

SETAREH X

ASTRID STYMA

lingering presence

Opening: Friday, 5. June 2020, 5 pm

6. June – 1. August 2020

In her still lifes, portraits and sculptural interventions, Astrid Styma (born 1988, lives and works in Düsseldorf) creates an intimate connection between the self and its surroundings. With only a few protagonists, whom the artist integrates into her pictorial world, this complex web of relationships is achieved through very simple interventions in the arrangement. In this composition in space, the initially classical subjects she chooses convey a narrative level that tells us about proximity and strangeness, joy and pain.

Central to the spatial composition is the nude depiction of a young woman, portrayed both frontally and on the back. These are opposed by glass vessels, which – like the bodily representations in the picture space – are isolated in perspective and arranged in front of a gently illuminated background. The vessels in the paintings on wood or canvas each take up different positions, either lying down or filled with water, or being touched and used by hands. A fist made of plaster lying on upholstered velvet is worked out to scale and hyper-realistically and has been broken on the surface by external influences.

The works convey a complex structure of relationships, which is also illustrated by titles such as "Orchestrating Love", "In Control" or "Bond and Boundaries". Through the shifting of coordinates and the simultaneous scene freed from an external space, the figure and objects are reminiscent of elements of a network of relationships and structures, which is also described in the Vedic metaphor of "Indra's Net". There, the description of a network of pearls and jewels is used to illustrate the interconnectedness of all objects and living beings. Among other things, the metaphor refers to the concepts of Śūnyatā ("that everything is empty and free of permanence and everything is mutually dependent") and Pratītyasamutpāda ("emergence in dependence"). And so Styma's shiny vases could also be those transparent containers that are reciprocally nourished by their surroundings.

As well, in the words of the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead: "The [people] are the primary units of the actual community – and the community is made up of the units. Each unit, however, has a relation to every other member of the community, so that each unit is a microcosm that in itself represents the entire all-encompassing universe. (From the lecture "Body and Spirit", 1926).