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Review: "Sketches for Three Voices" by Joanna Klink, Annette Carlozzi, and Francesca Fuchs at testsite, Austin

by [Lauren Moya Ford](#) | April 5, 2023



"Sketches for Three Voices" at testsite, installation view. Photo: Adam Schreiber

"We invite you to see by listening," the poet Joanna Klink told the audience before the beginning of *Sketches for Three Voices*, a spoken performance of a text by curator Annette Carlozzi, artist Francesca Fuchs, and Klink. The piece was created in response to a group of Fuchs' paintings and sculptures installed in the downstairs rooms of testsite, an art space and private home in central Austin. Carlozzi, Fuchs, and Klink stood together and read their writing in testsite's sunny living room, where a large crowd had gathered and spilled into the rest of the house. From the end of a dining table in the next room, I could only see the tops of the performers' heads, so Klink's invitation was especially fitting: as each participant read, first separately and later in steady, overlapping layers, I looked out a window, watching a neighbor's tree bob in the breeze.

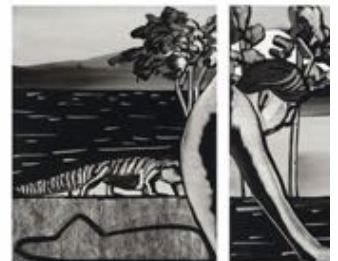


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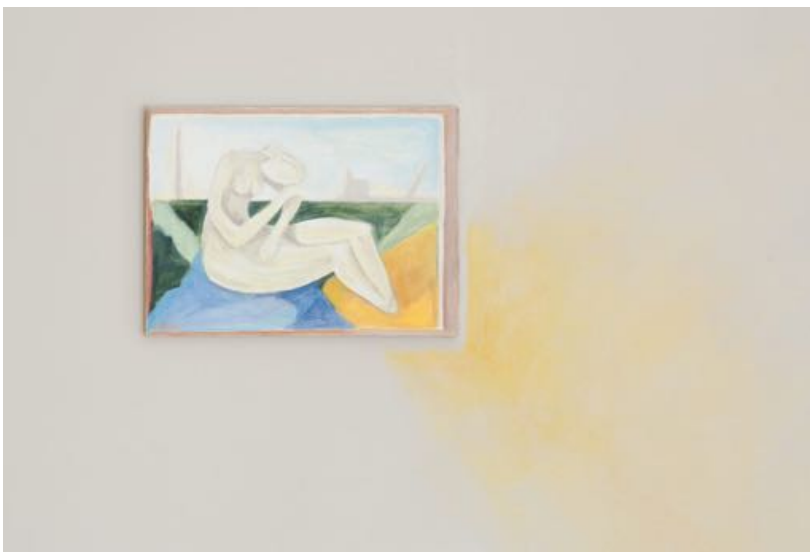


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Francesca Fuchs, "Reclining Figure in Landscape," 2023, oil on canvas, 9 5/8 x 13 inches. Photo: Adam Schreiber

The feeling of quiet contemplation that pervaded the performance matched Fuchs' graceful pieces. Her works often depict singular objects from the her past, including items that she made as a child or that her family collected from friends. We all have things like these in our lives; they carry sentimental value and tell stories that only their owners can know. But the care with which Fuchs depicts them in paint is a gentle and radical gesture. Through her work, she questions conventional notions of value as she centers, elevates, and expands the meaning of these objects.



Francesca Fuchs, "Figure in Landscape," 2022, oil on canvas, 9 1/2 x 13 inches. Photo: Adam Schreiber

I know Fuchs's work for the soft hues and backgrounds painted in subtle shades of white, but a series of four small paintings in the dining room seem to signal a new direction. Here, her subjects recline in richly-colored, rocky landscapes that evoke the flavor of the American Southwest. In contrast to the blank backgrounds of Fuch's other paintings — which emphasize a sense of objectness, smallness, and possession — the scenes of vast nature animate and enlarge their subjects. Even though these paintings are smaller than those in the living room and foyer, their figures resemble monumental sculptures rather than things on a shelf.



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Francesca Fuchs, "Coil Vase," 2023, fired clay, oil paint, 9 x 4 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches; "To Make a Change," 2021 acrylic on canvas, 15 1/16 x 20 3/4 inches, Private collection. Photo: Adam Schreiber

Pastel clouds of pink, yellow, blue, and green radiate past the frames of these works and onto the walls of the house. These painted flourishes make each piece a site-specific, hybrid painting-installation, and have appeared in Fuchs' [other recent exhibitions](#). Here the hazy marks look like passing patches of sunlight, or even a kind of aura, as if there's an energy in these pictures that cannot be fully contained. This sense comes through most strongly in *Reclining Figure in Landscape* (2023), where a rainbow at the top of the canvas extends into a vibrant arc on the surrounding wall. With these external brushstrokes, Fuchs is pointing to the artificiality and even the futility of the frame.



Francesca Fuchs, "Seated Woman," 2022 acrylic on canvas 26 1/2 x 36 inches; "Hausbrot," 2022, fired clay, oil paint, 3 1/2 x 8 x 7 3/4 inches. Photo: Adam Schreiber

Curiously, each of these pieces has its match in the living room. There, the central figures of Fuch's paintings sit against empty, white backgrounds. And while the titles of the colorful paintings in the dining room refer to their subjects as figures in the landscape, their counterparts with sparse backgrounds are all titled as women. *Reclining Woman with a Broken Arm* (2023), a painting of a sculpture sitting on a white platform against a white backdrop in the living room becomes *Reclining Figure in Landscape* (2023) in the dining room, a painting of the same sculpture sitting beneath an exuberant rainbow on brightly-colored rocks. There's a sort of

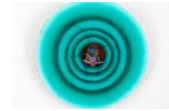


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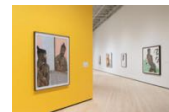
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history, where titles like these have been used countless times. Fuchs is also questioning the supposed necessity of a work's absolute individuality and originality. In these paintings, her subjects look the same, but are they really?



Francesca Fuchs, "Dringend Gesuchte Terroristen," 2023, acrylic on canvas, 16 1/8 x 11 1/4 inches. Photo: Adam Schreiber

The earliest piece in the show is *Seated Woman*. With its pumice-like surface and robust curves, the figure resembles a prehistoric fertility goddess, but it was made from a carved, man-made aerated breeze block in 1989. The sculpture appears in paintings from 2022 and 2023, both of which are larger in scale than the original three-dimensional object. In the booklet of texts that accompanies the exhibition, Fuchs relates that the sculpture was given to her grandmother. Upon her grandmother's death, the sculpture "came back to me." After three decades, one artwork inspired others. "Maybe time does not exist," Fuchs writes in her text. One is reminded of lines from Klink's poem "Reclining Woman": "And even if I'm not anything yet, / I will be someday."

Sketches for Three Voices by Joanna Klink, Annette Carlozzi, and Francesca Fuchs is on view at [testsite](#) through April 16, 2023. There will be a closing reception on April 16 from 3-5 PM, with a final performance taking place at 4 PM.

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