

R. H. Quaytman - Modern Subjects, Chapter Zero

10_09_2021 – 09_01_2022

As part of her research into the artistic history of Brussels, the Anglo-American artist R. H. Quaytman visited the Wiertz Museum. Quaytman asked herself: Who was Antoine Wiertz (1806-1865), and why did he turn his studio into a museum? Why did he choose to paint remarkably emancipatory scenes of women in distress on a monumental scale, as well as other gruesome depictions of poverty, war, and suicide?

R. H. Quaytman reinvents the production of pictorial images in today's digital age, reinstating them within the context of art history and of painting in particular, reasserting their materiality and spiritual scope, and deconstructing prevailing narratives from a feminist and intersectional point of view. Her strategies are pictorial, photographic and conceptual, leading to the development of complex groups of works she titles as chapters. Composing each of her exhibitions in relation to a local reference, Quaytman builds her series as a narrative structure that shapes the overall organisational principle and the mode of execution of the individual works.

The choice of [Antoine Wiertz's] subject matter suggests a revolutionary ideological orientation supporting the emancipation of women and the poor, and placing the blame at the feet of the military, the state and the rich — although his works on these subjects are displayed to the side of his gargantuan attempts to attain La Gloire.

- R. H. Quaytman

For her **monographic exhibition** at WIELS, R. H. Quaytman explores Brussels' cultural and artistic history and, more specifically, the relationship to power of some of the artists with whom she shares an affinity, such as Magritte and Broodthaers. In her preparatory research, Quaytman came across the painter Antoine Wiertz and his personal museum, which is now nestled in the heart of the European Quarter. With its unique and spectacular hanging, this museum bears witness to the golden age of monumental painting, which was in the throes of decline in the face of photography and film. Wiertz sought to compensate for this waning with an overabundance of moralising subjects condemning injustice and inequality. He depicted chilling scenes of poverty, war, suicide, or cholera. Now all but forgotten, Wiertz's work and exuberant museum-sanctuary provide a starting point for Quaytman's investigation into the possibilities of painting in the context of the photographic image, seen through the prism of Wiertz's work, which teems with suggestive male bodies while displaying a genuine empathy for the condition of women.

Curators: Devrim Bayar & Dirk Snauwaert

With the generous support of: Gladstone Gallery

BIOGRAPHY

R. H. Quaytman lives and works in Connecticut (USA). Her works have been shown around the world, from the 2010 Whitney Biennial to the 2011 Venice Biennial, and Kassel's Documenta 14 (2017). She has had numerous solo exhibitions, notably at the Serralves Museum, Porto; Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Secession, Vienna; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; and the Renaissance Society, Chicago.

PRACTICAL

WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre
Avenue Van Volxemlaan 354
1190 Brussel - België
WWW.WIELS.ORG

Press conference: Wednesday 08-09-2021, 10:00

Public opening: Thursday 09-09-2021

Open Tuesday > Sunday, 11:00-18:00

Tickets available online at WIELS.org

PRESS INFO

Micha Pycke

micha@clubparadis.be

Tel. +32 (0)486 680 070

ABOUT WIELS

WIELS is the leading Centre for Contemporary Art in Brussels. Its ambitious exhibitions and side programme highlight contemporary artists and new ideas, offering new perspectives and experiences. Each year WIELS welcomes some twenty artists in residence from Belgium and all over the world in a six months exchange program. WIELS also offers an intense learning, mediation and education programme pursued through workshops, sensory training projects, seminars and tours for children, teenagers, seniors, school groups, community organisations. The diversity and the specificity of the activities of WIELS, take place in a remarkable landmark building, all which makes it a unique institution for contemporary art in the European capital.