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## SILKE OTTO-KNAPP IN THE WAITING ROOM

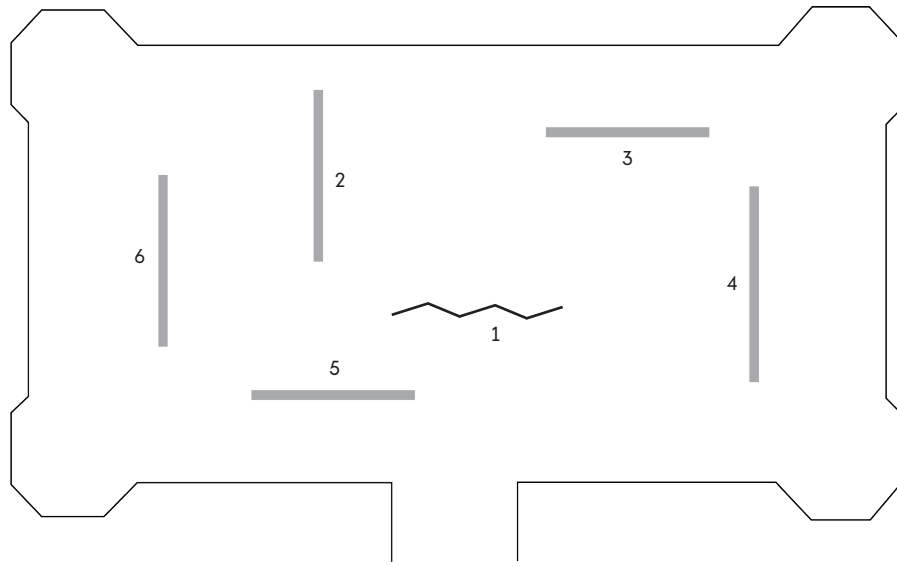
Over the course of her career, Los Angeles-based German artist Silke Otto-Knapp has established a painting practice characterized by its rigorous process and remarkable attentiveness to the medium's conditions and possibilities. She begins by transferring drawings onto canvas, filling their forms with layers of black watercolor pigment and then spraying them with water. As the paint dissolves, Otto-Knapp tilts and wipes the surface, causing color to drain from certain areas and deposit in others as it dries. This is repeated numerous times, each application deepening contrasts and building up a soft, diaphanous sheen. The resulting works carry a certain enigmatic quality, the seeming simplicity of the reduced compositions belied by subtle variations in density and a powerful sense of atmosphere.

*In the waiting room* brings together a new group of large-scale paintings, situated in an arrangement of free-standing structures to form a kind of multidimensional stage set within the gallery. In some, silhouetted bodies stretch, ambulate, and contort, in the midst of a performance or preparing for one. Others introduce more scenic elements, reminiscent of the painted backdrops used on proscenium stages to ground actions within a particular setting. Each of these motifs introduces its own historical valences and particular sense of space and time to the works, quickly establishing a productive tension with the surfaces they occupy. A dancing body in choreographed position implies an experience of motion, as does the moon suspended over a body of water activating the ebb and flow of the tides. These dimensions exist in the paintings, but

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- 1 *Screen (Trees and Moon)*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 96 x 160 inches (240 x 400 cm)
- 2 *Group (moving)*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 118 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (150 x 300 cm)
- 3 *In the waiting room (7)*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 118 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (150 x 300 cm)
- 4 *In the waiting room (9)*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 157 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches (150 x 400 cm)
- 5 *Group (reaching)*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 67 x 59 inches (170.2 x 149.9 cm)
- 6 *Forest*, 2019  
Watercolor on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 118 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches (150 x 300 cm)

All works courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York/Rome; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin/New York; greengrassi, London; and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

no more so than the shifting perspective of a viewer walking around them, or the changing light in the room as the sun traverses the sky. In Otto-Knapp's work, all of these registers and more coexist within the coded space of the canvas. Hers is a profoundly painterly practice, stemming from a deep and persistent investment in pushing at the limits of the form and mobilizing its particular capacity to sustain such dynamics.

At the Renaissance Society, a number of these works are mounted on temporary walls, while another stands alone in the form of a folding screen. In context with paintings thematically linked to performance and dance, these structures gesture towards conventions of theatrical staging, where decorative facades frame the set for a fixed audience. Here, they operate as both supports for imagery and as partitions in a provisional architecture of their own. Their positioning in the space generates vantage points and patterns of movement, a loose choreography enacted by whomever is viewing them. And within the bounds of the canvases themselves, the stage is set for the kinds of complex interplay painting makes possible: referential connections, material

traces, embodied perceptions of time and space, the sedimented weight of history, and more ineffable experiences of emotion and affect, all collapsed into and mediated by the pictorial surface. Hovering between figuration and abstraction, they deal in intimation more than narrative, hinting at scenarios with their own strange, choreographed logic without ever charting the steps.

The title of the exhibition, *In the waiting room*, points towards a space of anticipation—perhaps the period before the curtains are raised on a performance, or the passage of time before a doctor's appointment. Waiting rooms are always underpinned by the promised fulfillment of some desire or need, and its temporary deferral. Otto-Knapp's exhibition centers this kind of experience; hinting at staged activations but never explicitly delivering one, her work invites the viewer to linger in a moment of suspension, dwelling on latent tensions and impressions as they arise.

Curated by Solveig Øvstebø.