

Artist Sophie von Hellermann on how she paints

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Sophie von Hellermann

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I have never stopped painting. It has been a continuous process since I was very young. It was not until I was at art school in the mid-nineties that painting became a way of defining my position as an artist and a way of forming allegiances with some artists and alienating others. I use pigments and acrylic emulsion and lots of water, which keeps the pictures light and airy. I want the results to look as fleeting as the images that come into my head. The paints often contain a bit of Fairy Liquid from washing out the brushes and I like to think of the canvasses as giant soap bubbles. They are large scale, like projections on the wall. I have an idea that we are merely a projection of the past, that we don't really exist and that we are an imaginary future scenario played out, and so my paintings need to be dry and thin to work as representations of this idea. It means I can never really plan a painting, I just start with the simple wish to create a clear image of something that strikes me. As I am working and trying out different ways to make an image, questions like this take over: what does this look like? Who painted this? Is it beautiful? I get cross with myself while I paint, but I would miss these conversations with the world more than anything if I ever stopped.

· Sophie von Hellermann was born in Munich in 1975. She is represented by Greene Naftali, New York (greenenaftaligallery.com) and Vilma Gold, London (vilmagold.com/newpages/artists/sophie1a.htm).

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