

Kyvèli Zoi

Spectators

Mar 9 — Apr 16, 2023

Kyvèli Zoi's paintings are often details. Fragments of bodies, trimmed as if looking close enough to try and see through the images and into the very essence of the moments and people they depict. They reveal a world which is shattered but full, described more in its instants than by its continuity, motionless in what seems like moments of revelation, or reflection. Private and witty, these paintings often entail questions relating power and gender relations, but also lighthearted moments of everyday's life. Initially focused on a more narrative and detailed kind of figuration, with colourful views, scenes and characters, often painted onto very large formats, Zoi's canvases and subjects have become in the past years smaller and narrower. Details, mostly of female bodies, became almost the only subject, while canvases shrunk in size. With "Spectators," Zoi is presenting the viewers with the most extreme result of this process, but a surprise too. The subject depicted becomes one and the same, reiterated seamlessly, and the canvases are some of the smallest she has ever painted. Surprisingly, however, these bitty oils on canvas are juxtaposed to one of her largest paintings to date. Almost 4 meters wide, *Spectators*,⁽¹⁾ magnificently takes hold and sets the tone of the whole exhibition. In this large diptych, what appears to be three women, different in their body type and ethnicity, stand next to each other, and their bodies, cropped by the canvas' margins, are shown only from the neck to the belly. Only their bare breasts remain in the picture plane, and only breasts are the subject, in fact, of each and every work part of "Spectators." They look back at us from the walls of the gallery space, powerfully imposing their presence in the room, in the inversion

of roles between who is looking and who is looked upon which the artist wanted to suggest with the exhibition title. Eventually, by repeating her subjects indefinitely, Kyvèli Zoi does also something more with her images. She seems to aim to create what one could describe as new archetypes, odd and private archetypes like: *that hand holding a cigarette in a thoughtful moment, the cocktail glass barely covering the forms of a naked body, or that feeling while looking into a fishbowl*. This ‘archetype-isation’ might be read as an invitation to stop considering only the singularity of the very image in front of us, and surpass it in order to appreciate its higher essence, distilling the very prototypical form(2) it held for the artist. As such, this close up of breasts, looking back at us from the picture plane, becomes part of this vocabulary of idiosyncratic archetypes, in its beautiful and empowering clarity.

Mattia Lullini

(1) Kyvèli Zoi, *Spectators*, 2023 (Oil on linen, diptych, dimensions variable, 140 x 160 cm each).

(2) As by the etymology of *archetype* from the Ancient Greek ἀρχω (*árhō*) ‘to begin’, and τύπος (*týpos*) ‘sort, type’.

Kyvèli Zoi (b.1993, Athens) received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York (2016), after attending classes at the École Nationale Des Beaux-Arts in Paris (2014) and the Central Saint Martins - University of the Arts London (2011-12). She is the founder of KYAN Project in Athens, and she has been recently exhibited at La Causa Gallery (Madrid, 2023), Waldburger Wouters (Brussels, 2023 and 2021), Artissima Art Fair (Turin, 2022), Galleria Acappella (Naples, 2022 and 2021), Elma Gallery (New York, 2022), One Minute Space (Athens, 2022), and Artistellar Gallery (London, 2021) among others. Zoi lives and works between Athens, Greece and Paris, France.

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