

Esther Messner uses pencils and acrylics to create large-format canvases depicting her friends and family. She combines gestural abstract painting with intricate pencil drawings, the spontaneity of the photographic act with time-consuming painterly execution, and the ephemeral nature of the moment with the permanent nature of the painted image. Lively, vivid portraits emerge from these contrasts.

Esther Messner graduated 2007 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna with a Master's Degree in painting.

The starting point of her artwork is a photograph. The artist takes pictures of her friends and family in everyday life, on vacation, and on evenings out. Her generation is one that sees taking photos and being photographed, even in trivial situations, as a matter of course. Nobody takes much notice when a camera is whipped out. Little thought is given to the pose struck or to what use will be made of the captured image. But what makes Esther Messner different from most: She surveys the pictures she has taken. The ephemeral nature of the photographic inception is transformed through careful selection and a time-consuming artistic process using pencil and acrylic paints. Beginning with a spatula to form a textured background – according to the artist this is a first step to getting closer to the character of the subject – she then works with pencil, often in numerous layers. In this way, from a matt and abstract background, emerge shiny, metallic portraits that shimmer lively in various nuances of color according to the way light falls on them. The people portrayed by Esther Messner are part of the skate scene – a subculture that is characterized by outsiders as having a reckless way of living, acting impulsively, and taking part in all kinds of excesses. The artist is deeply ingrained in this subculture and, at first glance, seems to promote these clichés in her works. Tattoos, beer cans, and indiscriminate, uninhibited poses appear in many of her works. But it is the achievement of the artist that even viewers unfamiliar with the skate scene are not caught up in musing about these attributes and attitudes, which might seem strange to them. Instead, Esther Messner allows the viewer to take the next step: recognizing the people in her work as individuals. It is not stereotypes that she presents, but instead people that she appreciates, loves, and pays tribute to in her artwork.

- Anke Wiedmann, 2015