

Conny Maier  
*Feels like rabies, 2022*

Société is pleased to announce its first solo exhibition with the German artist Conny Maier. In *Feels like rabies*, Maier presents a series of new paintings that explore fundamental questions about human nature, ecology, dominance, and control. The works are populated by figures who seem out of sync with their environment, as if they might topple over at any moment in their cruel struggle for ascendancy over nature and other beings. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes of the “ambivalence of salvage,” how damaged worlds nonetheless contain an abundance of life, beauty, resilience, and the potential for dynamic new alliances between different life forms—and Maier’s paintings unflinchingly delve into this space between destruction and renewal.

Conny Maier narrative paintings portray extreme psychological states through a style of contorted figuration that verges on caricature. In *Dynamik*, nine figures come together to form a pulsating mass: a jumble of bodies, hands pulling fabric, and long rivers of tears. The figures who inhabit the work convey an ambiguous bundle of emotions—they could be experiencing paroxysms of extreme grief, struggling to inflict pain upon one another, or both. The term dynamic indicates a form of continuous and productive activity or change and Maier nods towards the delicate balance between anguish and brutality in many of her paintings. There is a peculiar timelessness to Maier’s work and the scenes that she depicts are almost impossible to place: they could just as easily exist in some not-so-distant past as a brave new world future. Their pastoral settings lend them a folkloric quality that is unsettled by the figures who inhabit these landscapes—and threaten to tear this world asunder. And yet, their deformed bodies can also be read as a testament to the perpetual struggle of finding beauty and balance in a constantly changing world. *Umstände* depicts a tightly cropped view of a crouching figure with two thick drooping stems dangling from their rear end. Their strangely elongated buttocks seem to indicate that she is in a state of vegetal transformation, blossoming like inverted tulips. In *Rabies*, a woman stands in a golden field with a rabbit dangling from her hand. A small puncture wound glistens on her thumb, indicating the inflamed delirium and collapse to follow. The off-kilter figuration in Maier’s works, coupled with the inter-species entanglements that they depict, articulate precarity and vulnerability as elemental states of being. As Lowenhaupt Tsing writes of living and attempting to thrive in a contaminated world, “Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others.”<sup>1</sup>

Conny Maier was selected as one of the three recipients of Deutsche Bank’s prestigious Artists of the Year Prize in 2021. She lives and works in Berlin and Baleal, Portugal.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.20.