

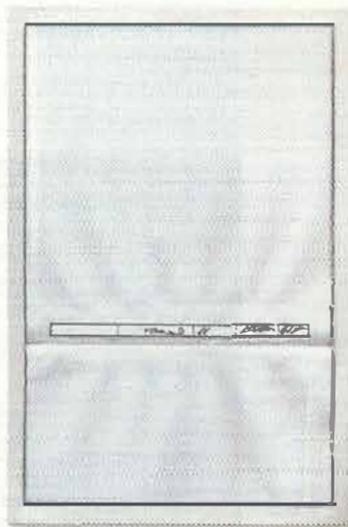
Marieta Chirulescu

KUNSTHALLE LINGEN

Some of Marieta Chirulescu's pictures—created in finely nuanced pale hues of gray, with faint efflorescences of color that revealed themselves only on a second or third glance—seemed to fade into the spacious white cube of Kunsthalle Lingen. Chirulescu, who was born in Sibiu, Romania, lives in Berlin, and received the Twenty-First Lingener Kunstpreis for painting in 2014. Hers is a uniquely reflective approach to painting: Working with scanners, laser prints, photocopies, collages, and occasionally brush and paint, she interweaves the discourse on the conditions of painting with a broader exploration of her media—and then translates her findings back into painting. Her pictures appear to speak the language of classical abstraction, yet the layer of paint applied to the canvas often lacks any texture, and many of the seemingly abstract surfaces have a basis in physical objects: We can make out snippets of paper and shreds of printed forms, as well as more abstract elements such as mirrors and glass panes. The resulting works, with their equivocal representational status, hybridization of visual techniques in multiple media, and amalgamation of abstraction and iconicity, combine alluring ambiguity with inscrutable austerity.

In keeping with this hermeticism, the seventeen works here were all *Untitled* and the show was simply named after the artist. The pièce de résistance was a group of seven new works, all 2014, installed at the center of the room. Hung unusually low, with their top edges aligned, the paintings unfolded a subtle interplay of diversified surfaces, material effects, and feigned serialism. Four were rendered in starkly muted tones and three were white monochromes. To make the white paintings, Chirulescu first applied a coat of black paint to loose swaths of canvas so that, once the material stretched over frames, the pigment showed the kinks, creases, and wrinkles that were in the fabric before it was stretched. She then masked the sides and a few inches along the edges of the front of the panels with tape and painted the canvas white again, creating paintings whose monochromatic fabric texture stands out on a white wall almost only as a black contour.

The other four new paintings take up these principles of physical presence and framing—and transform them: A fine line runs parallel to all four of each work's edges, and each painting bears a sort of wide label affixed across its lower part. In the area around these lines, some of which show traces of abstract notational gestures reminiscent of



Marieta Chirulescu.
Untitled, 2014, inkjet
print and gesso on
canvas, 68 3/4 × 45 1/4".

handwriting, the surface is puckered like paper curling from moisture. Initially, it is hard to see how these pictures were made, or what they actually show. Formally speaking, they might be reductive and etiolated paraphrases on Rothko. In reality, they are based on scans of improvised collages: In each case, a label was pasted on a sheet of paper, which was then pressed beneath a pane of glass, producing a rippling network of flattened folds; Chirulescu scanned this object and transferred enlarged laser prints onto canvases. In the reproductions, the glass at first reads not as a real object but as a flat line enclosing a pale color field. Looking more closely, we can decode clues such as the paint residues on the edge of the glass that appear in several of the pictures. The medium of reproduction itself, too, has left its traces; bands that result from scanning errors and the minute, colorful solarization effects that occur when glass is scanned come to play an active part in the compositional process. Chirulescu's pictures unfurl a heterogeneous and multilayered pictorial reality: By coupling and blending digital and analog techniques, she has devised a novel way to restore uniqueness to painting in the age of its reproducibility.

—Jens Asthoff

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.