

PASSION PAINTING: EMMANUELLE CASTELLAN + LUC TUYMANS



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The Potsdamerstrasse area, opposite side of the Kanal from Neue Nationalgalerie, has been an art hotspot in the recent years. It's a highly contrasted district where formerly-and-then-again posh buildings sit next to run down shops and the famous LSD, sex shop with a classic 70's touch. Classy galleries have been settling here for a while, and it feels very clean. Now in a corner of a pretty Hof you can find the former space of the gallery Manzoni Schäper, now re-activated by Katharina Ziemke and Damien Cadio. Now, I don't know how it sounds for you, but to me, this is very exciting. They have been collaborating for quite a while now on several exhibition projects and had a show in this very Potsdamerstrasse space earlier this year.

This proposition includes works by Berlin-based french artist Emmanuelle Castellan and a very nice piece by Luc Tuymans. The latter is a painting megastar, and has



been an enormous influence for probably most of the painters that are now 40-25, at least, he was definitely for me. His practice might have some flaws (meaning not everything is masterpiece), but this dude is a killer machine. This means you can be sure to have a stable awesome artwork in front of you. Here in DMNDKT the piece is an installation of colour lithographs and a fragile little black and white structure, titled 'the Rumour'. Of course with Tuymans we're now in a mysterious and faded environnement. I'd compare it to stay sick in bed on a gray day. It feels strangely good, it hurts a bit but it's comfortable and in a way soothing.

'The Rumour' includes representations of eye pupils and irises, and this is where Emmanuelle Castellan is taking over.

She presents us two different series of works. The first one, in connection to Tuymans' work (but not made around it), is a variation on a photo of eyes extracted from the 1959 movie 'Les Yeux Sans Visage' (Eyes without a Face) from George Franju. The other one derives from photographs she took at the Dahlem Ethnological Museum, in the Native American Art section.

The work process of Ms Castellan starts with one image that she photographs herself or extracts from some source. This image becomes her 'obsession' for a period of time in which she draws it, sketches it, works on the gestures that determine its lines and inner structure. As she has been involved in several contemporary dance projects, this notion is also present in her work.

As a matter of fact, the canvasses she shows us render a feeling of space, like one of a stage. In precise touches she breaks the surfaces of the many layers she had been forging over time to create elements of perspective that project us in a very



peculiar three-dimensionnal environnement. In this space, only the essential elements she had been filtering from the original image are still here, and this is what she shows us, the now solid relation-ship between the surroundings and what it contains.

It was the kind of thing Renoir was mad about, to paint the air. There's a beautiful example of this 'painting of air' that gives the viewer an unshakable sensation of space in Manet's *La Lecture*. Maybe you remember this over the top avalanche of white fabric? Well, it's the little piece of gray carpet that makes us understand the air.

But let's go back to her process. She explained the specific work on Native American Art and Objects exhibition had an important impact on her practice. She told having the feeling to de-territorialize the lines of the original images, and felt close to the



fate of Native American nations.

In any case, it's worth a trip, and do take some time there, as for any painting, it requires time to tell you things!

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