

MIER

“Jana Schröder”

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Artforum

By Marta Silvi

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Via Ripense 6

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In her first solo show at this gallery, Jana Schröder proceeds nonchalantly through a strongly performative pictorial practice. Her large canvases appear like monuments of automatic writing—in this case, notes and doodles—of the type one might imagine psychoanalysts encouraging patients to make in order to gain access to repressed memories. Schröder’s activity is a tribute of sorts to the paintings of Albert Oehlen, the artist’s professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 2005 to 2009, who combined abstract and figurative elements in response to the neo-expressionist aesthetic that reigned in the 1980s. “Spontacts Paintings,” 2016, a series of large canvases executed in indelible pencil and oil, bring to mind the spontaneity and impulsiveness implicit in the title’s portmanteau, belying the true nature of the operation. Schröder’s camouflaged stratifications of paint that emerge upon close observation are more evident in works where grids and squares stabilize the background, creating a geometric platform and a circumscribed and pulsating space of action (*Spontacts Ro* and *Spontacts UD 07*). The artist applies various layers of indelible pencil, subsequently reworking the subtle lines, or even completely expunging them with a slow, more concrete pictorial stroke. Meanwhile, her process is linked to the alchemical qualities intrinsic to the ink, which tends to gradually dissolve and/or change color when exposed to sunlight. This is painting in a state of constant evolution, which offers the viewer a form that is never definitive. Spontaneity versus control, surface versus depth, and apparent speed versus slowness of gesture are the ingredients of an investigation that is more complex than it appears.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.