

## On Katherina Olschbaur's exhibition "Wilde Reiter" at OOF Books, Los Angeles, 2018

With a style that operates between surrealism, figurative art, and abstraction, Olschbaur's work washes over the viewer in waves of understanding—where one initially sees shapes and their depth, the brain later compiles this fragmented information to form a complete object. With this contemplation moment between perception and understanding, the artist indicates at our humanity—what we are able, in one instant, to comprehend and still shield ourselves from.

In this particular body of work, Olschbaur explores motifs typically associated with the American West; as the name of the show and the artist's painting style signal, however, the meaning of these images are multi-tier. Many of Olschbaur's native association with riders on horseback are apocalyptic, deadly, seductive, or indicative of insanity. These narratives, in contrast to the image of the cowboy, become intensely personal for Olschbaur—a recent transplant to Los Angeles, she has gone about comparing expectation and reality. Saddles can be taken as either the conduit to freedom, exploration, and innovation or a means to madness and an untimely end. Horses are either menacing, deranged, and demonic or majestic and gentle. *Wilde Reiter* is, ultimately, an evolution of work centralized around personal narrative, cultural narrative, and the subjective marriage of the two as seen through a lens that pushes the viewer to evaluate their stance on the subject matter in a Brechtian manner—making the familiar strange.

Christie Hayden