

Klodin Erb

Danke, ich schlafe gut

Galerie Urs Meile, Zurich Ankerstrasse
April 10 – May 30, 2026
Opening: Friday, April 10, 2026, 6 - 9 pm
The artist will be present

Text by Margherita Martini

Danke, ich schlafe gut. Don't worry, I sleep very well! The duvet is so heavy that sometimes I wonder whether it is actually the one sleeping on top of me. And can't you see how many pillows there are? More than one single head could ever need, so many that I sometimes cannot decide where to rest mine. This is too soft, this too small; this has a pillowcase that pricks my skin, this keeps a stubborn smell, as if it remembered something I have instead forgotten. What if, to be safe, I would simply not rest my head at all?

The paintings from the series *Danke, ich schlafe gut* (2026) by Swiss artist Klodin Erb form a loose topology of inhabited interiors. Executed in oil on black canvas, a support that is not merely a background but a structural element, these intimate-scale works allow images to surface as if drawn out of a dreamlike depth. Erb's spatial intelligence is central to the series. Beds, draperies, upholstered seats and everyday objects gather in rooms often defined by sharply angled corners that pull the eye like magnets, reinforcing the impression of entering a psychological environment that belongs simultaneously to personal and collective reverie. Within this scenography, human figures, animals, mannequins and hybrid presences coexist in a condition of ontological equivalence, each engaged in actions that hover between self-absorption and rehearsal. Erb's pictorial language moves along a figurative lineage that extends beyond historical Surrealism and contemporary inflections of magical realism. Her method of allowing forms to surface from darkness into light reveals a distinctly Baroque sensibility, while at the same time recalling the psychological atmospheres of artists such as Füssli, Böcklin and Redon, and evoking Symbolist visions as well as the Gothic grotesque. Her interiors also resonate with female reconfigurations of the domestic as a space of tension and transformation, from the corporeal narratives of Paula Rego to the cosmologies of Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington. Rather than staging the irruption of the fantastic, Erb recalibrates the status of things: a telephone suddenly looks watchful; a curtain becomes a psychological proscenium; a bed offers itself as both platform and place of temporal suspension. Gradually, the familiar migrates toward the *Unheimlich*: not through the shock of sudden strangeness, but through the dawning suspicion that the ordinary has become estranged from itself. This atmosphere extends into the exhibition space, where real furnishings, curtains and bed-sheet-patterned wallpapers enter into continuity with their painted counterparts, producing a condition of Duchampian *inframince*: a minimal but decisive interval, comparable to the warmth retained by a pillow. These elements expand the pictorial field into the architecture of the gallery, allowing it to shift from showroom to stage set to inhabited room. A selection of earlier works punctuates the space, including pieces from the series *Avatar* (2020), whose floating, faceless heads seem to generate the dreamlike interiors of the *Danke, ich schlafe gut* paintings. Lacking any stable physiognomy, they function as vessels for identification, substitution and collective projection. Nearby, a solitary nightgown suspended in mid-air evokes the absent body to which such heads might belong. In the mirrored avatars, the viewer's reflection becomes entangled with these painterly presences, slipping between self-recognition and estrangement. The "ich" evoked by *Danke, ich schlafe gut* is therefore not a single autobiographical voice, but a mutable and shared subjectivity expanding from the heads into a wider psychic and social landscape.

Danke, ich schlafe gut. Or at least, this is what I believe. Again, tonight someone has rewritten the rules without warning. Small administrative events of which no records are kept: chairs changed their minds, lamps volunteered for the night shift, and thoughts relocated from one head to another. We found ourselves at the table. You handed me something warm - perhaps a drink, perhaps a rabbit - and then we remained in silence, while in the next room someone was getting ready for an appointment that had already passed. Around us a small, composed crowd began to gather. I suspect they wanted an announcement. Possibly from you. Possibly from me. Possibly from someone who resembles me closely enough to take my place without causing a scandal.

Klodin Erb conceives her rooms as enclosed environments in which identity doubles, fragments and occasionally lends itself out with an almost theatrical logic: a self flickers in a pair of elegantly dressed legs, another settles into the calm authority of a parrot in a bathtub. Within these ironic/oneiric micro-events, identity moves like a current and the interior resolves into a site of distribution rather than containment. Memory follows a similar errant logic. It pools and drifts back. These movements brush against a collective unconscious made of archetypal resonances that cross bodies and generations, leaving their mark in gestures, postures, repetitions. Mnemonic traces often appear in Erb's paintings through minimal acts of care that connote the domestic environment as a site of ongoing maintenance of the self, where identity and memory are constantly supported and repaired. Such dynamics have a concrete autobiographical inflection: the emotional and practical responsibility of accompanying a mother through dementia, and the repeated task to stabilize the coordinates of her daily reality. From this intimate point of departure, Erb's interiors begin to expand outward, registering a broader contemporary condition: the disorientation of the private sphere resonates with a more general condition in which fundamental structures of coexistence appear increasingly unstable and shared frameworks of orientation seem to loosen. Care and memory, initially grounded in personal experience, acquire a metaphorical dimension, reflecting a wider atmosphere of social and collective uncertainty. Private and public unease are therefore not opposed but deeply entangled. But Erb does not dramatize this instability; she depicts relational laboratories that remain measured and composed, and in which one may be called upon to support or to be supported, to remember or to forget, to remain singular or to split into doubles. *Danke, ich schlafe gut.* Rest? Reassurance? A little formula for endurance pulled up to the chin like a protective covering.

Danke, ich schlafe gut. I move through rooms that seem to remember me already. Objects greet me with a suspicious familiarity: a candle tilts its flame, a curtain exhales, and there is even a mirror that decides to duplicate me without asking for permission. I look at myself, I, now split in two. One of me stands still and watches, while the other carries on with the day. Inside the reflection, brief tutorials of domestic survival are offered: how to smooth a blanket, how to stack thoughts as if they were delicate dishes. We are taking turns holding the scene together. I drop a cue and you develop an instinct for catching it before it hits the floor. We remember as a shared task, like carrying a piece of furniture up a staircase. Eventually, the light begins to dim, and it is time to negotiate the logistics of sleep (who closes the eyes first?), until we settle into the same quiet, adjusting the night around us like a well-worn costume. Danke, ich schlafe gut!

Klodin Erb (b. 1963, Winterthur, Switzerland) lives and works in Zurich and is among Switzerland's most renowned contemporary artists. She was awarded the prestigious Prix Meret Oppenheim in 2022. Recent solo exhibitions include presentations at the Aargauer Kunsthau and the Musée des Beaux-Arts Le Locle (both 2025). In 2026, she will present solo exhibitions at Ferme-Asile in Sion and at the Centre Culturel Suisse (CCS) in Paris. Erb's vivid and imaginative visual worlds register the emotional pulse of the present, shaped by her sensitivity to shifting social and psychological realities. Rooted in painting, her practice - spanning more than three decades - continually expands the medium's boundaries, allowing technique to evolve in close dialogue with content. Drawing on art history, myth, literature, popular culture and digital imagery, her work is driven by curiosity and experimentation, often extending into film, installation and collage.