

Sophie von Hellermann

Von kommenden Dingen (From Things to Come)

Opening: 22 July 2022, 6–9 pm

Exhibition: 23 July – 03 September 2022

WENTRUP is pleased to present "From Things to Come," our second solo exhibition with the German-British artist Sophie von Hellermann. This new body of work is inspired by the life and writing of the German liberal politician, writer, and industrialist Walther Rathenau. Alongside this gallery exhibition, von Hellermann has created a site-specific installation at Rathenau's former Prussian palace, Schloss Freienwalde, in Brandenburg outside of Berlin.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Walther Rathenau by far-right extremists. At the time of his murder, Rathenau was Germany's foreign minister and remains, until today, the only Jew to ever hold that position. Sophie von Hellermann was commissioned to create a site-specific artwork for the suite of rooms in Freienwalde. Historic photographs of the rooms as they looked at Rathenau's time served as her starting point and inspiration. Using her typical characteristic expressive style and dynamic painting technique, the artist brought her subjective feelings, associations, and thoughts about Walther Rathenau and this place to the walls and ceilings of the palace. The canvases for the exhibition, which can now be seen at Wentrup, were also painted here.

Sophie von Hellermann's works combine her interest in history, mythology, stories, literature, and film. She selects individual themes of interest to her from entirely different areas, 'weaves' them together, and implements them in her spontaneous painting style without sketches or preliminary drawings. While soaking up the unique atmosphere at Freienwalde and working on the murals, von Hellermann worked intermittently on the canvases. The rigid painting surface of the walls and ceilings working on scaffolding and painting overhead presented physical challenges. The yielding canvases provided a form of relief allowing the painter to work on the floor.

A look at the works in the exhibition illustrates the artist's complex world of thought. For example, the magnificent depiction in "Schloss Freienwalde," in which Rathenau receives his guests with open arms. It seems as if he is on a stage, figuratively a reception of modern ideas directed toward the future at a time when far-right, backward-looking forces were attempting to destabilize the still-young Weimar Republic.

In the work "Rosenkavalier," Rathenau meets with the first owner of the palace, Queen Friederike Luise of Prussia. On the one hand, the artist addresses the return to the roots of the bourgeois spirit, Enlightenment and Classicism at the beginning of the 20th century. This may have served Rathenau as a reference point for

renovating the late classicist palace. In addition, the artist refers in the title to the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who was a guest of Rathenau in Freienwalde several times and was possibly inspired there to write parts of "Rosenkavalier." In other works, there are more contemporary witnesses, esteemed thinkers, and confidants of Rathenau, such as Albert Einstein, a long-time friend with whom he had a lively exchange of ideas. Or the writer and Nobel Prize winner Gerhart Hauptmann, who was also a guest at Schloss Freienwalde several times with his family.

In her works, von Hellermann materializes memory as a layering of different historical references that are simultaneously rooted in the here and now and capable of carrying the feeling of a bygone era into our present.

Sophie von Hellermann (*1975 in Munich) lives and works in London and Margate. She is a professor of painting at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe.

The art project at Schloss Freienwalde has been initiated and curated by Ruth Ur / urKultur and is open to the public from Thursday to Sunday. Wentrup has produced a video on the occasion of the exhibition:

<https://vimeo.com/726071673>

Sophie von Hellermann has had solo exhibitions at Greene Naftali Gallery, New York; Pilar Corrias Gallery, London; Kunstverein Hannover; Neuer Aachener Kunstverein; Kunstverein Konstanz and Saatchi Gallery in London, among others.

Her commissioned work "Sirens", created with Anne Ryan, is on view at the Turner Contemporary museum in Margate until the end of February 2023.

She has been in group exhibitions at Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin; Braunsfelder Family Collection, Cologne; Dortmunder Kunstverein; Bonner Kunstverein; Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hayward Gallery, London; and Tate Britain, London, among others.

Works by Sophie von Hellermann are in the collections of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Neuberger Museum of Art, New York; Cranford Collection, London; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas; Saatchi Collection, London; Collection of Alaia Cheng, Hong Kong; Hall Collection, Derneburg, and the Zabłudowicz Collection, London.