

PUBLIC AND BEYOND JUDGMENT

Jeanette Mundt

G2 Kunsthalle, Leipzig

June 12 – October 4, 2026

With PUBLIC AND BEYOND JUDGMENT, the G2 Kunsthalle presents the first institutional solo exhibition of New York-based painter Jeanette Mundt (*1982, USA) in Germany. In addition to a series of new paintings, the artist has created a site-specific wall work [1]. Mundt combines art-historical and pop-cultural references with personal elements, pursuing the goal of continually rethinking the image. Her practice is driven by an ever-reorienting process of discovery that absorbs the collective flood of images like a resonating body, distorts them, and generates something new from them. In doing so, she makes clear that one's own gaze is never constant and that both perception and its understanding are subject to continuous change. She illuminates the genesis of images, from their creation through their reception and shifts in meaning, to their deconstruction, and thus underscores the ambivalence between construction and reality.

Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (The Origin of the World) from 1866 depicts the sex of a reclining nude woman whose upper body, with the exception of her stomach and one breast, is covered. The work was commissioned by a private collector and was first exhibited publicly in 1988 at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. The sex appears here as the source of all human life and, as such, as the foundation of the entirety of human existence — with all its intellectual, cultural, scientific, and social achievements, and every emotion that makes the world and everything within it perceptible to us.

After years of being hidden or only partially shown, the work received intense criticism following its rediscovery in the late 20th century, including accusations of pornography. Precisely through the omission of the head, the center of the mind, intellect, and identity, the depiction can be read as the objectification of women. In 2024, two activists spray-painted the glass panel protecting the work at the Centre Pompidou-Metz with the phrase "Me Too" in red paint. The French-Luxembourgish performance artist Deborah de Robertis claimed responsibility for the action. Out of the interplay of the red color and Courbet's motif a new image arises, which Jeanette Mundt in turn takes up, reworks and abstracts in *After Courbet* [2]. The body, the groin, and the writing in red lie expressively and thickly on the canvas. The indeterminate and the variable define the image. Just as the physicality is not necessarily decipherable without prior knowledge or the cue of the title, the inscription "Me Too" is illegible. Mundt shows the paint merely as a trace, as a hint, as something that suggests a disruptive element now appearing universally, without standing concretely for anything. It becomes part of the image, part of the body. The original work was promptly cleaned following the 2024 action, and today no trace of it is visible in the museum. Nevertheless, countless photographs of the work with the inscription exist.

Mundt investigates the relationship between the original and its reproductions. In the age of digital image generation, these no longer even require a real-world action; instead, they can

be generated digitally in countless variations, which increasingly complicates the authentication of images and raises the potential for misuse and manipulation.

In addition to art history, Mundt turns to popular culture, the title of *American Beauty* [6] references the film of the same name from 1999, which tells the story of an attempt to reclaim a meaningful life. Mundt dedicates the series to the film's iconic depiction of a figure lying naked in a sea of roses. In the film, this scene embodies the fantasy of the middle-aged protagonist, who has fallen in love with his daughter's friend and imagines her, while masturbating, lying in a bed of roses. Once again, the focus is on a male projection of a woman: here in a dual role, as both the fictional fantasy of the protagonist and the idea of the director.

Mundt portrays herself here as the young woman in the iconic pose on the bed of roses. Unlike the cinematic template, however, she chooses a view from below, thereby enacting a radical shift in perspective. Through painting, she relocates the vantage point to a position diametrically opposed to the original camera angle. The viewer now assumes the gaze of the reclining figure and looks, in a sense, toward the camera — or rather, into the imaginary world of the film's protagonist. Numerous layers of paint spread across the body like floral formations, partially obscuring the figure. These painterly overlays can be read as a shield that protects the body from being immediately consumed by the gaze. Through the deconstruction of figuration, Mundt opens a path towards the abstraction of the depicted. The figure remains present, yet resists clear legibility. In this work, Mundt once again probes the specific possibilities of painting — visibility and concealment, figuration and abstraction — simultaneously, interweaving them with one another.

Édouard Manet's *Olympia* from 1863 stands in the long art-historical tradition of the reclining nude woman. Its direct precedents were Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (1510) and Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538). Manet,

however, depicts not a goddess, as was customary in those models, but a sex worker. The name "Olympia" carries no iconographic tradition, yet phonetically evokes ancient deities, making it a reinterpretation of an age-old pictorial motif.

In the series *Two Olympias* [3], Mundt depicts herself in the reclining pose of the nude woman from Manet's painting, but adds a second Olympia. She begins the work by rendering the bodies and then works expressively over the base layer, causing the figures to blur and appear alternately more or less defined. At times they are unrecognizable as such without prior knowledge, instead integrating as an equal plane of color into what appears to be a spaceless, abstract composition. The dynamism of the paint layers conveys a feeling of disorientation and instability, demanding concentrated attention. The doubling of the body can be read as a confrontation between the roles of subject and object. Being seen and seeing through gender-specific gazes collide here. The figure operates like a flickering disruption. By appropriating the templates of her male colleagues, such as setting and pose, copying them, and transferring them onto her own body, Mundt reflects the male gaze. In doing so, she preserves the autonomy of her body's perception and representation, situating it within a new reading of the art-historical canon.

Mundt assumes an active dual role as both artist and subject, reinterpreting history. Mundt poses questions through works that seem to remain in a state of transformation. They reflect a world changing at a dizzying pace and simultaneously mirror its constant pictorial representation, by depicting these processes simultaneously in variable states.

Text: Leo Wedepohl

WORKS

- 1 WALL WORK, 2026
- 2 AFTER COURBET, 2026
Oil on canvas
50 x 61 cm
- 3 TWO OLYMPIAS, 2026
Oil on canvas
each 121 x 175 cm
- 4 EAST MARION, 2026
Oil on linen
116 x 119 cm
- 5 I WILL DESTROY YOU, 2023
Oil on linen
213 x 457 cm
- 6 AMERICAN BEAUTY, 2026
Oil on canvas
198 x 162 cm
- 7 FISH AND LEMONS, 2026
Oil on canvas
each 97 x 78 cm
- 8 BATHERS, 2026
Oil on linen
50 x 61 cm

JEANETTE MUNDT

(*1982, USA) studied at the Pratt Institute in New York, graduating in 2006. She then continued her academic education at Rutgers University in New Jersey. In 2024, she received the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, followed in 2025 by a residency at the University of Tennessee.

Her works are held in the collections of institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami (Florida), the Aïshti Foundation (Beirut), the Perić Collection (London), and the Museum Ludwig (Cologne).

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G2 Kunsthalle
Dittrichring 13, 04109 Leipzig
www.g2-leipzig.de

OPENING HOURS
Wed. 3 – 5 pm / Fri. – Sun. 12 – 5 pm

PUBLIC TOURS
Thu. 3 pm [DE]
Thu. 4 pm [EN]
Registration for the tours is available online
at www.g2-leipzig.de

ADMISSION
Regular: €5
Reduced: €3
Reduced admission is available for school
pupils and university students.
Free admission for children under 12 years
of age, as well as students of art history and
fine arts.
No additional fee is charged for the public
guided tours.

