

Mousse Magazine

ESSAYS Mousse 73

Post-Performance Painting: The Bad, the Worse, the Better... Style as a Weapon

by Marie de Brugerolle

Winter 2020

...I have discussed with almost all of the artists here the question of “bad taste” and “bad girls” in painting as a genre, attitude, and social position. But above all, what determines their link to Post-Performance is the question of the object produced by or embodying performative acts, while remaining a painting. The issue of how to be a *bad girl* and a *good artist*—is it still relevant today? It made sense to start by looking at the works and seeing how most of them attack



Modernism, yet also consider it as a patriarchal moment to be investigated. The works considered here were created as paintings, mostly canvas stretched on a frame—a standing panel with a typical frontality at first glance. Yet whether object or subject of the performance, scenic object, “post-consumer” object, accessory, or set, it is also the landscape-stage that goes beyond the classical *veduta*. Every painting is “always already” a performance, a series of actions. It involves and provokes movements, steps back—actions that are consequences of performance. Performativity of speech acts, of the literal space of the viewer, of random imagery, with a consciousness of painting as non-neutral object, but a critical tool and a liminal field.

This “in-between” space which is that of “no taste,” of “bad taste,” but also of a multiplicity of styles, is at the heart of the plurality (Charline von Heyl, Allison Katz, Manon Vargas). It is also a place for a conversation between painting and audience: painting as a scenic object (Charlie Hamish Jeffery), as a relation of glances (Lynette Yiadom-Boakye), or as the remnant of a story (Lucas Ajemian). Sometimes it is a suspicious beauty, no longer the ideal of a flat, symmetrical, quiet, balanced model, but a distorted and ambiguous one (Autumn Ramsey, Allison Katz, Pui Tiffany Chow), which is a way to break the uniqueness of the grand maniera (Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Gigisue), or to create new languages (Hatice

LOS ANGELES
2271 W. Washington Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90018 USA
+1 (213) 509 3518
www.paulsoto.net

BRUSSELS
23 Avenue Jef Lambeaux
1060 Brussels, Belgium
+32 (0)4 99 82 88 30
www.paulsoto.net

Pinarbasi) and new spaces (Monster Chetwynd). These new paths are critical because they don't rely on one direction but break the canonization process of fashion, market, and post-internet values. They are definitely not images, not flat, not screen...

A SUSPICIOUS BEAUTY: EMBODIED MANIERA, PAINTING AS A MOOD BOARD

Chicago-based painter Autumn Ramsey composes in thin layers, sampling lions, tigers, and falcons from a bestiary in Persian tapestry, Chinese etchings (which we mostly know from wallpapers), and ornamental imagery. Filtered by Symbolist painters such as Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, or André Masson, the sexual dimension of some patterns, like the tiger attacking the deer (or covering it), is confronted with a line or a brushstroke effect that renders at the same time an awareness, through the materiality of the painting gestures, that we are in front of a representation. It becomes a series of actions reminding us of the deepness of surface, in a constant vibrato. "This is a way to understand how we occupy multiple positions simultaneously without being limited to any one of them," says the artist.⁷ Female sphinxes, androgynous figures, and cut flowers are puzzled in an irreconcilable manner. It is the lack of stasis and its implications that the artist finds valuable. Hierarchies keep reversing, as we come closer to see the detail of a claw or the line made by a sharp brushstroke. "A sense of phenomenal presence is important in my works, especially in the way they imply intimacy, but my work uses psychological and emotional proximity as often as a way to reveal unquestioned positions and multiple identities. It offers some insight into the mystery."⁸

In contrast, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's figures are recognizably people. "One of the things people assume about my stance is that I don't want to talk about race and that somehow this isn't political. It's never been that. I just don't like being told who I am, how I should speak, what to do and how to do it. I've never needed telling [. . .] It isn't so much about placing anyone in the canon as it is about saying that we've always been here, we've always existed, self-sufficient, pre- and post-discovery, and in no way defined by who sees us."⁹ The artist's work anchors her in the scale of the canvas, and installed at eye level, puts us physically in dialogue. Colored walls, where her works are hung in conversation, create a scenic staged space. Eye contact among the portrayed persons and viewers is reinforced by the human scale. Some highlight her "grand *maniera*," but the work is not about technique. Often the rapidity of realization—she creates each work in a single day—generates a failure of style effects. It brings the history forward, from today. Floors and sets are not specified, but feet and body positions are anchored. The important fact is not who they are but what they are: persons in action. Sometimes a person is in a situation that they carry within their physical presence, as in *Harp-Strum* (2016) from the green ballerina series.

LOS ANGELES
2271 W. Washington Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90018 USA
+1 (213) 509 3518
www.paulsoto.net

BRUSSELS
23 Avenue Jef Lambeaux
1060 Brussels, Belgium
+32 (0)4 99 82 88 30
www.paulsoto.net