

Hallucinatory Paintings Depict the Bodily Impossible

Stefanie Heinze's work features clumsy figures whose actions and gestures bleed into glorious unrealities.

By [Kevin Holmes](#)

April 4, 2016, 3:20pm



Stefanie Heinze, *Oop (Fingerspitzengefühle)*, 2016 oil and acrylic on canvas, 2 parts
190 x 300 cm, 74.8 x 118.1 in. Courtesy Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London. Copyright

the artist Stefanie Heinze's paintings depict fleshy forms caught in flux where their actions—eating, resting, leaping—appear to merge into one another in a clumsy flow of movement. There's almost a Looney Tunes sense of the absurd as Heinze's half-stumbling figures defy logic, and their actions bleeding into others and their surroundings. It's hard to discern where they end and the world around them begins.

These blundering, colorful forms can be found in group show Dropping the Guru, at London's Pippy Houldsworth Gallery. "I like clumsiness as a tool," Heinze explains to The Creators Project. "I work with space as such in which one action blends into the next. I want to see the bigger picture." This seemingly compositional chaos comes from Heinze's freeform approach, where the blank canvas is a place for searching. "I try to enjoy the condition of not-yet-knowing," says the German artist.

Paintings go through "weird transformations," and often Heinze will work on several pieces at once. Before the painting process comes sketching, a way to begin establishing these restless figures and shapes. "The act of drawing is a process of locating and discovering, with shapes and movements interacting with one another," Heinze notes. "These forms are often engaged in basic physical functions such as appearing, eating, resting, leaping, nudging, prying into other affairs and so on."



Stefanie Heinze, Pretensions' Urgh (Swelling, Stretching, Leaping), 2016 oil and acrylic on canvas, 2 parts 220 x 155 cm, 86.6 x 61 in. Courtesy Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London. Copyright the artist

These exploratory sketches are then infused with color and bulk through acrylic and oil paint, with the very act of the painting happening on a larger scale (the paintings in the exhibition are around six feet tall and five feet wide or larger) informing the flow of the fictive gestures and motions. "Failure is a possibility and an integral part of my imagery. Even drawing mistakes are reinterpreted in the paintings." Heinze notes. "I think this kind of struggle becomes discernible in the work, how the process works hand in hand with the motifs. It is the searching procedure that leads me to the paintings. This what I love about image making. I can make a figure walk and lean back at the same time. Glorious impossibilities!"

Within these playful depictions of the human body, the bodies merge with other objects, too. The figures become their environment and the consumable products that we surround ourselves with ooze into their forms until it's all a jumbled mass of abstraction. "I spend a lot of time embellishing myself. I'm quite a consumer of beauty products," Heinze says. "Eyebrow pencils are my latest addiction. Nail varnish is timeless. It's insane how I can spend a whole morning changing the colors of my nails and finally leave the house without any on. It's absurd. The figures in my paintings are among other things shaped out of clothing, makeup and consumer goods. I'm interested in social status and identity. How to deconstruct gender roles in a playful way."



Stefanie Heinze, *Untitled (Eyeball on Guard)*, 2016 oil and acrylic on canvas 180 x 150 cm, 70.9 x 59.1 in. Courtesy Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London. Copyright the artist



STEFANIE HEINZE, *IN COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORM/PEANUTS*, 2015 ACRYLIC AND OIL ON CANVAS 180 X 290 CM, 70.9 X 114.2 IN. COURTESY PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY, LONDON. COPYRIGHT THE ARTIST



STEFANIE HEINZE, IN LIMBO (WAITING FOR A BETTER HALF), 2015 ACRYLIC AND OIL ON PAPER 190 X 150 CM, 74.8 X 59.1 IN. COURTESY PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY, LONDON. COPYRIGHT THE ARTIST



INSTALLATION VIEW: DROPPING THE GURU, PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY, LONDON, 2016 COURTESY PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY, LONDON