



## *Hush/Gasp*

Noémi Barbaglia  
Jiyoon Chung  
Marc Henry

18.01. - 01.03.2025

Revealing and hiding are more closely linked than one might think. Abundant images make things invisible rather than visible, and what we try to hide becomes all the more conspicuous. Noémi Barbaglia deals with themes like these: the dialectical relationship between concealing and showing, and the ambiguities that arise from it. The artist crafts her sculptures out of epoxy resin and fiberglass, a technically woven material that is drenched with liquid plastic, which then hardens and forms complex drapes and folds. This is not unimportant, since her sculptures recall forms such as veils and cloths. The artist lays the fiberglass fabric over plastic models like shrouds; she works the initial forms like sculptures. For other pieces, she models the fiberglass itself, which ultimately hardens into a robust, yet light and only seemingly fragile form. The works suggest a lightness, an ever so light touch, a material presence that borders on the immaterial. Additionally, the materials—fiberglass and epoxy resin—are translucent like a veil. Barbaglia screen prints many of her works, and treats some of them with light-sensitive ink. The sculptures have a painterly quality. This creates ambiguities,

a blur and semantic confusion. What is under the cloths, what do they reveal while concealing almost everything? A gravestone, an architectural detail, an everyday object surrealistically enlarged? There is nothing there, at least that's what one suspects, but it is precisely that play of appearances and disappearances that poses questions which have always preoccupied sculpture and painting, questions of fleeting referents and transient significance.

The paintings of Marc Henry come from a world of digital images, and he references an archive with which he creates elaborate digital collages, just as other painters make sketches. Henry then translates the collages to oil paintings. When he wants to change colors and hues, he photographs the painting to digitally simulate different situations, and he jumps back and forth between analog and digital images. Working with digital technology is difficult to stake out, because with AI tools, the process between prompt and result remains intransparent. Henry also uses rough canvases when he paints, which are beyond complete painterly control. In this process, the artist relinquishes authorship on various levels. Henry, who studied economics before studying art in Vienna, sees himself as a painter in the emphatic sense, and his works are an examination of the medium's history. It is therefore only logical that the artist incorporates these digital processes into his work, as painting is suited to reacting to technical innovations and being in contact with an intensified modernity.

Henry's work revolves around the construction of fictions—a reference to our post-factual age. One series of paintings shows a house of cards comprised of AmEx credit cards, and it is reminiscent of an earlier era of realist painting with its impasto paint on coarse canvas, as if capitalism may invent a new self-description in every age, which nevertheless echoes the old. Gloved hands touch the cards and bring down the towers. The Tower of Babel once was a symbol of human hu-

bris, and similarly, the credit cards serve as a metaphor for a delicate financial system, built on fragile credit and fictional money, but with real consequences.

Perhaps Jyoon Chung also has a particular interest in making things disappear; in any case, her work deals with abstraction and subtraction—taking away. Before studying at Städelschule in Frankfurt, the artist studied photography in Seoul. She uses photographic processes for the pictures of thorny vines in this exhibition. Chung creates photograms that resemble nature studies. She takes molds of thorny vines, and casts them in epoxy resin. These sculptures seem strangely light and disembodied, a ghostly shadow of the original plant—translucent, transparent, abstract. Standing upright, they seem to defy gravity. Then, Chung makes photograms of them. They abstract once again, by taking away the depth of the branches, flattening them and reducing them to their outlines, and making the aggressive thorns appear even more fragile.

Her second work in the exhibition is a sculpture that consists of four headrests, which the artist took from a car wreck. She removed the covers of the headrests, and then exposed them to mealworms for several weeks, until all that remained was foam with holes in it. The pieces evoke a violent origin, and they bring to mind a car accident, and it seems as if the artist wants to create a memorial. It is no coincidence that worms and hollow skulls are part of the inventory of memento mori and still-life painting. The objects are not merely readymades and utilitarian objects, because they have a mimetic quality—they are reminiscent of heads. At the same time, these hole-ridden pieces are intended to protect the most valuable part of our body. Sculpture, decay, and destruction become indistinguishable in her work.