

Leslie

Jane Bustin – *Fühler*

Opening: 22.06.17

Exhibition: 23.06.17-20.07.17

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, European philosophers have distinguished our capacity to feel subjectively from our ability to think rationally. We are sentient beings. As the late neurologist and author Oliver Sacks claimed, 'perception is never purely in the present – it has to be drawn on experience of the past'<sup>1</sup>. Jane Bustin's exhibition *Fühler*, to have feelers or sensors about a given subject, calls on this capacity.

Bustin's approach to painting foregrounds a conscious experience of material surface and texture. Although abstract, her works are evocations of people and histories. They are grounded in a range of intellectual sources, primarily European modernist poetry, design and literature as well as theology and philosophy. Such concepts are given physical expression through her intuitive arrangements of materials. Oil, dyed silk, porcelain, woven cloth, polished copper, tulle and ceramic glazes are just some of the media used to give shape and feeling to philosophical ideas. Born out of the tactile, her works are *Fühler*; they are imbued with a sensory memory and resonate with emotion.

Four works in the show, *Après II*, *Nijinsky I*, *Nijinsky's Windows* and *Rehearsal II*, pay tribute to the radical Russian ballet dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950). Rising to prominence as part of the belle epoch, Nijinsky combined depth and intensity of expression with symmetry to pioneer new stylistic ideas in modern dance, echoed in the compositional balance of Bustin's three textural diptychs.

In *Après II* textile becomes a stand-in for the body and the memory of its physical activity. It takes its cue from Nijinsky's choreography of the ballet *L'après midi d'un Faun* in 1912, where the movement of fabric is used as a metaphor for sexual desire and physical exhaustion. Like most of Bustin's works the scale is of human proportions. Hung quite low, *Après II* sits on the wall around the height of the artist's heart.

Elsewhere, earlier works in the exhibition include *Christina the Astonishing*, part of a series referencing the iconography of female saints and *Tablet I*, *Tablet III* and *Tablet IV*, evoking archaic forms of communication. Combining sheets of paper from both old and new notebooks, they prompt memories of the past alongside thoughts of the future.

Refusing to be filmed during his lifetime, Nijinsky strongly believed his performances should only be experienced live. Likewise Bustin prefers her works to be encountered in real time under the honest inconsistency of natural light. Like the tip of antennae, one's eyes should roam over surface, roll over folds, shift focus through diaphanous layers and peer into copper reflections. Her works call upon an understanding of *Fühler* and our capacity to feel as sentient beings. They ask us to look again.

Poppy Bowers

Curator, Witworth Art Gallery, Manchester, England

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Musophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, London: Pan Macmillan, 2011