

Leah Nehmert  
*Harmonies*  
18.03.23-24.04.23  
Gallery Ann Mazzotti  
Opening 18.03.23, 3-6pm

There was one defining stupendous moment after which Leah decided to let music enter her studio. She had not bought a ticket for that specific concert, she had no expectations, the music was just there for her to hear. The jazz concert given inside the Tinguely Museum in Basel moved her to tears. Her attention was focused on what was taking place inside of her, in a very personal place, not a spot but rather a space inside her sensitive self.

The vibrating sounds communicated something to Leah, they did something to her: wonder, awe, joy, nostalgia, sorrow, tension, mysterious and inexpressible ripples of emotions and thoughts. Sensations so powerful and intense, so rife with the living energy of her being that it seemed to her that the moment had filled her whole body like a presence, that time had stopped. The moment lasted so long as the sounds played in her, then it flew by.

Because concerts gather a certain number of music-makers and their instruments within a particular space and time, more intimate as was the inclusive stage in the Tinguely Museum, or much larger as concert halls, they also afford a visual and spatial experience to the listener. Leah's encounters with different musical scenes have found their consonant traces in her ongoing research with colors, organic shapes and forms in her paintings and clay works.

Music is one with the vibrating instrument whose sounds flurry the air: the voice, the piano, the violon, the flute... *Du Bout des Doigts* was painted after Leah heard a romantic piece on the piano. In that space, open hands remain free to sound the keyboard anywhere. The visual impact of the saluting string instruments at the end of a concert gave rise to *Field of Fiddles*, where air borne fiddles float in a field of green and yellow hues.

A solitary violon hovers in front of horizontal staves in *Imperfect Harmony*. The staves are not annotated, open space to receive notes or rests or signs, or nothing at all; open space which the viewers may occupy as they please, dream of and in. As in many of her paintings vertical and horizontal lines and patterns cross the space and meet the full dots and empty circles, the bars and lying rests, the swirling, wavering shapes found in musical language.

Leah remembered learning musical language for piano and guitar playing when she was a child. As with her clay works that reflect on the corporeal quality, shape and wooden color of the violin, she harmonized the material traces of musical writing in earthly hues and textures in *Music for the Eyes*, where notes, curving phrases and slurs, rests and stops punctuate the canvas in dance-like movements.

In her attempts to translate her lived experience of the musical moment, Leah has had to work both with the physicality of the instruments in her field of vision and the immaterial sounding boards of emotions and thought. The title of the present show, *Harmonies*, speaks of the intangible. And her works as a visual artist bear witness to her re-thinking and transformation incarnate of that moment. As music continues to stir Leah, all will still be work in progress.

Hyun Sook Ji

P.S. Is the smallest painting of the show, *Matters of the Heart* a wink to the viewer? :  
«If music be the food of love, play on...» (W. Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*)