ALMINE RECH

# Alexis McGrigg
# The Labour of Being

## Jan 8 — Feb 5, 2022 | Paris, Turenne (Front Space)

**Almine Rech is pleased to present Alexis McGrigg's first solo show with the gallery, on view from January 8 to February 5, 2022.**

There's something powerful about art that is steeped in symbolism and allegory, the kind of art that stops you in your tracks and challenges you to imagine a world beyond your current comprehension. The kind of imagery that makes the seemingly impossible-possible, by presenting you with a vision of the world not as it is but as it should and can be. For the best part of almost a decade Alexis McGrigg has been creating work that does just that; her compelling iconography depicts Blackness as not only a way of being but also as unsuppressed, free in the unknown in a form beyond boundaries.

In "The Labour of Being," her debut solo show with Almine Rech, Alexis McGrigg takes her ethereal visual storytelling to another level of outer space. Her latest series continues the examination of Blackness as an intangible plane. This exploration of the "Other" in a world where there is no "Other" pushes the boundaries of societal constraints and allows the observer to imagine what freedom feels like beyond form, one through which the souls of black people transcend between here and a third space on the boundary of our universe. She refers to this space as "Home". In between earth and this third space is an expanse invisible to the eye -- The Ether. It is within this plane that the souls find rest and a meeting place to convene during their journey. It is a familiar place, one of comfort and liberation from feeling displaced, according to McGrigg:

*"There are souls in this space that are freshly formed, having just crossed over into the Ether from "Home". There are souls who have journeyed many times, for decades, who are keenly acquainted with the Ether. Then, there are souls who have just returned from earth, tired and weary from having taken on human form. Each of them in these varied experiences, navigating the Ether in their own way. But what is true for all of them is that the Ether is a place that gives rest and replenishes the soul to continue journeying."*

Her current body of work is a visual study, an investigation of the vulnerability of rest and the labour of being. The imagery depicts abstracted figures whose forms are constantly fleeting, drifting through a particulate filled space; their atmosphere shaping and reshaping as they move, both dependent and independent. The figures are seen grouped or gathered together emphasizing the notion that the souls are never alone.

The interpretation of these varied experiences are visually present through the imagery, but can also be seen in the contrasting application of materials like her recent paintings *To Give Rest* and *Let Us Not Grow Weary*. These two works are examples of how McGrigg has been grappling with ideas of rest and vulnerability. While she continues her application of layered fabric dyes, dusted with gold mica powders and acrylic paint, she has begun playing on the tangent of exposure – sealed and unsealed canvases. The unsealed canvases, such as *Let Us Not Grow Weary*, while drenched in vibrant translucent dyes are at the mercy of their environments. They are exposed to the elements much like the souls are exposed when traveling from earth back to the Ether. The sealed canvases, like *To Give Rest*, depict the figures and color subdued by a clear lacquer, a protective covering. This covering mimics the barrier that resting in the Ether provides. These souls journey back to a safe space, a place of refuge to revive themselves.

“The Labour of Being” is a powerful continuation of McGrigg’s clarion call to society to see beyond boundaries and limiting social constructs by looking at the true humanity of a people (Black) who have carried the burdens of so much of Western hegemony.  Her work is a deconstruction of the false societal narratives around Black identity and an irresistible opportunity to experience the limitlessness of Black existence through the all-encompassing expanse of Blackness itself.

— June Sarpong