

In The Frame

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The art of BDSM

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Ali Silverstein, May 30, 2016 (Yellow Objects All Over) (2016)

The artist Ali Silverstein had never made the connection between her approach to painting and BDSM (bondage and discipline, domination and submission, Sadism and Masochism) before a discussion with a visitor to her solo booth at the fair Untitled in Miami Beach last year. “I was talking about continually being present and feeling these genuine desires come up from a place that’s not in my mind, from a real body place, and then being brave enough to keep following those, and that’s when she [said] ‘this is exactly what I teach people’”, Silverstein recalls. When she asked the visitor, Kasia Urbaniak, to elaborate, she replied, “Well, I’m the highest-paid dominatrix in the world,” Silverstein says.

“In the Frame: The art of BDSM,” *The Art Newspaper*. November 14, 2016

albertz benda

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The artist is currently showing a new series of work at Albertz Benda gallery in New York in the solo exhibition [To Put on the Edge, a Table](#) (until 17 December), inspired by her discussions with Urbaniak and the psychology of BDSM—but don't expect black leather. People are confused by the bright and cheerful colours in the abstract canvases, the artist jokes, but the power dynamics and the desire are in the process, not the result.

“The range of acceptable desires is very, very narrow. So as a woman, let's say... you're a prude, until you're a slut,” Silverstein says. “I think the easiest starting point is legitimising desire—increasing the range of acceptable desires. Painting is a very immediate way to explore these things.” The artist had to start by identifying what she is afraid of doing while painting, she says, such as making an “ugly” work. “I have to figure out how to negotiate with my own resistance,” she says. “The freedom part is hugely important, but it's kind of being willing to make a mess, being willing to be authentic in what you want, being fearless.” How far is she willing to go? “I would really like to experience at some point, her being my domme in the studio [telling me what to paint]—wouldn't that be cool—but it's totally terrifying working up to that,” she says.

This Wednesday, 16 November, Silverstein and Urbaniak—who now collects the artist's work—will discuss what links their two practices in a conversation *Power Dynamics and the Creative Process: Hunting for What's Alive* at Albertz Benda.

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