

Fiona Rae

27 April 2018 – 23 June 2018

Opening: Friday, 27 April, 7 - 9 pm



FIONA RAE
*Snow White changes into something
rich and strange, 2017*
oil on canvas
183 x 129,5 cm / 72 x 51 in

Pastel shades dominate the new paintings by British artist Fiona Rae (*1963 in Hong Kong, lives and works in London). Fiona Rae sounds out the possibilities of the genre in her painting, understanding abstraction as a language to be continually re-modified.

After restricting herself exclusively to the colour range white to black in a previous group of works, here the conceptual starting point is almost the reverse, inasmuch as black is eliminated altogether and used neither as an independent colour nor for mixing with other shades. Instead, the focus is on delicate, fluidly merging pastel shades, with which Fiona Rae creates a cloudy picture ground, in which it is not entirely clear where one colour begins and another ends. The artist combines this pictorial space with graphic, sometimes merely suggested, expressive painterly gestures, which may be interpreted as either figurative or abstract. The pictorial space exudes a fathomless, floating sensuality, a bacchanal element that provides the basis for numerous graphic settings such as arrows or apparently stylized brushstrokes. As kind of super-signs, these act like characters performing the drama of painting on the canvas.

Unsurprisingly, the titles also point towards this new theatricality in the work of Fiona Rae: they refer to archetypal fairy-tale characters and originate from plays by William Shakespeare: *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here, too, we sense Rae's fascination with the collision between high culture and the banal. In this context, the artist remarks:

I am intrigued by the juxtaposition of high and low, of serious and comic, of familiar and esoteric, and what that might mean and suggest when found together in a painting or a title.

There has always been an encyclopaedic dimension to Fiona Rae's work as well, as Nicolas Bourriaud indicated in "The Atlas of Fiona Rae". In the artist's current works the encyclopaedic attains a new quality: the painterly gestures reveal the genre of painting as a field dominated by diversely layered information, which is assessed in ever new ways via theatrical handling of this same information and codes.

Fiona Rae's works are represented in numerous public collections, including the Tate Collection UK, Centre Pompidou Paris, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin and the Mudam Luxembourg.