

Sophie Esslinger

novelle

May 10–June 14, 2025

Opening: Friday, May 9, 6 pm

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The literary genre of the novella is generally characterized by a sudden twist—a rupture that changes the course of the narrative. In this moment of disorientation, something new emerges. The exhibition title picks up on this principle, transposing it from literature to painting—and thus initiating a discourse on tradition and innovation.

Painting—often believed to be dead—undergoes a constant transformation in Sophie Esslinger's work. The artist draws on recurring motifs from her formal repertoire such as eyes, hands, circles, and plant fragments. Combined and contextualized in new ways, they merge to form an associative chain of recognizable and unfamiliar elements. Allegorical forms such as drops or stars have emotional, cultural, and symbolic meanings. For example, a drop is round and pointed at the same time, referring to physicality and transience, emotion and symbol.

Language and image enter into a close dialogue; literary and poetic texts influence both the titles and moods of her works. The result is a painterly space that oscillates between body and landscape, outer and inner worlds, form and figure.

In an age where we are overwhelmed by the flood of digital images, Sophie Esslinger calls for an immediate experience of color, form, and surface. Her monumental paintings, which are not only to be viewed but can almost be entered, can be interpreted as reflections on painting itself: What can this traditional medium achieve today? Where is the new?

– Katrin Rollmann