

SURFACE

Pauline Rintsch Drifts Into the Knotty Depths of Feminine Interiority

In an anguished diptych that mimics an open book, the German painter summons a smudgy, Balthus-like study of sorrow, seduction, and solitude that glows with a vulnerable psychosomatic lucidity.

BY RYAN WADDOUPS

July 17th, 2024



"Navel Series I/Mary's Heartbreak" (2024). Image courtesy of YveYANG Gallery

Here, we ask an artist to frame the essential details behind one of their latest works.

Bio: Pauline Rintsch, 29, Düsseldorf (@paulinerintsch).

Title of work: Navel Series I/Mary's Heartbreak (2024).

Where to see it: "Pinch Me Hard and Soft" at YveYANG Gallery (12 Wooster St, New York) until August 17.

Three words to describe it: Sensual, vulnerability, oxidized.

What was on your mind at the time: The work consists of two paintings, touching and looking at each other through the corner, where they are installed with red frames. On my mind was creating an ambivalent atmosphere of either connection or disconnection through the paintings.

The painting on the left is the first of a series of paintings where the focus lies on the navel and its symbolic meaning. Here, the moment of undressing plays in particular with the anticipation of physical connection, intimacy, and touch. And the contrary on the right side: A person, childlike and introspective, seemingly disconnected from her surroundings like a closed shell. I made this portrait of my friend after she had a bad breakup. She started smoking a lot again and didn't eat much to cope with the solitude and heartache.

An interesting feature that's not immediately noticeable: As the work is installed with frames through the corner, it receives a sculptural dimension and depending on the point of view reminds me of a butterfly with wide wings or an opened book. I use the colors blue or lilac for my underpainting and as I usually paint with rather thin layers on top. The color of the underpainting shines through after all.

How it reflects your practice as a whole: In those two paintings, you can see many aspects that interest me at the moment: the depiction of skin, with fleshy tones, veins, bones peeking through the skin. I like to paint the contrast of different materialities—here, the texture of fabric in contrast to the softness of the human skin. The sheerness and delicacy of the tights give the skin a second membrane. Additionally, I observe daily life and the people around me, and I especially draw from the closeness of personal relationships and friendships.

One song that captures its essence: "First Love/Late Spring" by Mitski.

