ALMINE RECH

Chloe Wise
Torn Clean

Apr 24 — May 25, 2024 | Brussels

Almine Rech Brussels is pleased to present *Torn Clean*, Chloe Wise's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from April 24 to May 25, 2024

An ecstatic mouth, an eye with a tear, a Baudelairean mane of hair, the abrupt appearance of a breast, movements that seem to graze or caress the flesh. Chloe Wise plunges us into the heart of her painting. In pieces, the painted bodies appear, they come to meet us, before embracing us, overwhelming us.

Their common element: on the canvas, everything seems to be for the best. They hold their poses, they perform happiness perfectly. They follow the commandments of a world that forces itself to laugh so as not to see the violence that inhabits it. Chloe Wise attracts us with this intensified joy that emanates from these bodies that are often naked, "graspable," and decipherable. We feel as if we are discovering a big, blended family, the artist's clan, a gang of sisters.

But Chloe Wise does not stop there, on the edge of self-satisfaction and false pretense. Behind the laughter that lasts too long and the superficially relaxed faces, the painter gradually introduces a disturbing feeling, a disruptive current. She triggers a feeling of unease in us. Everything seems too perfect, too smooth. Even the dominant color—this beige that prevails over the ocher, without pigmentation and blurred with a suspicious halo of whiteness—that unites her visions seems to warn us that danger is lurking, in our own acceptance of a world that wants to smooth its surface to make itself presentable, and therefore acceptable. Chaos is not far; it waits, lurking in the shadows, outside, where our eyes avoid looking.

This recalls a quotation by Alfred Jarry: "The more I touch a circle, the more vicious it becomes." With passion and flamboyance, Chloe Wise forces us into an unveiling. Smiling becomes wincing. Tears of joy become regular tears. Innocence is out of kilter. In a first-person statement, the artist describes the color "flesh"—historically based on Caucasian pink—of Band-Aids, those bandages that one sticks on the skin in order to hide a wound: "Until now, Band-Aids had their own generic color—that of Caucasian skin, an unhealthy beige that imitates some people's skin without managing to convince us that it is skin. [...] The Band-Aid is an impostor, fake skin that is supposed to play the role of the scab—the scab of the scab."

According to her, images can create the same artificiality, by covering up and burying what can't be tolerated. By gradually subverting her "perfect" paintings, Chloe Wise challenges our way of seeing. Every painting starts to hold multiple meanings, emotions that are shared, complicated, and truly experienced.

Georges de la Tour needed candlelight to reveal the secrets of chiaroscuro, the intimacy of an existence stolen from night. Chloe Wise prefers a neutral brilliance, one that seems to have no harshness, but gradually reveals the fakery and filters that are imposed on our vision and deceive it. By tearing away these artificial alterations, the painting removes the Band-Aids of our beliefs. Pressing where it hurts, it questions the scope of its sacred, bodily act, and the chaotic world around us, whose calls to order we constantly try to evade.

Poet René Char wrote that “lucidity is the wound closest to the sun.” It is the duty of painters to reveal the other side of images, by offering their most intimate and secret visions. And in this way, like Chloe Wise, to teach us to see again.

— Boris Bergmann, writer