

ANI SCHULZE
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SNAKE CHARMING

Under the title *Snake Charming*, Ani Schulze presents new drawings, a site-specific wall mural, sculptures, and a video work in her first exhibition at the gallery.

Groups of people during leisure time: In her watercolors and textile works, Schulze depicts figures engaged in various activities: picnicking, hunting, bathing – tussling? The scenes seem familiar yet unsettling. References can be found in Western art history: Paul Sérusier's *Femmes à la source* (around 1899), Gustave Courbet's *Les Baigneuses* (1853), and Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (originally *Le bain*, 1863). What underlies all these French classics is the male gaze on the female. Schulze uses these role models and turns them upside down: her hybrid figures are emancipated, strong, and independent. They assert themselves in the image space and do not need confirmation from outside. Female characters from the history of art are joined by Roman history and Greek mythology, among them augurs and danaids.

With the reversal of roles, the all-queer-female* casts, zoom-ins, and contemporary digital extensions (e.g. the mobile phone at picnic) the artist relocates the sceneries into today and undermines a binary system. The dissolution of dichotomy also becomes visible in the alternating relationships of the figures: it is difficult to tell whether the gestures are affectionate or combative. Their props change from instruments to weapons and vice versa. The image of the snake charmer fits all too well: The snake considers the person and flute (pungi) a threat and responds to it as if it were a predator – a state between hypnosis and attack. Schulze's polymer sculptures *YES I – III* gather in the space, devotional sitting and waiting, rather affirmative.

Flute players are also the protagonists in Ani Schulze's video *Suffusion of Yellow*. They perform techno-shamanistic ritual acts of prediction and cure. Water, as source, as fountain, and its cleansing, healing effect is a recurring motif in her work. Not only is water an all-connecting element, but it is also fluid and formless. Everything flows, or, to speak with Astrida Neimanis, "We are all bodies of water."¹

Miriam Bettin

¹ Astrida Neimanis, "Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water.", in: *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*, eds. Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni, Fanny Söderbäck. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.