

Los Angeles Times

Review Art Review: Michaela Eichwald "quo vadis gnothi sauton and cui bono" at Overduin & Co.



Michaela Eichwald, "Restzeit," 2015
acrylic, oil, lacquer, tempera, and wax on pleather
53-1/2 x 114-1/4 inches (courtesy of the artist and Overduin & Co.)

By **DAVID PAGEL**

When painters want to get serious, they usually turn to oil on canvas. If money's no object and they want to make something special, they often move up to oil on linen, which is even more prestigious.

For centuries, such top-shelf materials—hand-crafted from natural minerals, organic liquids and plant fibers—have been linked to painting's authenticity. When it comes to art, we want the genuine article: not fakery or fraudulence or anything that smacks of artificiality.

At Overduin & Co., Michaela Eichwald's paintings on pleather fly in the face of such conventional wisdom. Making the impossible combination of plastic and leather look as natural as canvas or linen, the large and midsize paintings in the young German artist's LA solo debut remind us that art and artifice belong together—at least as much as art and nature, if not more so.

The open-mindedness Eichwald brings to fabrics carries over into the materials she brushes, pours, dumps, smears, smudges and scrawls across the surfaces of her works. These include acrylic, oil, wax, lacquer, tempera and graphite. It's a burbling stew of possibility.

Eichwald's palette is organic. Beige, brown, off-white and fleshy pink predominate. But instead of bare skin, her paintings call to mind comfy cushions and plump pillows, not to mention skimpy skirts, sexy bustiers and snug pants. Artifice and adornment—long the enemies of abstract painting—come to the forefront.

A sense of anything-goes freedom suffuses Eichwald's works. It's matched by a by-any-means-necessary urgency.

Stylistically, her paintings are organic abstractions, their squiggly shapes and bulbous forms recalling natural organisms, cellular structures and human viscera. But there's an atmospheric—even ethereal—quality to Eichwald's imagery. It's a down-to-earth dreaminess that puts you in mind of prehistoric cave painting, bathroom-wall graffiti and the doodles people used to doodle before cellphones killed off such DIY time-killers.

Time does not stand still in Eichwald's paintings as much as it spirals around a moment loaded with possibilities. Striking just the right balance between cheeky irreverence and seriousness of purpose, her works draw viewers into reveries that never get old because they improve with age.

Overduin & Co., 6693 Sunset Blvd., (323) 464-3600, through Aug. 1. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.overduinandco.com