

**Press release  
November 2016**

## **Sue Williams**

**November 19, 2016 to January 21, 2017**  
**Opening on Friday, November 18, 6 to 8 pm**  
**Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstr. 270, 8005 Zurich, 2nd floor**  
**Tuesday – Friday 11-6, Saturday 11-5 and by appointment**

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present the 5th exhibition with the New York-based artist Sue Williams. Since Sue Williams' pictorial and sculptural work came into public in the 90s, it has underwent great changes. At the beginning of her career, Williams painted figures that were heavily influenced by comic-books and the pictorial language of advertisement. These paintings often show domestic violent and explicit sexual contents, which were mostly understood as a feminist critique of the patriarchal society and of war. Over the years, Williams' sometimes rawly applied figurative scenes changed into more casual and extended compositions that took over large-scale canvases – until they grew into almost or total abstractions, into intertwined swirling compositions consisting of bodyparts, orifices, and betokened organs.

Starting with her raw lining, which was often accompanied by handwriting, Williams increasingly employed classical techniques of 20th century painting: Smudge, drip, expressionistic brushstroke, or abstract lines – techniques which, in the male-dominated world of painting, are associated with male painters like Jackson Pollock or Willem de Kooning. In Williams' recent works, which seem abstract at first glance, forms and painting gestures emerge which refer to her earlier work: Forms create figures, and finally leave the viewer with the question if they really exist on the canvas or not.

The exhibition presents two groups of works which Williams created in two different decades: Paintings on fabric taken from patternbooks from the late 90s, and large-scale paintings which the artist created recently. In combination, the different works allow an amazing insight into the development of Williams' oeuvre, revealing both differences and continuities.

Fabric-patterns can be understood as an embodiment of a crusted, petty-bourgeois community, perpetuating structures like the nuclear family, patriarchy and thus the devaluation of women. Williams employs these fabric-patterns, still recognizable through their characteristic toothing and perforation, as a ground for her painting. The pastose primer, reacting with the fabric, fringes at the rims and thus creates the impression of holes being ripped into the material – or of visions emerging from the patterns. The figurative scenes, applied with the characteristic aggression and wildness of Williams' works from the 90s, show the proverbial backside of the fabric-patterns: Anti-erotic images in which female figures are treated object-like. Both the fabric itself and the scenes can be understood as a social satire of treatment of woman – sometimes sad, sometimes with a very dark sense of humor.

Williams' new large-scale paintings show the latest development of her work: Compositions in oil – which seem to be totally abstract at first glance – extended over large canvases combine the different techniques the artist developed during her career: Clear lines bundling or building patterns, colour fields, fringing at the rims, and clear drawings which are neither figurative nor totally abstract. Figures or organs seem to emerge, a clear reference to Williams' signature style. It's not the paintings' subjects, being represented violently subjected by the structures – it's the painting subject itself that breaks ground in these images.

At first glance, the exhibition shows two groups of works as different as the decades they were created in. But the figurative scenes are showing up again inside and all over mixed in with the abstract 20 years later. Yet the tension between the works only proves the continuity in the development of Sue Williams' pictorial work.

Sue Williams was born 1954 in Chicago Heights, Illinois (USA), and lives and works in New York. Her first solo exhibition with Eva Presenhuber took place in 1999. Her work is represented in major museums and private collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Art Institute of Chicago; Sammlung Goetz, Munich. In the fall of 2015, her retrospective monograph has been released by JRP|Ringier. Solo shows in public museums include Vienna Secession; IVAM Valencia, Spain; Geneva Center for Contemporary Art, and Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany, and participated in 3 consecutive Whitney Biennials. Major Museum group shows include Comic Abstraction, Museum of Modern Art New York (2007); Rebelle, Museum voor Moderne Kunst

Arnhem (2009); Keeping it Real, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2010); Figuring Color, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012); Take it or leave it, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); America is Hard to See, Whitney Museum of American Art New York (2015); Painting 2.0, Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015-16).

*Tillmann Severin*

For more information, please contact Andreas Grimm ([a.grimm@presenhuber.com](mailto:a.grimm@presenhuber.com)).

Current exhibitions: Douglas Gordon  
November 5, 2016 to January 21, 2017  
Maag Areal, Zahnradstrasse 21, 8005 Zurich  
Tue – Fri 10 – 6, Sat 11 – 5 and by appointment

Adam Pendleton  
Midnight in America  
November 19, 2016 to January 21, 2017  
Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstrasse 270, 8005 Zurich  
1st floor  
Tue – Fri 11 – 6, Sat 11 – 5 and by appointment