintings' names feed into this indefinite play between figuration and abstraction, or narration and reduction taking place on most of your works. The titles seem to enhance the insecurity regarding the motif one tries to identify on your paintings...

CB

...I try to keep the names as open as the paintings to avoid being didactic or shutting down potential readings. They are not called "Tomas" or "Dan", for example.

ALW

What drew you to the title "Waggle Dance"? Have you recently become interested in Apirary?

CB

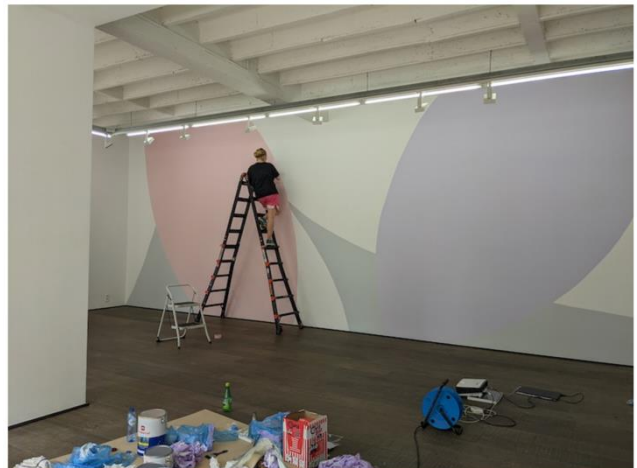
I did lots of sketches in the Botanical Garden in Berlin prior to the show. The result was that shapes and colours found their way into the work that might refer to 'flowers'. The bees aren't in there, but maybe we could think about the audience as the bees?! Another resonance I enjoy is that the waggle dance(s) the worker bees do form very clear, symmetrical patterns. It's a fascinating, efficient and visual form of communication, which reminds me of the direct way of communicating that the pared down palette and gesture of my paintings uses - skipping the frontal cortex and going in more directly.

ALW

Do some of these botanical sketches appear in the exhibition?

CB

This was very early preparatory work for me. It was mostly about the process of observing and 'soaking up' colours, shapes, emotions, environments... Sketching helps me to slow down, and to look and observe more carefully. I sketch more in my studio without referring to this preparation. The important thing was being there in a very receptive state. The way I access this information is through memory rather than returning to the sketches themselves.



Cornelia Baltes, preparing the mural for her exhibition "Waggle Dance" at Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels

ALW

I remember, once in your previous studio, you showed me a box full of sketches...

CB

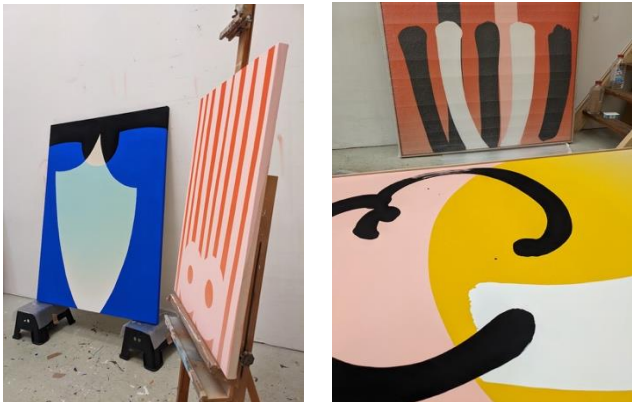
...I still do the box! I must sketch A LOT to find a sketch that provides a starting point for a painting. The boxes are part of an ongoing editing process. Some sketches turn into works many years later and many never do, but I'm a big hoarder and can't throw the sketches away.

ALW

The box I saw was one of many, and it was crowded with sketches that you had been doing over a period of time. When you are preparing for new works or a specific exhibition, do you then flicker through the boxes that you have already, or do you start with a new and specific idea?

CB

Often, I find it easier to see a new painting paired with an older sketch from my archive of ideas. It's a diagonal approach.



Studio Cornelia Baltes, Photo credit: Cornelia Baltes

AWL

How about the colouring of your paintings? How do you determine the colours of the brushstrokes, the spray, the colour-fields or gradients being shown within one exhibition?

CB

The ideas for colours come in different ways. Sometimes it's obvious to me. Sometimes it's a much longer process and I find myself chewing over the colours for a long time. Also, despite being totally convinced about colour choices, sometimes when I step back and look at the finished work, I realise that they were just wrong, and I do the whole painting again. This is annoying, but I've learned that I must accept it all as part of the process. When I'm finalising a group of paintings for one concrete show, it also feels as if I'm more observative of my environment. Like the other day, I found some inspiration in an ice cream advertisement. I am aware of the paintings as a group and think carefully about how they interact with each other and the other elements of the installation.

ALW

Some of your paintings reveal one or more gradient colours in the first layer. How come to working with gradients?

CB

I started to work with spray paint in 2014, in search of a way to apply bold fields of colour. Doing so with brushes can be quite tricky and requires several layers, so I started to work with spray cans.

Things developed naturally with the new medium. I tested the water with a borrowed airbrush on a dodgy compressor and things quickly snowballed from there. I find that I'm now at the point where I'm becoming more formally refined in terms of how I'm making use of this particular tool. It's an important part of the language I'm using, but I'm letting it take more of a supporting role in recent bodies of work.

ALW

Where do you do the spraying?

CB

I now have a spray booth with extraction and an airlock in my studio: after years of spending more time on cleaning than working.

ALW

I noticed that very few works of yours are small-scale. Why do you choose for them to be so big?

CB

I somehow have a tendency for big scale paintings. I think it's the body of the viewer and its relation to the gesture. Aside from that it's the physical connection of the paintings to the space they're installed in. Small paintings often appear like a window. My paintings are not windows, they are objects in the space...

ALW

...which you often extend with murals and colour fields on the walls.

CB

Yes, I like to 'surround' the viewer, I want to embrace them with the work. Currently I am considering placing a carpet in this show, but I'm not sure yet. Some works are still being finalised and I need to resolve the final installation of all the elements simultaneously.

ALW

Do you see your work related to the theatre?

CB

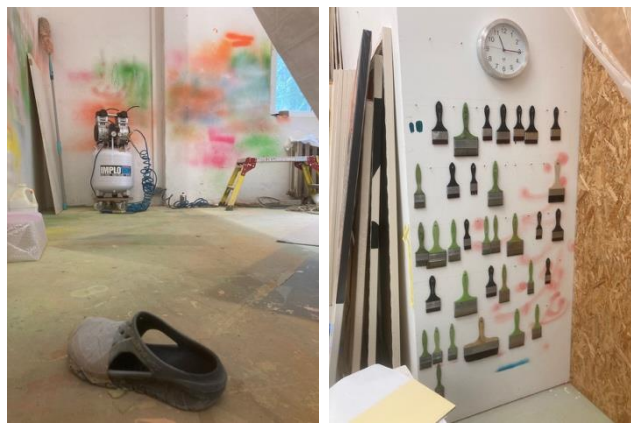
Yes, I often think of a stage – a scenery, with a participatory element. Sometimes it's just the different vantage points and lines of sight when the works are installed in the space. In a more literal sense, I once did a show where paintings on wheels could be rearranged in the space by the audience.

ALW

Speaking of participatory elements, I wonder whether you enjoy interacting with people when they look at your work, or whether you prefer to be outside of that perception process?

CB

I like to be there and see the reaction of the audience, but ideally without them knowing that I'm the artist. What I really enjoy is doing public art projects. I recently did a mural in a gym in Aarhus in Denmark and a few years ago a piece for The Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. These works are made for everyone passing through, outside the gallery context and they can be part of someone's daily life. Soon I'm doing my first public sculpture in London: abstract swans will sit in a water basin in front of the new Elizabeth Line station in Canary Wharf – a powder coated, steel sculpture. Stressed people arrive there, arriving with the tube and heading towards their offices. The sculpture is supposed to be beautiful and awkward at the same time. My point here was to make something funny and joyful.



Studio Cornelia Baltes, Photo credit: Anna-Lena Werner

ALW

I believe your aesthetic language has always been joyful, but it has gradually become more abstract and reduced. Why do you think this happened?

CB

I do notice an ebb and flow and I would say that the works move on a certain spectrum - sometimes more and sometimes a bit less reduced. In terms of a clear shift, my work totally changed about 12 years ago during the Master program in London. At that time, I found a way to make my peace between my painting practice and my graphic design past. I understood my big desire for communicating in a straightforward way through colour, and reduced form - amplification through simplification.



Cornelia Baltes, Photo credit: Joe Clark / joelark.photo

Cornelia Baltes graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art; London in 2011. She has exhibited in solo and group shows at Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz; Museum Wiesbaden; Chapter Arts Center, Cardiff; Mostyn, Llandudno (Wales); Northern Gallery for Contemporary Arts, Sunderland (UK); ICA London, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Kunsthalle Nuremberg; Museum Folkwang (Essen); Museum Kunst Palast Dusseldorf among many others.

This interview was conducted in July 2022 and also appeared in the catalogue for Cornelia Baltes exhibition "Waggle Dance" at Rodolphe Janssen in Brussels.

## Cornelia Baltes Shows Us How To Play Among Paintings

Martin Herbert | Reviews | 10 May 2021 | ArtReview

According to the exhibition checklist, Cornelia Baltes's *Eigenbrötler* (or 'Loner') comprises eight paintings – some on the wall, some suspended and double-sided – and three murals; but actually navigating it gives you the impression of being in the midst of one big, spatialised painting. The German-born, Slade-educated artist's aesthetic is outwardly reductive, favouring restful, slow-modulating colour gradients topped with thick, confident, almost cartoonish gestural marks that can recall closeup scribbles or, more fancily, high modernism. You'll glimpse allusions here to Robert



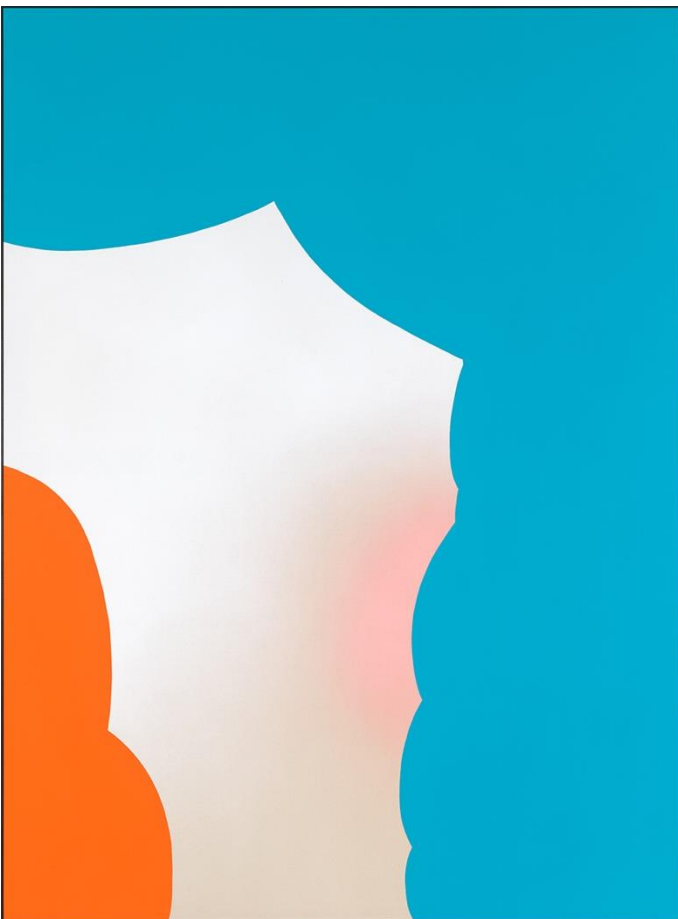
*Eigenbrötler*, 2021 (installation view). Courtesy Eigen + Art Lab, Berlin

Looking around, you see colours and forms continually articulated and then picked up elsewhere, winking across the room, usually a little tweaked in transit. The white-and-yellow palette broadly recurs in a painting tucked round the corner, whose addition of a thickly black-lined squiggle in turn recurs, modulated, in other canvases. Head to a far corner of the second room and look back, and the space turns into a minisymphony of cool blues and juicy oranges. Individually the canvases are enjoyable enough in a quick-hit way, a melange of high abstraction and Pop minimalism. But it's when you feel like you're composing yourself – taking a step to the left or right, backward or forwards, so a new set of planes aligns and the colours high-five each other – that they take off. In this manner, Baltes manages to fold relational art and the networked painting that peaked a decade ago into her taxonomy of styles. It's not the most taxing approach in the world but it's not lightweight either, just easeful and exceptionally convivial, and at this present juncture, a balm. Before you know it, you're out on the floor, doing her dance.

*Cornelia Baltes: Eigenbrötler at Eigen + Art Lab, Berlin, 5 March – 10 April*

*First published in the April 2021 issue of ArtReview*

Martin Herbert | Reviews | 10 May 2021 | ArtReview



*Mina*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 230 × 170 cm. Courtesy the artist and Eigen + Art Lab, Berlin

Motherwell's midcentury *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* canvases and, in the opening painting – an obliquely semicircular form in Persian blue cradled in an elbow of pink – to Ellsworth Kelly. But that painting sits against a larger abstract mural, a buttery expanse of unmodulated yellow upon white, the contours of which line up with shapes in the painting, making it clear that Baltes is proposing a playful conversation between pictorial elements, and questioning where a painting might end, or not end.

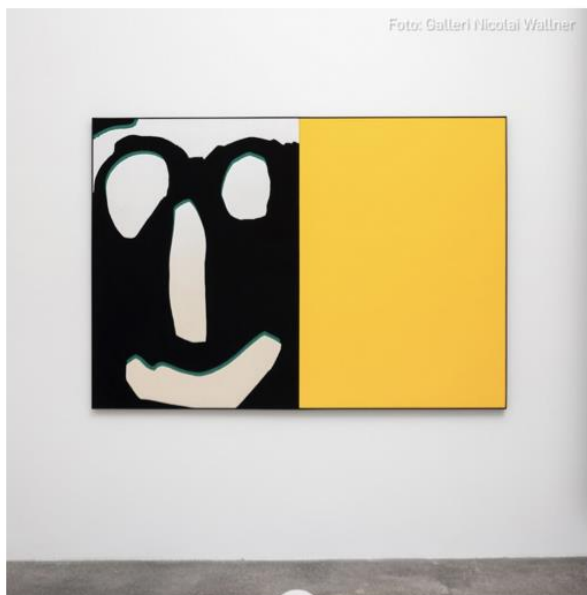


## ART AND CULTURE SECTION 18. NOVEMBER 2020

PETER MICHAEL HORNING  
Art editor

### 5 hearts: These brave paintings will make you smile

As a painter, Cornelia Baltes expresses herself so childishly simple yet at the same time in a direct manner, that she is reminiscent of a minimalist – 50 years after minimalism. One automatically comes to smile at the sight of her picture, and it is to be welcomed.



Humor in modern art is a rarity, especially if we are talking about art with a certain international wingspan. Right now, one can see such a rarity on display.

Cornelia Baltes' bright clear and strong colors are right for a children's room. And the simple and curved or slanted lines that the German artist uses in her paintings can well be confused with humor.

Even the titles of the pictures are reminiscent of cheerful words in a nursery rhyme.

For they consist of only three letters, such as 'Con', 'Noy', 'Soy', 'Nic', 'Yee', 'Yeb' and 'Loy'. Do these little words mean anything at all? It's not something you can look up in the dictionary and find an easy explanation for.

If we insist on talking about humor, however, the humorous effect is hardly intentional on the part of the artist. It is merely a consequence of the striking and disarmed simplicity with which she dishes up her imagery as well as her titles. What you see is what you get. But the fact that you get nothing but the little that you see ignites a suspicion of a hidden presence of something



**Cornelia Baltes: Tit for Tat.** Galleri Nicolai Wallner.  
Glentevej 47-49, København. Til 19. dec.

Is it conceivable that these images are a kind of surfaces, but with a hidden depth, and that they hide on visual codes that the eye cannot capture? Is there a system in the way Cornelia Baltes applies the colors from the color circles? And is it with well-advised mind that she somewhere lets the complementary colors be neighbors and thus challenges the viewer's sensory apparatus?

Recognizable shapes appear in her works, such as a face, a leg, a triangle or a letter. But still, one would hardly describe the images as typically figurative. On the other hand, they are not abstract either. For the colored forms of the image touch a kind of sign language. The question is simply what the signs allude to.

#### An extra wall

It can also seem a bit confusing if even a half-sized picture like 'Con' does not stop at the actual frame, which the picture otherwise always does, but continues out on the wall.

So should you decide to acquire this work for your home, space must also be set aside for an extra wall. Thus, more than hinting that a painting is not always just a delimited object and that it cannot necessarily just be moved to a completely different location.

The wall can also be an integral part of an image hanging on it.

In another image such as 'Soy' shows that Cornelia Baltes not only uses a brush and paint as work tools, but also scissors. For her untraditional method also opens the possibility that a shape can be cut, or cut out of her painting, so that it suddenly becomes a painted collage.

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#### Her idiom is so clear that you think you must have overlooked something

According to Artfact, Cornelia Baltes ranks among the 1,000 most important artists in Germany. That itself is not very impressive. It is perhaps also not impressive that the 42-year-old artist has had exhibitions in England and Switzerland - and now in Denmark, for the second time.



'Con'. Yes, common for all the titles of Cornelia Baltes' paintings: very short. When the price of this picture is as high as DKK 342,000, it is because the wall is part of the work.

But her pictures are directly impressive. In 2020 - all pictures are from this year - it requires some courage to paint paintings for a wall. For neither the medium nor the technique can be considered avant-garde.

It also requires a special courage if one, half a hundred years after the end of minimalism, wants to create a pictorial expression that appears as minimal, simple and childishly manageable as her work does.

The title of the exhibition, 'Tit for Tat', is about retaliation, about giving someone a spoonful of his or her own medicine. What Cornelia Baltes will retaliate or avenge is unclear. But her idiom, on the other hand, is so clear that you think you must have overlooked something.

If you're going to smile at all this clarity, it does not have to be for the sake of the pictures alone. Maybe you just need it at a time when too much is very serious without being particularly clear.

# ARTFORUM

## Cornelia Baltes

LIMONCELLO

340-344 Kingsland Road

January 15–February 20

Interrupting the view from the entrance of Cornelia Baltes's show is a large suspended canvas. On it, a bright blue fade and two U shapes are contained by a wobbling matte black background. Initially, these forms register as a strange alien creature with closed eyes, but quickly they reconfigure into the rear of a pair of jeans. The title: *Steve* (all works 2015–16). *Steve* turns out to be bum-to-bum with *Monika*, a set of raw canvas legs outlined in more black with horizontal bands of red and blue, suggesting sport socks or anklets. Nearby, *Fin* is set at an angle, just off the wall, while *Greg* leans back. The two hang little more than ten centimeters apart and are flirting like mad. *Cindy* wrings her fingers in the corner . . . Perhaps she likes *Greg*, too. *Hendrik's* loitering in the back of the gallery with *Twinkle*. *Untitled (Electrolytes)* consists of two inverted swoops of bright yellow set over a pure white surface, while *Feathers* has three gradating orange-to-white ovals straddling a naive-looking E routed into the MDF support. These two works are spaced between but away from the two main clusters of their anthropomorphic counterparts; ornaments in the backdrop of this hip gathering.

Baltes's titles are suggestive yet elusive, just like her imagery. Their mostly mono-word format aptly echoes the reductive and quirky qualities of her approach. Real-world observations inform but fall away from her stylized works. Though the artist's clean and unabashedly chic graphic sensibility suffuses this exhibition, the occasional scuff or rough drag of paint satisfyingly upsets the status quo of tidy lines, flat colors, and expertly graduated shades. Baltes's ability to imbue rigorously conceived form with playfulness and humor is impressive. And though her "cool kids" look decidedly "in," their visible, kooky neuroses manage to charm and utterly endear.

— Nicholas John Jones



View of "Cornelia Baltes," 2016.



From top:  
**Lars Laumann**  
*Morrissey Foretelling the Death of Diana (2006)*  
 Installation view at Kunstneres Hus, Oslo (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist and Kunstneres Hus, Oslo

**Jemma Egan**  
*Don't get fresh with me (detail, 2016)*  
 Installation view at Zabudowicz Collection, London (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist and Zabudowicz Collection, London  
 Photography by Tim Bowditch

**Cornelia Baltes**  
*"Drunk Octopus Wants to Fight"*  
 Installation view at Limoncello, London (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist and Limoncello, London  
 Photography by Andy Keate



## Jemma Egan

Zabudowicz Collection / London

In her show at the Zabudowicz Collection in London, Jemma Egan examines food as commodity: its production, packaging, presentation and promotion. The exhibition is titled "It Means More to Me than Most People" — a quote pulled from a documentary on the Pizza Hut restaurant chain, in which an employee expresses his profound attachment to the product he sells. Egan too seems to express a reluctance to poke fun at her subject matter investigating instead the depths of our complicity with consumer capitalism.

The dominant work in Egan's three-piece exhibition is *Porkies* (2016), a series of clusters of soothing pink silicone rubber tubes arranged evenly around the room, resting on benches along the wall or dangling, like jungle vegetation, from exposed beams in the ceiling. However, the name of the sculpture-installation betrays a subtle antagonism: the pastel pink (closely resembling Pamela Rozenkranz's sea of standardized Northern European skin tone at last year's Venice Biennial) insists on a simultaneous signification of pigskin and, thus, the horrors of the mechanized meat industry. This clash of positive and negative signifiers in the highly designed commodity marks the archetypal ambivalence in the consumer. Egan notes Barthes' essay "Ornamental Cookery" as having particularly influenced her research.

A mural that takes up one whole wall of the room is revealed, on closer inspection (also of the press release), to be made with baby oil on untreated MDF. It depicts fragmented mouths of smiley faces half agape, reproduced serially à la Warhol's silkscreen process, leaving or even accentuating the faults of the printing method — suggesting a pop sensibility that aligns Egan with a historical tradition of engaging the consumer product in the artwork. With her uniquely visceral sculptural vocabulary, this recently graduated artist has much to say about the intersecting aesthetic and ethical implications of contemporary consumerism.

by Jeppe Ugelvig

## Cornelia Baltes

Limoncello / London

The title of Cornelia Baltes's exhibition "Drunk Octopus Wants to Fight" comes from a photograph that went viral on the Internet — an image of a coat hook-cum-inebriated angry octopus. Baltes's nine small-to-mid-scale paintings oscillate between the tropes of abstraction and figuration, shifting depending on how you see these signifiers.

Many of her shapes are corporeal, recalling long limbs, bottoms, boobs, fingers or nails. These are painted in a caricatured and witty — even bawdy — style. Works such as *Greg or Fin* (both 2016) suggest anthropomorphic portraits of body parts. In *Steve* (2015) we are reminded of the eponymous drunk octopus with two sucker-bearing arms of cornflower blue; equally, two buttocks in a pair of jelly-like jeans are cheekily suggested (pun intended). *Cindy* (2016) sees trashy false fingernails depicted in neon orange that graduates into canary yellow, fingers interlaced and outlined in white against black — or perhaps these are psychedelically glowing sperms.

Referring to markings from the artist's sketchbook, her once spontaneous gestures have been refined and reproduced upon canvas and colored MDF. Smooth, two-dimensional forms sit on the surface plane devoid of any sense of the artist's touch; seemingly uniform, upon closer inspection, sections of MDF have been hollowed out with a router, emptiness looking like black paint. The effect is discombobulating and funny, opening up the void-like space behind the "flat" painting (à la Lucio Fontana, though with entirely different intentions).

Evoking a playful mood, Baltes's practice feels joyful: black squiggles dance between yellow arches; baby pink circles glide through a graduated-blue tube, like bubble-gum platelets. Following the art-historical precedents of Philip Guston's cartoonish manner or David Shrigley's humor, Baltes enables a reassessment of everyday objects, even our own bodies, through a spirited lightness. Try to see her work and not smile; you'll struggle.

by Louisa Elderton

## Lars Laumann

Kunstneres Hus / Oslo

It's a good thing that the last day of Lars Laumann's exhibition at Kunstneres Hus coincides with the artist's opening at the gallery VI, VII. Because it takes a little pathos out of the concept of a mid-career retrospective that the show at Kunstneres Hus presents itself as. It is already eight years since his surprisingly touching tale of tragic love, *Berlinmuren* (2008), made a considerable splash at the 5th Berlin Biennale; and already ten since his quirky tour de force of editing and fanboydom, *Morrissey Foretelling the Death of Diana* (2006), first garnered international attention.

His attraction hasn't worn thin, but it is rewarding seeing those now-historical pieces in relation to his more recent work, which is less invested in the kind of novelty that helped those earlier works gain notice. One can follow the trajectory of an already quite accomplished artist as he hones his focus on the relevant aspects of his narratives — a sincere investment in a very specific story, but paired with an acute awareness of a larger geopolitical situation — as seen in *Prima Secunda Africa!* (2014), an exploration of African and Nordic coastal landscapes and the trading of Norway's earliest global export, stockfish.

This evolution also informs the publication that accompanied the exhibition, available not in print but online as a free download. Presenting the texts in the films, the book establishes that Laumann not only finds exceptional, too-good-to-be-true tales, but that he is a convincing and sincerely empathic storyteller. In its focus on the texts, the book allows the viewer to become a reader, to delve into both their poetic subtleties and slapstick moments, where the mundane reverberates with the existential. "I just want to be myself," is the protagonist's conclusion in Laumann's most recent and maybe most accomplished project, *Season of Migration to the North* (2015). As a refugee from Sudan, he compares his experience to those in the diaries of a young Jewish woman fleeing Nazi Austria for Oslo. It leaves the viewer and reader curious — but also anxious — for what will come next.

by Andreas Schlaegel



[Work / Art](#)

## Cornelia Baltes, the creator of delicious fine art

◀ 17

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Words by [Lucy Bourton](#), [Tuesday 18 October 2016](#)

Cornelia Baltes is a German born artist who completed an MFA at the prestigious Slade School of Fine Art. Living and working between London and Berlin, the artist has had an immense amount of solo exhibitions as well as contributing to a wealth of group shows since 2007. This consistent production of high quality work is quite the rarity within the realms of fine art, but it doesn't appear that Cornelia seems to be stopping anytime soon.

Her most recent exhibition at London's [Limoncello](#) gallery *Drunk Octopus Wants To Fight* displayed the progression of Cornelia's refined practice. Her pieces resonate with shapes and a colour palette similar to an illustrator's work, but it is Cornelia's encouragement of audience interaction that elevates her as a fine artist.

For instance in *Turner*, an exhibition of her work at the [Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art](#) in Sunderland last year, each of Cornelia's paintings were installed on wheels on the floor of the exhibition space, in order to be moved, arranged and curated by the audience. For such luscious pieces of work this interaction is a treat; the artworks are so appetising you want to hold them. Rather than being guarded on a gallery wall Cornelia invites you to enjoy them up close.



**Cornelia Baltes: Drunk Octopus Wants To Fight**



Cornelia Baltes: Turner



Cornelia Baltes: Turner

Cornelia Baltes: *Drunk Octopus wants to fight* at  
Limoncello 14 January - 20 February 2016

Graphic interplay between revealing and disguise - the opening steps of this show immediately corner you. Two paintings; 'Steve' (2015) the back of a pair of spray-on jeggings or jeans, hieroglyphic of the contemporary age, and 'Fin' (2016), who is physically hung away from the incoming guest. Like an awkward party, your first greeting upon entering Cornelia Baltes' solo show at Limoncello generates a set of assumptions which you must endeavour to enable or dismiss in a quest to figuratively define the work.

The stark hang is refreshingly stimulating for a painting show, giving you time to step back and analyse the gestural moments at play while not bombarding you with too much information. The simplicity of what you have here and the ability to ask you to work harder to gather the requisite information assures a pleasant reliance on the viewer to genuinely question the genesis for each image. Could 'Monika' (2016) be reminiscent of sports socks, 'Greg' (2016) reminders of hot drinks left on a teak coffee table, 'Cindy' (2016) a nail salon standard manicure? Baltes' gestural ambience plays tricks with our requirement to create standards with which to visually assess and acknowledge what something is in order to feel comforted by it, assured or potentially capable of critiquing it.

Playing devil's advocate with symbolism, Baltes' work acts as a dialogue between recognition and obscurity. How best we attempt to gain access to the relevance of our visual language and culture boils down to the reliance we have on it to generate content, information and dialogue. There's a communication issue here that Baltes seems to be insinuating, that not much is gained by adhering to a structure that enables the viewer to contextualise, analyse and move on. That we should stop and question what we encounter and ask of it harder questions. That we should expect more from the images placed before us and not feel so continually comforted when we know their relevance.

Can we ever look towards a moment in which our imagery and visual language is truly autonomous? Baltes seems to allude to another gestural space that recalibrates the forgotten unwanted visuals of the 21st Century and with this, her show acts as an archive of lost or abandoned tropes. It might seem more forsaken had Baltes not crafted such an exuberant and witty approach to her painting style.

While I could possibly indulge painting fans in a rhetoric on abstraction via Baltes' graphic application of monochrome, block and graduated colour, I feel it might be more fruitful to dwell on the emotional potential for the work as clarification of our ability to engage and form associations with frameworks of cultural significance. Baltes seems to remind us not to be too trustworthy of those who create the content we so heavily rely on to form our opinions: the media, advertising, street art, fashion, contemporary art. We can only engage in the potential for image-making as opposed to its responsibility. Baltes seems to intentionally leave us at a junction which is far more emancipating than it is of concern. It is a reminder that our relationship with visual culture may inform the genetic make-up of our society but ultimately it is us who decides how best to use that to relate to one another.

Published: This Is Tomorrow Online, 2016-02-02

<http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/cornelia-baltes-drunk-octopus-wants-to-fight>