

Manfred Naescher

Shadows of Marie Bashkirtseff, 2013

Watercolor on Paper, Ongoing Series, Various Sizes

This text is preliminary. A final text will be written once the series is concluded.

Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884) is today primarily known as a painter. In the late nineteenth century she became famous for her diary that was published posthumously (and censored severely) by her mother. It revealed - even in its early truncated version - the ambition and vivacious proto-feminist spirit of the young Marie Bashkirtseff, who, burdened by fragile health and knowing of the likeliness of an early death, developed an intense focus on improving her craft and creating a remarkable oeuvre, before she passed away of tuberculosis at the age of 25.

Shadows of Marie Bashkirtseff is part of my ongoing exploration of memory. Using jpegs found on the internet of oil paintings by Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884), I directly trace the contours of the figurative elements of Bashkirtseff's compositions, while allowing the interior areas of these outlined shapes to become a stage for the performance of the watercolour. The series is ongoing and open-ended, so far (February 2013) three watercolours have been completed.

My work explores the idea of memory as image-making. My main medium, watercolour, has the unique property - in materiality and through gesture - of both mirroring and making visible the process of memory. A recording of the process is made in the time it takes the medium to dry: Water and pigment leave traces on the paper that reveal a trajectory through which the biography of the image becomes legible. The emerging image functions analogously to memory in that distortions, shifts, additions, cessations, redistributions, and re-prioritising occur. The work becomes a witness of its own gestation and transformation, illusion becomes concrete form. What remains is a memory.