

SABINA MARIA VAN DER LINDEN

Das Letzte/ Last Thing

Opening April 27th 5-8pm

4.26 — 6.2.2024

Backdrops of sedative blues and Prozac pinks permeate the screens, calligraphic forms, prints, and costumes illustrated in the diverse series of works by Sabina Maria van der Linden, ranging from the late '90s to the present, created during her time in Berlin.

Although always a formative and impactful figure since my childhood, I had not seen Sabina's works until five years ago when I visited her house on Kottbusserdamm. There, she revealed from beneath her bed many boxes containing calligraphic drawings, silkscreen prints, photoshopped versions of herself with Naomi Campbell, and in bed with a prominent male artist. A cacophony of fetishism, idol cult, advertising, fashion, superficiality, and vintage porn.

Through choreographed, staged, performed, and photoshopped characters, she addresses the extreme poles: the desire for flawless beauty, youth, total control, and perfection. The narcissistically charged, perfection-seeking characters are contrasted in her video works such as "Perfectly You," a series of fifty videos. They are based on a compositional process that explores the mechanisms of individual and collective control on different levels. The figures, decorative sets, costumes, and objects in van der Linden's films also present language as a modular form, speaking in ever-new constellations of emptiness, isolation, and superficiality.

The videos and calligraphies are very choreographed and artificial—exuding stiff elegance, meticulous self-control, discipline, and perfectionism, akin to a middle-class homemaker tarted up. Both the women and men narcissistically show off body parts, gesturing as if in a 1950s striptease, admiring themselves as if they were expensive cars or a new refrigerator in an old commercial.

Almost always, her films are collaborative projects involving actors, other artists, and directors, reminiscent of a generous and giving era of Berlin that has ceased to exist. While improvisations form the starting point, they follow not thematic but formal rules: the setting and costumes dictate the movement of the actors, improvised dialogues and monologues are not developed spontaneously but with a significant time gap, numerous interruptions, and repetitions.

—She'd like to be in all things no more than the idea that people have of her—

Tenko Nakajima

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