

Lauren Coullard *Angels On A Needle*

July 18 — August 29, 2020

Wednesday-Friday 1-7pm, Saturday 11am-4pm
(From August 8 by appointment only)

Opening reception: July 17, 2020, 5-10pm. The artist will be present.

Special Sunday opening: July 26, 2020, 12-6 pm | SUNDAY OPEN organized by INDEX

MOUNTAINS is pleased to announce *Angels On A Needle*, a solo show by French artist Lauren Coullard. The exhibition has developed from the gallery's *In A Single Work* series and presents a selection of recent paintings by the artist in both rooms of the gallery.

Text by Julien Verhaeghe.

Here and there, in Lauren Coullard's paintings, colours fusing in scattered configurations. Shades sometimes vivid, almost energetic — they suggest motley universes propitious to some kind of cheerfulness. Making themselves darker, other colours are more inclined to immerse us into nocturnal atmospheres — they allude to sleepy worlds where emerges a hidden onirism. From these ambiances, sometimes translucent like a clear day, sometimes underground, it remains that we are tempted to associate some compositions to the tradition of German expressionism and to the art of collage, while others, more figurative, lie halfway between pop-art, Dadaism and Surrealism.

Actually, Lauren Coullard's compositions are unclassifiable. Something of these paintings really explores the nature of what is hybrid, were it only through the preparatory work of collage each time executed on a small format before every composition — unless it is through the uncertain space they open between figuration and abstraction, that we witness painting after painting. On one side, indeed, medieval vignettes reveal court characters and prodigious creatures; the thematic of courtly love and chivalrous deeds sets up the backdrop. On the other side, touches of colour and flat tints, lines and edges, slack and spontaneous, contribute to an overview visually inextricable. In a kaleidoscopic way they manage, though, to compose a rhythmical, almost musical brushwood, as if to recall that the most tumultuous swirls always possess a form of measure.

Moreover, especially in certain compositions, this painterly fuss allows us to mobilize the work of imagination, so that vaguely anthropomorphic patterns end up emerging out of the painting. And regardless the question whether or not we would be looking at a figurative work that has become abstract — or, the other way around, to an abstract work letting us identify elements of reality — it seems that the presence of this imaginary of hybridity is also linked to the way these humanlike figures — or rather, these characters — are conceived. We notice, for instance, that they always seem disguised, wearing make-up or camouflage. In a suggestive manner, first, when our need for interpretation makes us believe that in the midst of a mosaic of forms and colours pops up an eye, a smile or a glance. More literally, afterwards, when on some paintings novel or history characters,

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gallant souls or colourful superheroes are invited – people that anyway always show a specific attention to the way they look, the way they behave and maybe even the way they perform.

Therefore, it is maybe the figure of the comedian that is more often present in the paintings of Lauren Coullard – they who pretend to be themselves and, simultaneously, a multitude of others; they who, above all, put on a show and convince us of the different realities they inhabit successively, reflecting fantasized lives and extraordinary stories, or asserting the inanity of a world that one should rather laugh about.

The act of turning oneself into another could be misinterpreted as the will to escape a given primary identity, or a world gone amorphous and ungrateful (Deleuze Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*) – as if it had been about fleeing. It is the opposite that occurs within Lauren Coullard's work, as the shifts and hybridizations operate as means to answer to life itself – or even to provoke and produce it. These characters, indeed, always claim for themselves the remarkable, and the features of what is out of step – lying sometimes on the threshold of extravagancy or exploiting contents specific to fabulous universes, such as manga, comics or cartoons.

To disguise, then, does not mean to hide, but to reveal oneself in a better way. Rather than a withdrawal, the gesture of becoming another outlines a form of clamour, a joy that echoes in the paintings of Lauren Coullard with this presence a little mischievous or facetious, almost jubilant. The most remarkable thing, in the end, is to see that this joy appears as close as possible to painting, through the danced gesture of the strokes or twirling colours. But we would almost forget the main point, namely that Lauren Coullard herself is also a character or a comedian. She aspires, as such, to visit territories freed from all barriers, and to discover unthought ways of self-realization – maybe she flees, but if she does, it is with paintbrushes and colours.

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Lauren Coullard (b. 1981 in Paris) lives and works in Paris, France. She is currently showing in *Your Friends and Neighbors* at High Art in Paris. Previous exhibitions include A.ROMY, Geneva (2020); Lily Robert, Paris (2019); Galerie Vallois, Paris (2019); C4RD, London (2018); Silicon Malley, Lausanne (2017); New Bretagne Belle Air, Essen (2016). Her work was featured in Artforum, Libération, Daily Lazy, and others. Lauren Coullard is co-founder of DOC! Paris.

Julien Verhaeghe is a curator and writer who lives and works in Paris, France.

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