

Inconfortablement au salon

by Arpaïs Du Bois

Opening: Saturday, December 1st 2018 from 2 until 6 pm
in the presence of the artist

Show: December 4th 2018 - January 26th 2019

FIFTY ONE

Gallery FIFTY ONE is proud to welcome Arpaïs Du Bois (Belgium, °1973) for her new solo exhibition 'Inconfortablement au salon'. Following up on her latest solo show 'Trébucheurs-Piétineurs' at De Garage in Mechelen and the publication of *Si Non Là*, this exhibition of her recent work (2018) is the third part of what could be considered a trilogy. In the gallery space, the public is presented with a series of drawings and paintings on paper, placed in an intimate, living room-like atmosphere. The art works that normally stay in the background of a living room for decorative purposes, now grab attention and disturb the peaceful setting, inviting us to rethink the human condition.

Guided by her instincts, Du Bois constantly produces new drawings and paintings to better understand and to frame the magnitude of impulses she experiences as an (involuntary) city dweller. As if looking through the unspoiled eye of an intelligent child, the aesthetics of her work are stripped of all unnecessary information. Her images are often enriched with scattered words: French word games that can be poetic, funny, but also critical observations, placing our daily struggles in a bigger perspective. Her intuitive drawings can be universally understood; they grasp the viewer, making immediate sense, leaving an authentic imprint on our awareness. As art critic Eric Rinckhout puts it: "Arpaïs leaves delicate traces on paper. Fragments of a pictorial diary, a sketched life. Signals from a sensitive existence."

Du Bois' drawings are often reflections on major social themes: how we should take position vis-à-vis a complex and overcrowded modern world, nature (or what is left of it), politics, living together, power, fear, hope... One also reads criticism on the helplessness of modern human beings. Referring to the 'chasseurs-cueilleurs' or 'hunter-gatherers' we once were, Du Bois would now rather describe humans as 'trébucheurs-piétineurs' or 'stumbler-tramplers', because of the harm they cause upon themselves and their surrounding, whether or not intentionally. Titles as 'Faire moisir la vieille histoire', 'Prévenir l'arbre de sa chute', 'Soupçonner les vagues et le ciel', illustrate Du Bois' social awareness, but also leave space for interpretation to the viewer. It is clear that the metaphorical picture painted by Du Bois isn't a rosy one, but regularly her viewpoint does get interrupted by playful nuances. Titles like 'Pour la gloire de trois saucisses', 'Saboter la balançoire', 'Bafouiller des mots tendres' and 'Patauger dans la bonbonnière' create a necessary humorous breathing space.

In this exhibition, the critical gaze of the artist towards humanity once again emerges. The show follows up on the concept of Du Bois' latest FIFTY ONE Publication *Si Non Là*, in which she photoshopped her large-format drawings in various interiors. In this exhibition, Du Bois also selected some medium sized and small sized drawings, the latter directly drawn from her sketchbooks, and presents them in a real-life living room setting. Du Bois plays with the contradiction between the cosiness and security of a living room, and her sharp drawn observations of the current condition of society. Humans may try to hide themselves from reality in the cosy isolation of their livings, but even there, the social reality occasionally breaks in. A consciousness that sometimes wrenches, hence the title 'Inconfortablement au salon'. Opposite to some atmospherical interventions in the gallery space, Du Bois' drawings, with their oftentimes vivid colors and powerful shapes, aphorisms and mottos, break in and force themselves on the visitor, who is left with an uncomfortable but triggered feeling.

After completing her education in visual arts, the Ghent-born artist is currently residing and working from her Antwerp studio. She has been a tutor at the St Lucas School of Arts Antwerp since 2003. From 1998 onwards, she has been the constant subject of exhibitions and publications in Belgium and abroad. Recently she participated in the Watou Art Festival (Summer 2018). Parallel to her present exhibition at Gallery FIFTY ONE, her work is featured in the *Prikkels* exhibition at the Dr. Guislain Museum, Ghent (until May 26th 2019) and at Artcurial, Brussels (solo show, from January 17th until February 17th 2019).