

ISABEL SULLIVAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pia Dehne

Faced with a Choice Do Both

March 13 - April 19, 2025

Isabel Sullivan Gallery is pleased to present ***Faced with a Choice Do Both***, an exhibition of twelve new oil paintings by German artist Pia Dehne. This marks 20 years since Dehne's first solo show in New York with Jeffrey Deitch, and her first with the gallery. An opening reception with the artist will take place on Thursday, March 13, from 6-8 pm at 39 Lispenard Street.

Pia Dehne will return to New York with an exhibition of visual riddles. This collection presents a contemporary take on traditional botanical painting, with uncanny juxtapositions that result in dreamlike, surreal images. Dehne uses traditional painting techniques, with an emphasis on precision, to create hyperrealist paintings of exquisitely rendered orchids in bloom. Though they create the illusion of reality or high resolution photography, hidden images emerge upon closer examination. Viewers will find unexpected objects camouflaged within the paintings, such as portraits of music icons, instruments, the sinister knitting hands of tricoteuses, or references to Renaissance and Baroque painting. References to ancient Greek mythology also appear, such as the whimsical painting *Bacchus*, where a vivid pink orchid intertwines with human hands and grapes in a nod to Dyonisian ecstasy.

The title of the exhibition references Oblique Strategies, a card-based strategy developed in 1975 by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt to promote creativity. The set, which Dehne used as the genesis for this series, included prompts like *Destroy the most important thing*, or *Faced with a choice do both*; the latter was contributed by Dieter Roth. Roth's quote reflects a refusal to be confined by binary and traditional conventions, a mindset aligned with avant-garde movements that reject hierarchy and embrace contradictions and uncertainty.

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Dehne's images are sensually choreographed, alluding to themes of beauty, attraction, sexuality and femininity. Petals are rendered sensuous and abundant. Hands and instruments become part of the orchids' bodies, further personifying their corporeality. They exist untethered from society, in their purest form, delicate and luscious. They bedazzle and seduce us. Yet there is something more complex being communicated. In *Baby's on Fire*, titled after a Brian Eno song, a radiant orchid erupts into flames over the profile of legendary singer Donna Summer. The flame envelops both the flower and Summer, suggesting intense passion, expression, vitality and metamorphosis. It is as if to say two things can be true; we can be both glamorous and chaotic, volatile and controlled. We can embrace creation and destruction, and opposing forces can coexist.

Pia Dehne (b. 1964 in Düsseldorf, Germany) has been an exhibiting artist for 30 years. Dehne grew up in post-war Germany as part of the punk and new wave scene, exploring music and underground culture directly during her youth. Her work has been the feature of several solo exhibitions in NYC at Deitch Projects, Haswellediger & Co. Gallery, Blackston Gallery, Charles Bank Gallery, and in Berlin, Germany at Achim Kubinski Gallery and AJL Gallery as well as numerous group shows. She received her Master of Fine Arts in 1994 at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Dehne later lived in Berlin before relocating to New York City in 1999. She has lived and worked in the Catskills since 2011.

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