

PAZ CORONA

Ulysse, c'est moi

Exhibition: 06.09 - 21.09

and then: 05.10 - 26.10



What is that word known to all men, Oil on canvas, 150 x 90 cm, 2013

PAZ CORONA // ULYSSE, C'EST MOI

Opening: 05.09 - 6pm to 9pm

“...yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.»

Ulysse, James Joyce

Ulysse and Molly Bloom

With this show I want to paint the nighttime thoughts of a woman, the way Joyce does with Molly Bloom's monologue, at the end of *Ulysses*¹. What interests me is the narrative situation: a man describes the inner state of a woman. There is an incommunicability between the man and the woman, a meeting that never works, just as painting is always an abortive encounter. This show is titled «Ulysse, c'est moi/ I am Ulysses», but it might just as well have been called «Molly Bloom, c'est moi/ I am Molly Bloom». I'm parodying Flaubert's "Madame Bovary, c'est moi", but at the same time I'm well aware that I am also them, her and him and he, the man and the woman who appear in the painting. I am Ulysses also refers to the fact that this book has been with me since I was fifteen, and it's never stopped constructing me. I'm thinking once again about the episode with the Cyclops asking Ulysses what his name is, and Ulysses's perplexing reply: Nobody. It is not a matter for him of denying what he is, but, on the contrary, of accepting that a definitive subject doesn't exist. A transformation of the subject is always possible: the performative elements present in language and in painting are forever illustrating as much.

This is why, as a painter, I work fast and I don't go back over what I've done. In my work there's a letting-go and interplays of echoes from one canvas to the next, somewhere between differentness and repetition. For example, a woman in her bed in these two large vertical pictures: she is looking at us, she is in an enclosed place, but her thoughts stray here, there and everywhere and open up the walls of her bedroom. Pink appears in the bed clothes. Pink, here, is not used as a simple colour, but rather as a meaningful shade of colour, like the colour of a

1 James Joyce's *Ulysses* (first published in Paris in 1922) condenses into a single day, in Dublin, the 16th of June 1904, all the stages of Ulysses's voyage as recounted in Homer's *Odyssey*. In the last part of the book, Leopold Bloom goes back home, just as Ulysses returned to Ithaca to find Penelope. Back home, Leopold finds Molly, his wife.



Entéléchie, Oil on canvas, 230 x 150 cm, 2013



At the end of the day, Oil on canvas, 220 x 90 cm, 2013

state or a feeling. Pink is like Molly who retrieves something of her love at the end of *Ulysses*.

In my canvases, there are recurrences, like the smile, which is a basic datum, because it always hides something, a phenomenon of double reading. The smile is a mask, a pretence. Beauty is always a veil over horror. The idea of the masquerade enables me to say: we are not necessarily a single thing. In one episode in *Ulysses*, Bloom turns into a woman. Quite literally, he becomes a woman. The exhibition works around the body, around female pleasure, which, for me, it not just the pleasure of a woman.

Painting as a Flow of Consciousness

At the outset, for this series, I wanted to produce full-length portraits, but then the faces imposed themselves. Black and white was also necessary: I realized that what was called for was few means, that I wanted to produce this series in a short time, in an urgent way. After all, *Ulysses* lasts for many hundreds of pages and is just the story of a single day. There's something I like about making things quickly, in the unfinished and the incomplete. Whether it's meticulous or not, it's a race against time. I work with a canvas that looks rough: the linen canvas is prepared with a transparent size, and I leave it visible in places. I'm not looking for effects, but I like it when my gesture goes beyond its intention. For example, I don't intentionally create streaks and runs: they appear as I proceed, hurriedly, with an indecisive hand. I very much like comparing painting with a slip: you want to say one thing and something else comes in its place, despite yourself. The way I paint is connected to my unconscious. I'm not trying to do something realist, but rather to grasp the exactness of a moment, its speed, its flow, directly on canvas. This is why I work without preparatory sketches. So there's quite a lot of pentimento, which I don't hide, reframing, clumsinesses, which please me. I paint with oil, I'm not entitled to use an eraser... I go along with what presents itself, with what cannot work. I want to paint the eye, the gaze, the voice, even if it's impossible, and work from mental images, without photographs. None of these representations make reference to real beings, they're projections: even if certain faces look like me, they're not self-portraits. It's the moment when the structure comes undone that I want to catch: making a beautiful image doesn't interest me, just as making a portrait is impossible: you can only show bits. It's in the process of writing that one expresses the most things: there's an ongoing game of construction and deconstruction. If you take a close look at how *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.* is written, you



can clearly see that it's the little bits which end up putting the subject together at a given moment. That's what I'm trying to do in paint: expressing the flow of a consciousness at a precise instant.

Painting is like Sweeping (a coup de balai)... or Throwing Dice.



In several canvases, I use a scrubbing brush to make the background. It's odd how much the tool can influence the manner. I'm thinking of the French expression coup de balai, both literally (sweeping something) and figuratively (in the sense of a shake-up). Just as Ulysses shakes his life up in order to become an artist, we sweep away things that no longer have their place, and we set off on new tracks. I've used another tool borrowed from household activities: a spatula used for defrosting refrigerators. I can't stop myself making a significant link: a spatula for defrosting is also used for warming, and making alive. So painting is also an experiment involving retrieval: you re-conquer what you'd lost by making things appear. I'm thinking of Hantaiï, whose show I recently saw at the Centre Pompidou; he doesn't tell us anything else: painting is a way of rediscovering his lost childhood and the gesture of his mother tirelessly ironing her apron. Talking of sweeping and shake-ups, I'm also thinking of Mallarmé and his "dice throwing", the way he uses the blank page, where he highlights the void. The void is very present in my pictures, like small unfinished areas, because the important thing for me is the principle of an unclosed, infinite whole. Painting is

an Odyssey: it enables the subject to find an elegant solution to a series of pitfalls. As in Psychoanalysis, in the flow of words, all of a sudden an image is frozen, because precisely at that place the word is no longer possible. It is a matter of catching life. I'm thinking of Nietzsche and The Birth of Tragedy, of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, of form and chaos, which we have to manage to keep together.

At the end of the day, Oil on canvas, 220 x 90 cm, 2013

Léa Bismuth
July 2013



As Well him as another, Oil on canvas, 230 x 150 cm, 2013



Gibraltar, Oil on canvas, 180 x 130 cm, 2013