



Laura Lamiel

Ursule

15.10.2023 - 22.12.2023

« *Is that what art is? To be touched thinking what we feel is ours when, in the end, it was someone else, in longing, who finds us?* »

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous: A Novel*, 2019, Penguin Press

Throughout our ten-year collaboration with Laura Lamiel, I have gone through a number of interpretations about the relationship between her work and art history. I have alternately associated her practice with eccentric minimalism or visual Tropicália brought back to Europe, for her trips to Brazil seemed to have determined her practice over the last twenty years. But I believe that my theoretical approach overshadowed my physical and psychic experience of the work, and thus missed its essential purpose: the experience of desire.

In her recent solo show at Palais de Tokyo ("*Vous les entendez?*" [Do you hear them?], 16.06 - 10.09.23), the walk through the art centre's basement, which featured a broken glass floor, a beach of red-painted books, a collection of work gloves and spy mirror 'cells', concluded with a dead end made up of three walls sheltering, among the drawings from the *Territoires Intimes* series (2018-), three 'kisses' painted with diluted red Indian ink and graphite. These small-scale drawings perfectly describe what a kiss on the lips can feel like when it is the premise or the climax of the union of bodies: a feeling of self-dissolution, of fusion between two beings who were two separate individuals just a few seconds before. Ending the Palais de Tokyo exhibition with these representations of the physical sensation provoked by desire is, for me, an artistic 'statement'. And this is how I view the artist's new proposal for the gallery today.

Inspired by the figure of Saint Ursula in Carpaccio's cycle held at the Accademia in Venice, and particularly by the *Dream of Saint Ursula* (1495-1500), which depicts the saint asleep on the edge of a large bed in a room featuring many frames (bed, door and window frames) while an angel comes to announce her martyrdom, the exhibition highlights the experience of desire and its relationship to the figure of the double. The monumental metal locker in the installation *Rien n'est à faire, tout est à défaire* (2023)--three quarters of its length containing linens that have been compressed and one quarter left partly empty--expresses a tension between a repressed drive that threatens to break free of its structural straitjacket at any time, and a calmer phase in which a few objects lie scattered, after having survived the chaos that their release from the folds seems to have provoked.

The installation *Ursule: figure 2* (2022-2023), a repertoire of forms seen through translucent glass smeared with Meudon white diluted with water, showcases the artist's instruments (sharpened metal nibs, paintbrushes lined up as if they were defence weapons) which appear, in relation to the previous compression, to be the instruments for liberating desire.

The technique of the large paintings fixed beneath glass, exhibited alongside the installations, contrasts their liquid, deep, vivid reds to the metal and enamelled steel. To me, these paintings are more than an image; they evoke a deep physical sensation of what flows within us on the level of the invisible and the almost indelible: desire, drive for life, and creative libidinal energy.



The double haunts the artist's work, not only in the infinite reflections of the interior of the spy mirror cells recently shown at Palais de Tokyo (*Les Yeux de W*, 2019-2023), but also in the portraits contained in a bookshelf, which is exhibited for the first time at the gallery, revealing the images that accompany Laura daily in her studio. If the photograph of a man swallowing smoke blown through a wall by another inmate, taken from Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour*, inevitably evokes the object of desire in the neighbouring cell, the piercing gaze of Giacinto Scelsi, the Italian composer and minimal music pioneer, is more mysterious. Yet, the two eyes that seem to penetrate the image are to be found everywhere in Laura Lamiel's drawing work, like a place of double obsession — less a mirror of the soul than a mirror of ever-lasting desire. The late 19th-century photograph of two Japanese women lying on their side echoes the position of Saint Ursula on the bed, and points out to the empty space left behind her in Carpaccio's representation of the saint. Like a projection space for the artist's desire, which follows us throughout the exhibition and brings us back to our own experience.

"In these highly structured spaces, the presence of these memorial fragments, bearing witness to other places and other times, constructs the present of the aesthetic experience. Viewers see in them what their eyes have taught them to see, thereby introducing in the perception and understanding of the work, parts of their own experience.

Jacques Leenhardt, "Laura Lamiel chez Carpaccio", a text written on the occasion of the artist's participation in "L'art dans les chapelles", 2022.

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translation: Callisto McNulty

Born in 1943, **Laura Lamiel** lives in Paris. Her most recent solo exhibitions include Cahn Kunstraum, Basel, CH (2021); La Verrière, Brussels, BE (2015); Kunstverein Langenhagen, DE (2014); La Galerie - art center, Noisy-le-Sec, FR (2013) and Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne, FR (2013). Her work has also been presented in several collective exhibitions, most recently at the Bienal de Arte Contemporânea de Coimbra, PT (2022); CAPC, Bordeaux, FR (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2019); Malmö Konsthall, SE (2018); Biennale de Rennes, FR (2016) and Biennale de Lyon, FR (2015). Palais de Tokyo has just presented her work in a large solo exhibition entitled « Vous les entendez ? » [Do you hear them?] (16.06 - 10.09.2023).

With the support of Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles d'Île de France-Ministère de la culture and Fondation des Artistes.

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