

Heidi Hahn II DC Open

5.9-1.11.25

End. Résumé

„It's almost as if these figures come and go. They meander and constantly reinvent themselves. They tell stories of destabilisation, change and new beginnings.“

– Heidi Hahn

Bodies that Matter. The Paintings of Heidi Hahn
- by Magdalena Kröner

Her painting is dedicated to the pictorial artistic research of complex ambiguities. The distinctive openness of her figures stems from the interplay between colour, contour, and planarity. While her work is formally structured, it retains an intuitive quality that's essential to her artistic approach. 'I am less interested in the motif than in the painting itself,' explains the artist. 'I observe how the paint constructs the images – or fails to do so. The process of creation, which I think of as alchemy, is just as captivating to me as the final outcome.' Hahn's abstract body forms defy clear meaning, which makes them both unencumbered and provocative: they reveal the pure power of the painterly gesture and associatively radiant marks that provoke through their autonomy.

Heidi Hahn's paintings require viewers to approach with radical openness, embracing the full spectrum of possibilities, to the not-yet-being and the no-longer-being. In doing so, she creates space for what the body can become, rather than what it must be.

Hahn liberates her protagonists' bodies, whose gender often remains unclear, from the passivity and constraints of traditional social and cultural norms, imbuing them with ambivalent energy.



End. Résumé #1, 2025

Oil on linen

218 × 162 cm, 86 × 64 in

Judith Butler has developed perhaps the most radical proposals for understanding corporeality and embodiment not from a fixed center, but from the margins of prevailing discourses. Butler comprehends and describes process and practice as the core of the bodily - both of which are also central factors in Heidi Hahn's painting. When fragmentation, dissolution, and ambivalence are disavowed as aspects of the self in favour of a perceived psychological 'unity,' painting has always opened up spaces of ambivalence. Butler writes: 'Psychic projection gives the body boundaries and thus unity, so that the very contours of the body are sites that vacillate between the psychic and the material. Body contours and morphology are not merely caught up in an irreducible tension between the psychic and the material; they are this tension.'¹

The bodies in Heidi Hahn's paintings are enveloped and devoured by structure and colour. The tactile presence of the colour, which she fans out in dense layers, gives her figures an ambiguously shimmering aura.

¹ Butler, Judith: Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1995, p. 97

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End. Résumé #4, 2025, Oil on linen, 140 × 195 cm, 55 × 77 in

This is achieved through barely perceptible shifts in colour temperature; an imperceptible flow or exposure of surfaces, or the use of subtle shading that obscures or spotlight-like illuminates the bodies. Elsewhere, it's the sharply drawn body contours that are extended to the edge of the image. This gives the painting a sequential quality as if a film strip were just starting to move and the individual frames were blurring together. Her figures can hardly be categorized, unlike in Hahn's earlier paintings. They dominate the space, are impressive in their physical dimensions, awe-inspiring yet also protective. They are dominant and introspective. Neither the artist nor we have control over the bodies depicted here. The artist opens up for herself and us an unfinished field of references, connections, transitions, and stylizations that tie into what we read as „body“ but dissolves its meaning into ambiguity.

In this way, these works become political, especially in a global environment of growing authoritarian tendencies: in a time when the longing for sexually and morally unambiguous body concepts follows a logic that seeks to marginalize every ‚other,‘ non-normative, and ambivalent aspect, this artist reasserts the fundamental ambiguity of the body with each new painting.

Biographical Note:

Born in Los Angeles in 1982, Heidi Hahn currently lives and works in New York. Her works are part of renowned museum collections such as the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Dallas Museum of Art, Moderna Museet Stockholm, High Museum of Art in Atlanta, New Orleans Museum of Art, Kadist Foundation Paris, New Century Art Foundation Shanghai, G2 Kunsthalle in Leipzig, Blueknowledge Foundation Amsterdam, Philara Collection or Saastamoinen Foundation Art Collection, Helsinki. Her paintings were presented at internationally renowned museum exhibitions such as at LSU Museums L.A, High Art Museums Atlanta, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art or New Orleans Museum of Art. September 13th the Blueknowledge Foundation Amsterdam opens Heidi Hahn's solo exhibition „Invisible Anatomies“. In spring 2025 Artforum international, Vogue Magazine and Impulse Magazine have published comprehensive articles on her work.

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