

cheveux longs... cheveux courts

by Katrien De Blauwer



Opening reception and book launch: Saturday, September 7th 2019,
from 2 to 6 pm, in the presence of the artist!

Show: September 10th - October 26th 2019

After her first solo show in FIFTY ONE TOO last year, Gallery FIFTY ONE is proud to welcome back Katrien De Blauwer (Belgium, 1969) with *cheveux longs... cheveux courts*. In this new show the artist revisits herself as a young woman by creating personae and telling their stories as if they were her own. Additionally, a new set of her more erotic *Dirty Scenes* is presented.

For the public, De Blauwer has become known as the "photographer without a camera", compulsively seeking out magazines from the 1920s through the 1960s, cutting them up and reassembling fragments into frugal yet powerful compositions. But already in her first solo show, *Double*, it had become apparent that the artist strove to transcend the limitations of the collage medium. The transformation De Blauwer had set in motion then, has now come full circle. She has been progressively shifting shapes; e.g. experimenting with more slender works, stressing their horizontality or verticality.

Her typical confrontation between two images, or two parts of one cut-up image, is gradually replaced by a deeper tension. Ever more frequently, just one image joins together – or is trapped by – monotone surfaces, which are black as ink or bright with colour. Furthermore, De Blauwer explicitly intervenes, leaving physical traces on her material. The wrinkling, tearing or folding makes the materials look old and used; the intuitive drawing (in pencil) and painting (in acryl) on the other hand, make the works look spontaneous and spirited, like childhood creations.

Only recently, the artist started work on something new: her so-called *Dirty Scenes*. These erotic images come alive with indistinct movements. The tenderness of bodily interaction and contact between woman and man is central here, and it is underlined by much softer pastel colours. Could these gentle scenes be the phantasies of De Blauwer's feminine protagonists?

One element that always remains unchanged in De Blauwer's itinerary, is the omnipresent reference to film noir and European avant-garde cinema. This not only comes about through the filmic images she uses, but also through the way they are treated. De Blauwer 'edits' her fragments with scissors, pencil and brush, before throwing these scenes into a sequence that tells the story of a woman. These imaginative sequences – beginning and ending with a 'still' image – come into motion the moment we start walking through the exhibition or start leafing through the new book that accompanies this exhibition.

Ingeniously, the artist cuts away vital pieces of information, 'relating' the scraps that are left, and thus urging us to open up to unforeseen insights. De Blauwer treats these fragments as if they were her own past life experiences. Combined with the popular imagery she uses, her personal 'Erinnerungsarbeit' attains the level of collective memory. This work, the remembering through reassembling, is a daily routine – if not obsession – for the artist. Her obsession with fragments is indeed so great, that even the title of this exhibition, as well as the names of its 'chapters' (*ISABELLE, caroline, SOPHIE...*), have sprouted from her notebooks, in which she collects text fragments from newspapers, magazines, etc.

Katrien De Blauwer studied art in Ghent and fashion in Antwerp and has been keeping mood books ever since. A passionate book maker, the artist has produced six monographs so far. Most recently she published *When I was a boy* (2018), *Why I hate cars* and *Dirty scenes* (2019). Her work was first shown by the gallery in the group exhibition *Seventeen by FIFTY ONE* and at Paris Photo 2017. These last years Katrien De Blauwer has risen to great acclaim on the international art scene, with shows in Tokyo, Paris, New York, a.o.

On the occasion of this exhibition, the gallery launches a FIFTY ONE Publication, *cheveux longs... cheveux courts*, featuring exclusively new and unseen work.