

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sophie von Hellermann

Novel Ways

November 21, 2013 – January 4, 2014

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce its fourth solo exhibition of new work by Sophie von Hellermann.

Novel Ways presents a new body of work in which the artist appropriates linguistic idioms and renders them literal. By mining the visual language and historical origins of idiomatic phrases, von Hellermann depicts their absurdist imagery and the whimsically strange worlds that these narratives inhabit. *Elephant in the Room*, for example, pictures a massive elephant, its body taking up nearly the entirety of the warm-hued parlor where a family sits in conversation. Von Hellermann surveys a range of such expressions, including *Lions' Den*, *Standing at the top of a slippery slope*, *Jumping Through Hoops*, *High as a Kite*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

In her installation *Cold as a Witch's Tit*, first exhibited at Firstsite, Colchester, in 2013, von Hellermann delves into a dark history that underlies its idiomatic title. The installation depicts portraits of women slain by Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne during the witch trials in Essex at the height of the English Civil War in the 17th century. In its latest iteration, the artist has painted a forested background directly onto the gallery walls, hanging these individual portraits on top of the mural's vegetation. *Throwing Stones in a Glass House* takes the notions of display mechanisms and literal translation one step further, staging a narrative scene along the walls of a three-dimensional house structure. By choosing to depict these scenes, von Hellermann once again focuses our attention to language and its origin, and painting as a thought process in both mental and physical landscapes.

Von Hellermann's paintings recall the look of fables, legends, and traditional stories that are imbued with the workings of her subconscious rather than the content of existing images. The artist applies pigments directly onto unprimed canvas, and her characteristic brushstrokes are gestured loosely and rapidly, with a deceptively light touch. What results are paintings in a range of colors—from richly moody tones to muted pastels—that visualize the fleetingness of thoughts, and likewise, painting's attempts to capture these transient moments. In subject matter and style, von Hellermann tests imagination against reality.

Novel Ways is accompanied by von Hellermann's recent catalogue *Elephant in the Room*, published on the occasion of her solo exhibition at Firstsite. The artist has also presented solo exhibitions at the Chisenhale Gallery, London, and the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen. In 2009, she presented a two-person exhibition with Josh Smith at Le Consortium, Dijon, and Museum Dhonts-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions such as *Cher Peintre, Lieber Maler, Dear Painter* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and *Watercolour* at Tate Britain. Her work is included in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. A founding member of hobbypopMUSEUM, von Hellermann lives and works in London.

For more information please visit www.greenenaftaligallery.com.