

Press release

Jelena Bulajic

11.03.-15.04.2017

Opening: Friday, March 10th, 2017, 6-9 pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Serbian artist Jelena Bulajic. This is her first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Jelena Bulajic first garnered attention for her laborious, large-scale canvas portraits – measuring up to 3,5 meters – which flesh out the profound depth of the human countenance. Her approach to her subjects is observational: concerned with capturing the passage of time and the effects of individual histories, the gaze from within the paintings is presented without narrative or commentary. Rendered in a mix of marble dust, ground granite, limestone and kaolin, the existential spirit of the work isn't a contemplation of mortality, rather, it is a formal exploration of tactility and surface.

In her most recent mixed-media paintings, Bulajic seeks to extend traditional notions of portraiture beyond the human character – expanding her treatment of surface as a dualistic reflection of physical layers: human skin, water, the sky as well as the paint itself on the canvas is the “life material” of the work. This new constellation of subjects is significant to the exhibition at carlier | gebauer. In what could be read as an abandonment of traditional approaches, she is committed to the physicality of her materials. The sky, water and abstract works are “mere surfaces of paint and pigment,” according to the artist. Here, she plays with control and lack thereof – what is ultimately intended to be examined is the medium as the “skin” of the painting.

In Bulajic's work, the “skin” could be interpreted in any number of ways – but it is always understood as an active, flexible interface. Here, the sky does not appear so different from the folded surfaces of the neck and the River Thames might evoke the surface of a hand. What is exceptional in Bulajic's paintings is her coercion of materials into layers with a physical presence and an uncompromising negotiation of surface tension and quality to produce meaning.

Jelena Bulajic (b. 1990 Vrbas, Serbia) received her BA in Visual Art from the Academy of Arts at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She went on to complete an MA at the City & Guilds of the London Art School and has exhibited internationally in London, Serbia, Germany, the U.S. and Scotland. Accolades include the GAM MA Fine Art Prize, City & Guilds of London Art School (2013), the Niš Art Foundation Award (2013), the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant (2012), and the Grand Diploma for Drawing, XIV INTERBIFEP (2011), among others. Her works can be found in the collections of The Saatchi Gallery and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Bulajic lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia.