ALMINE RECH

Fabien Adèle
Blush

Mar 15 — Apr 13, 2024 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to announce *Blush*, Fabien Adèle's second solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from March 15 to April 13, 2024.

The Risk of the Double

Is it nightfall that gives us the feeling of moving from one painting into another? In Fabien Adèle's paintings, we sometimes find positions of hands that seem Mannerist and faces in profile as if cut off before speaking. A sense of expectation is created. The artist often produces several versions of the same composition, so that he can adapt to what happens on the canvas, letting his intuition take on different tones. With *Deux Figures sur un Banc I* and *II* ("Two Figures on a Bench") the scene can be tinged with twilight in a russet blue that recalls Leonor Fini, or it can take on a pale yellow dawn with shades of gray in the style of Puvis de Chavanne. The artist is unafraid of doubles, seeing them as a chance for passages, transitions. A shadow becomes flesh, a body becomes a silhouette, in a process of inversion. The artist does not work in series but in echoes, repeating motifs in different versions with particular palettes inscribing phases of earthy ocher or ethereal sand. There are no oppositions between large works and small ones, or between one subject and another, but continuity. Through fragmentation, some motifs acquire an independence that makes them almost into symbols, like the hand surrounded with young shoots in *Entre Deux Grains de Sable* ("Between Two Grains of Sand") or the foot that almost crushes fruit lying on the ground in *Dernière Nuit*. Other subjects, by association, evoke a rebus or even a mystery, like the couples on benches, who seem to hold themselves in an indeterminate dreamlike state.

It is more accurate to talk about figures than characters in his paintings; with few features and eyes that see nothing, their faces have something androgynous about them. They disturb the viewer by seeming to multiply on the canvas, to be moving like Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Time is suspended so that all possibilities can be explored. Fabien Adèle does not refer to textual influences as did the Symbolists or Surrealists, although his work has been compared to theirs. However, his painting still has something literary about it. Without evoking words, and with paintings that sometimes remain untitled, he multiplies stylistic effects such as repetition (as we've seen), metonymy (the part for the whole), and chiasmus with its mirror effects. The image is a language unto itself, and this is what he emphasizes, like the American magic realist painters he admires, such as Alex Colville, Andrew Wyeth, and Jared French. Adèle's compositions can be more or less complex; in his latest paintings, he hints at perspective and makes different planes coexist. The settings of these paintings are minimal: a bench, a window, a flowerpot, or a table, which are more like accessories for interaction or symbols. Fabien Adèle likes to compare his way of painting to the technique of a bas-relief sculptor. The layers of oil paint allow him, without impasto, to affirm shapes through light and to imply the sense of a space that is primarily mental. A space where painting takes on the risk of the double, the doppelganger.

— Henri Guette, art critic