



of as normal and in which contexts—are central preoccupations in Freudenberger's art.

Freudenberger already probed these themes in an earlier series, "Alternative Objekte," 2010–12—pictures based on motifs he selected from his personal archive, manipulated, and output onto canvases as pigment prints. Though not technically paintings, these pieces were each unique, and that lent them some of the aura of individually hand-made works. In exhibitions such as "Neue Höhlen Heute" (New Caves Today) at the Krefelder Kunstverein in Krefeld, Germany, in 2012, the artist mounted them on a wall he had also painted with an irregular black-and-white chessboard pattern.

This recent show, by contrast, featured three paintings in black acrylic marker on a coat of grayish-white spackle. The first, *o.T. (tic 2, doppelt)* (Untitled [Tic 2, Double]), is covered with what look like scrawled variations on a single basic shape that by turns evokes associations of human anatomy and remains an abstract signifier. One is reminded of telephone doodles, but also of works by mid-twentieth-century abstract painters who banked on the creative potential of automatism. Here and there, the scrawls are layered atop splotches of blue. The boxy outlines in the second painting, *o.T. (tic)*, might almost be letters. No words ever quite take shape, but the power of unconscious association makes it hard not to think of the logos that surround us in daily life. The third picture, titled *o.T. (leer, tic 3)* (Untitled [Empty, Tic 3]), shows—well, what exactly? Several sets of parallel lines hint at a room with a doorway, while brushstrokes farther to the right suggest some kind of motion. An oddly shaped blotch near the bottom-left corner might be the shadow of a missing object. The entire piece could be a comic-strip panel from which all action has been erased.

Mounted on an aluminum scaffold, the three works faced the gallery's three large windows, and were best seen from the street. The venue's interior, by contrast, offered only rear views of the canvases and the framework supporting them. This installation undercut conventional expectations; so do the pictures themselves, which invite a variety of unconscious associations—telephone doodles, logos, graphic novels—but are hard to square with "normal" idioms of visual art. With their passing disruptions of the familiar, they might make you wonder just what makes your own interpretive apparatus tick.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

## ZURICH

### Marvin Gaye Chetwynd

GALERIE GREGOR STAIGER

Even when a performance has not yet taken place, when Marvin Gaye Chetwynd has *not* conducted some Walpurgisnacht in the gallery, when no one has been chained to a latex double of Jabba the Hutt or done a banshee dance half-naked or otherwise worked themselves up into a transformative, ecstatic frenzy—even when the surfaces are innocent of blood or sperm or body paint—her artworks still reverberate with arcane energy. In "The Stagnant Pool," in which she converted a single room into a stage set for a potential performance, Chetwynd showed off her ability to animate her work through her powers of suggestion alone.

At the core of Chetwynd's practice is an understanding of the ritual origins of art. Prior to her enrollment at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, she received a degree in anthropology at University College London, but felt she could never really reconcile herself to the mortifying seriousness of the discipline. At the Slade, she studied sculpture

under Phyllida Barlow. Chetwynd's work, in its exuberance, its improvised, informal quality, and its use of materials at hand, at first sight recalls Barlow's, but the temperaments of the artists could not be more different. Barlow is deliberate with words, and sometimes almost ponderously inarticulate. Chetwynd, by contrast, is hypervocal. She uses language to exhort; she thinks out loud, praises and teases, starting her next sentence before she finishes her first. For Chetwynd, who seems to find everything funny, the straight faces of armchair anthropologists revealed they were guilty of not taking ritual seriously. Instead of devoting herself to documenting rituals, she enacts them. Mummies' plays, pilgrims' tales, school nativities, propitiatory dances, sacrificial rites, and science fiction all come together to give her works a liberating sense of transgression.

On the back wall of the gallery, functioning as a kind of the backdrop, was a large reproduction of the famous garden fresco the Villa of Livia near Rome. Every tree is shown in full flower or he with fruit. To any Roman viewer, the verdant tableau presented artificial image of paradise. The tree trunk at the center of Chetwynd's version of the image was cropped out, leaving its fruit-laden foliage floating like a fecund cloud. The white floor below it was marked with black stripes, creating an effect halfway between that of a Renaissance church and that of a Dadaist basketball court. Cross the floor before the backdrop, you immediately felt sprung by invisible audience, as if you had wandered onto the stage of a very strange amateur play.

Around the remaining walls of the gallery were fourteen paintings from a series called "Bat Opera," 2002–, and six "Psychic Collage" 2017. The bat pictures—portraits, really—have the sort of heavy black frames you would associate with expensive Old Master paintings. The frames underline the objectlike status of the works, their ability to be bought and sold, to migrate. It's hard to tell if Chetwynd is using them to play the art market or to mock it.

At the center of the exhibition, occupying the most prominent space, was the five-foot-tall sculpture *Salamander*, 2017, made of latex and papier-mâché, and such. It's an absurd, polka-dotted, frolicsome-looking thing, all teeth and appetite and ambiguous good cheer. The amphibian did not play the role of a classical work of sculpture so much as it behaved like an avatar in a Paleolithic computer game, a prop for the visitor. It stood at the center of the room, gawping into dioramas—themselves poised on clawed feet that recall the story of Baba Yaga's hut, which runs around on chicken legs. Inside every single one of the dioramas, for no obvious reason, was the bald head of Albert Pierre, the famous French priest and resistance fighter, cropped so that he somewhat resembled Michel Foucault. The entire series seemed to constantly beseech the viewer not to watch, but to partake. The show's charge came, perhaps, from the sense that even when Chetwynd's objects are not leftovers from some small riot, they might still ignite one, as props that could flip a village panto into a Dionysian bacchanal.

—Adam Jas

