

**Antonia Rodrian**

***Matching Shapes And Midnight Snacks***

August 30 — October 11, 2024

*"These paintings are connected to each other, like chapters of a storyline or some sort of loose-knit narration. Elements wander from one painting to another"*

Perpetual actions evoke a sense of wonder in our everyday experiences, much like the flow of time or the vast expansion of the universe—continuous processes with neither a beginning nor an end. In *Matching Shapes And Midnight Snacks*, **Antonia Rodrian** blurs the lines of perception to elevate ordinary objects into a realm of mysterious perpetual action. Everyday items assume autonomy, acting as tools or self-conscious artifacts in a poetic story. In her first solo exhibition in Belgium, the artist presents a selection of new paintings, watercolors, and graphite drawings, continuing her exploration of the plasticity of reality following her recent institutional exhibition at Düsseldorf's contemporary art space, Kunst Im Tunnel (KIT).

Rodrian's work weaves together memory and composition, creating visual narratives oscillating between the intimate and the abstract. Her approach is akin to a close-up, slow-motion lens, where the seemingly ordinary becomes a site of exploration. Through this magnified perspective, simple moments—like sharing fries or biting into an apricot—are transmuted into layered compositions that transcend their everyday origins. These actions, removed from their original context and reimagined on the canvas, are not depicted in a literal sense but are instead distilled to their essence, evoking a sense of nearness, as if one is leaning in to catch a whispered secret. Rodrian herself notes, *"One aspect, which unites these works, is a feeling of very close proximity, or nearness as if you were leaning in, whispering to someone or something."* This notion of a visual whisper is central to her practice, where form and essence take precedence over direct representation. By distorting and exaggerating these familiar scenes to the brink of absurdity or surrealism, Rodrian invites the viewer to engage with the sensuality and energy embedded within the details, offering a new perspective on reality that is both deeply personal and universally resonant.

The title of the exhibition *Matching Shapes And Midnight Snacks* encapsulates the dual aspects of Rodrian's practice: the formal and the narrative. This wordplay bridges reality and imagination, transforming the sublime beauty of the everyday into a sensual theater, where continuous exchanges between objects, the body, and their surroundings unfold. Her works are interconnected like chapters in a storyline, with elements migrating from one painting to another. Colors, forms, and movements are repeated, creating a cohesive narrative. The curve of hair in one painting echoes the movement of grass in another, while the rectangular shapes of fries are linked to the matches, and so on.

In *Matching Shapes And Midnight Snacks*, Rodrian's objects act, hold, play, perform, search, shape, and reshape, appearing as subtle traces of gestures that often escape immediate notice. Her works *Heads Sticking Together* and *Matches* exemplify these characteristics, where seemingly mundane matches become central figures in her compositions. Despite their thematic similarities, these works diverge significantly. In *Matches*, the action centers around the moment of ignition, with a beam of light emanating from a honeycomb-shaped strip. The absent hand or performer leaves behind only the trace

of a gesture, an image suspended in time as though warped by the fabric of spacetime itself. Conversely, in *Heads Sticking Together*, the action is one of organization—or perhaps absurdity—as the matches appear to autonomously arrange themselves or linger as remnants of an unseen action, left behind by the whims of use. Both compositions investigate inherent contradictions, balancing between order and chaos, autonomy and manipulation.

Rodrian's pieces seem to build on the rich tradition of Dutch and Flemish still life painting from the 16th and 17th centuries, echoing the meticulous attention to detail and the symbolic resonance of the depicted objects. However, Rodrian's focus diverges from literal representation, emphasizing instead the geometry and essence of objects, distilling them into abstractions that transcend their everyday meanings. The objects appear to be in motion, caught in the midst of an action or interaction, rather than fixed in stillness. In *Midnight Snacks*, for example, Rodrian presents a close-up view of hands interacting with a pile of fries. The bright, warm hues of the fries dominate the composition, while the hands are rendered in soft, natural tones. The dark background enhances the visual prominence of the fries and hands, creating a strong focal point. This painting, created during a residency in Istanbul, reflects on aspects of community and the intimate interaction of sharing food, commenting on the social and nourishing aspects of shared experiences.

In *Two Feelings One Sensation*, Rodrian presents a zoomed-in image of interlocking fingers partially obscured by undulating, ribbon-like forms that appear to envelop the hands. The soft, pastel hues of the fingers contrast with the cool, mint-green tones of the surrounding shapes, creating a multisensory experience. Rodrian employs her characteristic blending of figuration and abstraction, where familiar objects—here, human hands—are partially obscured or distorted by abstract elements. The softness and warmth of the flesh subtly contrast with the surrounding green forms, blurring the distinction between subject and environment. Forms sensually connect, touch, and embrace.

In Rodrian's world, the bite of an apricot, the combing of hair, or the striking of a match transcend their everyday simplicity, morphing into new realms painted with a gentle, soft palette. The structures depicted sometimes dissolve into abstract lines, while the repetition of forms emphasizes the formal composition of the painting. Through her continuous interrogation of representation, Rodrian defines her distinctive style, where the materiality of painting and the positioning of color are as important as the subject matter itself. In her work, the act of seeing is intimately connected to the tactile experience of touch and perception, blurring the boundaries between subject and object, the personal and the universal, and the tangible and the ephemeral.

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**Antonia Rodrian** (b. 1989 in Essen, Germany) holds an MA in Fine Art from The Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (2017). Recent solo and group exhibitions include NRW, Le Feuvre & Roze Gallery, Paris (2024); Personal Showcase, Galerie Rolando Anselmi, Rome (2024); *I've got you*, KIT, Düsseldorf (2024); *So close, come on*, Badr El Jundi Gallery, Madrid (2023); *Foolish Fire*, Newchild, Antwerp (2023). *The Serpent Scenes*, Galerie Rolando Anselmi, Rome (2022, solo); *Birdenbire Burada*, Kiralik Depo, Istanbul (2022); *Open House*, Shortlist Schmidt-Rottluff-Scholarship, Brücke Museum, Berlin (2022); and *Wild Blue Yonder*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2021). In 2020 she was awarded the Kunstpreis 2020 Baustelle Schaustelle. Rodrian's artist residencies include Atelier Galata in Istanbul (2022, 2024) and Bronner Residency in Tel Aviv (2020). Within the context of the institutional show *I've got you* at KIT Düsseldorf, she received the Baker Tilly Stipend 2023. The artist lives and works in Berlin.

**Matching Shapes And Midnight Snacks** is on view from August 30 to October 11, 2024. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.