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CLAIRE MILBRATH

GLAD SURPRISE

15 December - 17 February, 2023
de boer (Antwerp)

Opening Reception: Friday, 15 December (7-10 pm)

de boer (Antwerp) is pleased to present *Glad Surprise*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by **Claire Milbrath**, her second with the gallery and her first solo exhibition in Europe. An opening reception will be held at Mechelsesteenweg 247, Friday 15 September from 7-10 pm.

"It is ever a new thing, a glad surprise, the stirring of life at the end of winter. One day there seems to be no sign of life and then almost overnight, swelling buds, delicate blooms, blades of grass, bugs, insects—an entire world of newness everywhere. It is the glad surprise at the end of winter." - Mystic Howard Thurman

Glad Surprise brings together Milbrath's collection of seasonal landscapes and interior scenes which serve as quiet reflections of the artist's psyche. The recurring figure in these scenes serves as an alter-ego to the artist, providing a pathway to the multitudes of oneself.

In the general incoherence that seems to govern the psychological landscape, the changing of the seasons is the only compass man has left to prevent him being lost. To identify oneself with the seasons, and beyond that with the cosmic cycle of death and rebirth, means to avoid being drowned in madness, to restore coherence and growth. The transformation from winter to spring becomes symbolic for the discovery of new stages of consciousness. In Vivladi's sonnet accompanying his *Four Seasons* concerto he writes, "We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously, for fear of tripping and falling... This is winter, but it brings such joy."

In *Winter Walk*, Milbrath's blonde figure walks alongside four prancing Bichon Frise' dogs under a pink sky and in a snowy landscape reminiscent of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's, *Hunters in the Snow* (*Winter*) from 1565. While both artists seem to present a mirror to the human condition, Milbrath's dreamlike pictures offer an "existential restlessness" where the dream is the dreamer.

Milbrath's domestic scenes bring nature inside through her use of floral patterning. Influences of Post-Impressionism are reflected in Milbrath's pastorals, and interiors, where patterns on the walls and textiles seem to vibrate. Milbrath's patterns function as an attempt to order the chaos of emotion; painting in this sense becomes like a garden - nature's chaos assembled by man. To cite Pierre Bonnard, *Intimism*, the depiction of banal yet personal domestic scenes, allows us to draw emotion from the most modest acts of life - resting in bed, preparing a meal, and enjoying tea.

ABOUT CLAIRE MILBRATH

Claire Milbrath (b.1989, Victoria, BC) is a self-taught artist working with painting, sewing, ceramics, and drawing. Adopting an artistic style reminiscent of the Naive Painters, Milbrath incorporates large swaths of lush color to construct her compositional space, renewing the coloristic tradition with vignettes relating to unrequited love, sexual fantasies, and childhood innocence. Milbrath's work centers around the imaginary life of Gray who serves as an alter ego for the artist. In recent years, Milbrath has exhibited at de boer, Los Angeles (USA); Pangée, Montreal (Canada), Eve Leibe Gallery, London (UK); The Hole, New York (USA), and Marvin Gardens, New York. She is the editor-in-chief and founder of Editorial Magazine.