

Anne Speier
Funky Monkey:
What are you afraid of? (2017)
 in "Portikus XXX"

Various venues
 18.6 – 14.10.2017

Humans have always had a preoccupation with our evolutionary kin, who have often been used as foils for ourselves. The mirror of our animal nature is key to this show, one of several offsite projects in Frankfurt organised by Portikus to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. Anne Speier has suspended an orangutan from a long rope, which it might be scaling up or down, in the stairwell of Fleming's Hotel, famous for having one of the few remaining public Paternosters (translated literally, "Our Father"): continually looping doorless "elevators of death" one must jump on and off of between floors. Should you choose to ignore this novel opportunity and take the stairs, Speier's sculpture appears above you as a surreal, creepy, spider-like phantom. Up close, the figure (I think it is a she) presents a bizarre contrast to the hotel's aesthetic: originally an office building, it still has a vibe of airless German bureaucracy, albeit dressed up with monochromatic geometry, glitzy fixtures and dark wood furniture. In this environment, the orangutan stands out above all for her organic, haptic and spindly form. As one circles her, she reaches out her arms defensively, one lumpy finger grazing the hotel bannister as she rotates, seemingly pushing viewers away. She floats slowly and heavily in space. It is surprising to think of how light she must be.

Recently exhibited in Speier's exhibition "Wild" at Galerie Meyer Kainer in Vienna, isolated in this hotel she is like an omen from another world. Crafted from paper-mâché, her bumpy skin and downcast expression are painted a deep bruised

color that contrasts with her flaming orange locks. Speier is a master of complex emotional storytelling: as in her other works, she combines darkness with humor in an extravagantly twisted narrative that leaves her intentions ambiguous. Is the subtitle "What are you afraid of?" a question for this funky monkey, or is it a question for us? Either way, Speier seems to be inviting us to reflect on our own condition. And perhaps being a sad animal in a schmaltzy hotel isn't that bad after all.

Sofia Leiby



Installation views, Fleming's Selection Hotel Frankfurt-City 2017