

## **(pour) retendre l'atmosphère**

by Arpaïs Du Bois



Opening weekend and book launch: February 27th-28th 2021 from 2 to 6 pm  
Show: March 2nd - April 17th 2021

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Gallery FIFTY ONE is thrilled to announce Arpaïs Du Bois' fourth solo show. With an exciting scenography, an atypical explosion of colour, an evolution towards painting and a brand new and beautifully published book, this exhibition marks a new step in Du Bois' artistic journey that is well worth exploring in person.

An exhibition of Arpaïs Du Bois (Belgium, 1973) is always a spatial experience, and this time it is no different. True to her perpetual search to understand and control the rooms in which she exhibits, the artist reshaped both levels of the gallery space. The walls she imagined and built - from low to high - counter the tunnel-like shape of the volume of the underground level of the gallery. They hinder the visitors in their way, inviting them to stroll around a slalom itinerary at their own pace. The scenography pushes us into an awareness of our obstructed surroundings, which for the artist is an architectural translation of the way she experiences actual society in a broad sense. 'Pour retendre l'atmosphère', with a wink.

One will also find - scattered through the scenography - mock-ups of glasses that echo traces of a vernissage or party, like remnants of previous carefree times.

Next to this intervention in the exhibition space, the faithful followers of Du Bois' artistic journey may be pleased and surprised by an unexpected explosion of colour in her work that occurred about two years ago. The use of earthly, darkish colours has been a signature aspect of Du Bois' pictorial output for a long time. It seems, however, that recently the most accurate way for her to deal with global issues - be they notified in the most intimate whispering or bold cry outs - is an addition of saturated colour to her usually somber palette.

Her work has also grown more painterly over the last years, leaving the drawing as such behind and investigating the limits of paper. It is therefore with pleasure that we announce that for the first time since many years, works on canvas will be part of the exhibition. They echo Du Bois' works on paper, forming a common output.

Regardless of this pictorial evolution, the essence of Du Bois' oeuvre remains the same; a symbiosis of drawings and texts that can be seen as a mirror or digestion of current times. Works like 'ravage à crédit', 'en réponse à la dérive', or 'une démesure sans bonté' illustrate the artist's ability to nail down a predominantly worrisome climate. Others like 'capitaine de mes mots' or 'hameçonner la non-violence' clearly evoke the way in which she is anchored in, and an active participant of, that researched and questioned reality. Her pure analysis of society is often compensated with poetic and playful elements - both visually and through language. Facing dystopia with a necessary layer of humor is a characteristic of her work since the very beginning of her career. Her poetical downplay of the troubling absurdity is for example shown in works like 'frapper très fort à la mauvaise porte' or 'apocalypse ambiance boudoir'.

Although her works are the result of a daily drawing practice and the observation of the world around her, Du Bois' oeuvre is not anecdotal nor to be read like an autobiographical diary. In her drawings the individual always rejoins the universal. That is why her observations on paper will often be very recognizable. Du Bois is ever critical, ever opening a dialogue with the viewer.

Du Bois' new book, FEUE LA JOYEUSETÉ, further opens the door to her intense universe. The publication, beautifully published by Hopper and Fuchs and designed by un'dercast, bundles the essence of her output on paper of the last four years. Extensively introduced by Damien Sausset and including a letter by Philippe Van Cauteren, this book is the ultimate successor of her previous publications - all of them specific gems, both for their concept as for their design. FEUE LA JOYEUSETÉ takes you on a road trip inside the artist's brain and makes you a spectator, a witness instead of a passer-by. With more than 450 works on paper, it is opulently illustrated.

*This exhibition is supported by the Flemish Community.*