

Monika Michalko

PRODUZENTENGALERIE

Admiralitätstrasse 71

July 1–August 28, 2021

One steps inside Monika Michalko's paintings as one might enter a room, drawn in by her characteristic palette of reds and warm blues, sometimes complemented by milky hues, their vibrancy contrasting with bleak and murky tones. Color creates pictorial spaces in which realities mingle: Though tangible scenes—interiors, still lifes, landscapes (sometimes on the verge of disintegration)—are almost always at the core of her pictures; materiality and abstraction appear intimately akin and interwoven, blending into each other, forming hybrids, compacting in complex textures. In canvases like *Mauretisches Zimmer III* (Mauritanian Room III) or *Clouds and hidden clowns* (all works 2021), an undercurrent of freehand ornamentation is unmistakable, yet in Michalko's hands it almost never curdles into mere patterning.

Her solo show at Produzentengalerie, "Laboratoire Lapidar," features ten new paintings as well as an extensive series of etchings. The unusual installation design brings out the artist's characteristic handling of pictorial space. Michalko had a geometric composition from a small etching enlarged and printed on oversize paper reels to cover the gallery's entire floor in an irregular grid of repeating forms. The walls are painted a bold bluish green up to half height, producing a dynamic visual setting for the presentation of her work and an exhibition that becomes a picture in its own right.

In *Romantischer Park* (Romantic Park) and *Untitled*, Michalko includes a cabin-on-stilts motif that quotes, and presumably pays tribute to, her teacher Norbert Schwontkowski, whose oeuvre includes pictures of similar shacks (*Miramare*, 2007; *Produzentengalerie*, 1998). Among her most imposing new works is the large-scale *Lapidares Labor II* (Lapidary Laboratory II), in which a loosely ornamental organization of the surface, atmospheric spatial depth, and a dynamic, precarious equilibrium between representation and abstraction conspire in a dazzling display of darkly shimmering colors.

—Jens Asthoff



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View of "Monika Michalko: Laboratoire Lapidar," 2021.
HAMBURG