PERSONA

An exhibition by Maria Moritz (March 30 – April 04, 2023)
fffriedrich, Alte Mainzer Gasse 4-6, 60311 Frankfurt am Main

How can we reflect on both the complex relationship between the exposing artist as an individual subject and the artwork as an objectification of personal and historic fragments? In other words – what does it mean to process one's own experiences through exposing a rather public subject like an artwork? How can we approach the idea of imbuing the image, as an object, with the artist's persona?

Through a gray curtain, our gaze is directed towards the oil painting *Elbestr. 41* (2022). An empty bed, the churned sheets were possibly just left and could be still warm from the night before. Although the artist herself is absent from the painting, she grants us a fleeting glimpse into her most intimate space – the private bed as a place where we strip down clothing, make-up, and facades and where we are most vulnerable. Knowing that we see a bed Moritz herself has slept in, we can perceive it as something authentic, taken from the artist's individual space of experience. However, the bedroom and the bed itself become projection surfaces or screens that point beyond the artist as an individual: For your own memories and stories of something that came before and after; about the banality of everyday life; loneliness, sex and sweat; about nightmares and dreams. This merging of something alien and personal inscribed into our perspective allows us to reflect on the complex relationship between the experience of a subject and its objectification in the image.

The self-portrait *not inward, not close* (2022) pushes the idea of (self-)exposure even further, showing the artist as a floating head squeezed between pillows against a yellow background, her eyes rolling obsessively into her head. The figure seems barely able to withstand the physical pressure and surrenders to the movement in the pictorial space.

The empty faces of the sculptural works *Fellows I* and *II* (2021/23) seem to lurk, following us with their looks. They may function as stand-ins for an anonymous audience that judges, appraises, observes, and reciprocally controls and disciplines. Perhaps also an alter ego; figures who make our self-observation observable; through whom the act of looking is contingent on the thought of being looked at. Moreover, through the visual axis between the figure and her self-portrait, Moritz makes herself the object being looked at – with her rolling eyes attempting to avert these gazes.

With the exhibition PERSONA, Maria Moritz transforms *fffriedrich* into an intimate space which reflects on its own complicated, public character. We observe and are observed, peak through the curtain at something supposedly intimate, projecting the artist's identity onto the pictorial objects, thinking of them as fused with her art. But what produces our image of ourselves, and others are *distorted* screens and canvases. Although all the works in the exhibition refer to Moritz, we can't make any eye contact or an immediate connection to the artist's persona. Rather, Moritz's self seems to dissolve in favor of the audience's imagination. Reflecting on the complex relationship between lived reality and its reflection by artistic means is, it could be summarized, only possible in the awareness that "[w]e are beings that are looked at, in the spectacle of the world. That which makes us consciousness institutes us by the same token as speculum mundi."[1]

Curated by Emily Nill and Louisa Behr
With generous support by Dr. Marschner Stiftung

[1] Lacan, Jacques: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, London, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1978, S.75