ALMINE RECH

# Fabien Adèle
# Corridors

## Jan 19 — Feb 25, 2023 | Brussels

Almine Rech Brussels is pleased to present *Corridors,* Fabien Adèle's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

In his East-Paris studio, Fabien Adèle chose to use a narrowed palette of colours for this new set of paintings. Their complementary shades of warm browns ranging from orange ochre to burnt sienna, along with lighter, more intense blues, underline the space where his twelve oils on canvas are displayed.

The painting of the young French artist (born in 1993), which has only been shown on rare occasions, is populated by singular protagonists. His human figures, with their stoic and frozen expressions reminiscent of antique statues, are immersed in interiors or landscapes that are both ethereal and bewitchingly luminous. Take the woman seated on a chair, her head slightly tilted forward, or the two female busts with endless hair, bathed in the aquatic element and staring into the distance to bluish halos suggesting the horizon at sea. Or perhaps the man leaning on a table, his hand barely resting on his cheek, his mouth half open, his garment fading into an incandescent sky. Seen from the front or back, these beings and their nebulous surroundings come together in paintings of the psyche and interiority that appear keen to suspend the passing of time.

The scenes that Fabien Adèle deploys straddle a line that embraces the symbolism of Fernand Khnopff, surrealism of De Chirico, Delvaux or Magritte, and Florentine mannerism of Pontormo, whom the artist admires for his chromatic anachronisms, outstretched necks and sexless saints seemingly contradicting the rules of the Renaissance. And although they do indeed weave ramifications between reality and dreams, their connection with surrealism is probably not as crucial as it seems. They don't quite reach the Lynchian worldview's dramatic tension either, although undeniably resonating with this line from a dream of Gordon Cole (the FBI agent played by David Lynch himself) in season 3 of *Twin Peaks*: *'We are like the dreamer who dreams, and then lives inside the dream'*. It is probably more in the magical realism of Americans Paul Cadmus – for his massive male bodies, especially – or George Tooker – for his hieratic, dreamlike genre paintings – that one could find some of the sources that inspired Fabien Adèle's work.

Even more than in previous paintings, the characters are shrouded with a ghostly presence, further highlighted by the radiant shimmer passing through their clothing and use of off-screen to depict the bodies, partly concealing faces and suppressing their gaze. Despite their spectral dimension, they display an evident carnal quality expressed in the delicately painted hands, gestures, or treatment of the drapery.

To construct his metaphysical cosmos - which borrows equally from philosophical mysticism and a geography of the imagination - Fabien Adèle uses mental collages based on preliminary sketches or his own memories of landscapes, people he has met or moments he has experienced. In these highly atmospheric paintings, suffused with sky and water, the plant world is merely evoked in a few fleshy leaves, or a bramble crawling over the textured, crafted wood of furniture. Beyond mere ornament, it serves as a metaphor for the proliferation of thought and deployment of dreams.

With its penchant for the timeless, the supernatural, and a form of spirituality rooted in the sensible, Fabien Adèle's painting is steeped in introspection and wisdom, melancholy and intimacy. With the motif of the double, otherness is also one of its key hallmarks, as are the many plays of mirrors and reflections: the two women, twins side by side, symmetrically gazing sideways, or the seated character, whose double emerges through diaphanous veils. The intensity of Fabien Adèle's painting arises from a peculiar alchemy, endowed with the ability to bring together the sensible and the metaphysical, thus inviting the viewer to apply their own experience to the irrational and dreamlike outlines of his take on realism.

– Charles Barachon, writer and art critic.