

Céline Ducrot

Wish we were closer

30.8.24–19.10.24

„I think painting as a medium has a unique capacity for ambiguity and has become a place for me to lean into the uncertainties I feel in and around me.”



Cocoons may be tough or soft, 2024

Acrylic ink on MDF board

40 × 30 cm

Three figures sit cross-legged in matching, shiny, petrol blue jogging suits in a circle on the floor of a room, surrounded by a swarm of moths. In another work, one figure sits bare-chested in the forest, while another rests on her thigh. Her skin and the tree bark are both covered in a kind of lichen. A third figure outside of the frame shines a flashlight on the ground. In yet another work, a figure lies on the beach, plays with snails and lets them crawl over her body.

Céline Ducrot's paintings show cinematic scenes whose narratives can never be clearly deciphered. Young, female protagonists are frozen in peculiar, sometimes enigmatic moments. With their eyes mostly closed, they naturally carry out actions that appear stringent in the immanent logic of the image, but whose story is to be written in the mind of the viewer. Although most of the figures' gestures seem familiar, the lack of correspondence with the other pictorial elements makes the scenarios appear mysterious, surreal and sometimes uncanny. This effect is often undermined by the presence of figures outside the pictorial frame, viewers are only given a fragmentary insight into a strange world. An explanation is never included in what is depicted.

The relationship between the protagonists and their world of emotions is only hinted at, leaving room for diverse perspectives. The characters' clothing and accessories, as well as the electronic devices, clearly place all scenes in the present, but the locations largely refuse to be attributed to specific places. The placement of all objects and pictorial elements is clearly intended as if in a puzzle, often with metaphorical connotations such as the proverbial stone in the shoe in Walk a while.

Moths and flies appear as a striking, recurring component, highly charged in art history as symbols of Vanitas painting, metaphorical bearers of doom or pieces of craftsmanship, which are also ambivalent protagonists in Ducrot's paintings.

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Walk a while, 2024

Acrylic ink on MDF board

170 × 120 cm

While some pictorial elements are depicted in a precise naturalistic manner, the skin and hair of the human figures have a distinct synthetic quality. The smooth surfaces reflect light and the color scheme in shades of blue and green reinforces the artificiality of the figures. They appear to be digitally created shells rather than human incarnate. In addition to the familiar cool grey-blue tones, the color palette of the new works is dominated by a matt-violet tone that emphasizes the mystical coloring. The flawless surface is free of painterly ductus and the precision of the airbrush gun recedes into the background, allowing the narrative strands to take the stage.

The atmosphere constantly oscillates between familiar and sinister, artificial and organic, intimate and foreign, between tenderness and brutality. These contrasts are equally inherent in the pictures, without the turning point being resolved. The resulting tension is the central element of the works. The longer one looks at the figures, the more uncertain the status of what is depicted becomes.

Biographical Notes:

Céline Ducrot was born in 1992 in Fribourg, Switzerland. She lives and works in Biel/Bienne CH. She is a graduate of the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig and exhibits internationally, including in 2023 in the group exhibition FEMBOT, The Hole, New York City, at the National Gallery, Prague CZE, Kunsthau Biel, Biel/Bienne CHE, Antichambre Bern CHE, Kunstraum Satellite, Thun CHE, KRONE COURONNE, Biel/Bienne CHE. Her work was honored at the Swiss Design Awards 2018 and the Prix Anderfuhren 2018 and was nominated for the Swiss Design Award 2022. As an illustrator, her work has been published in various publications and institutions such as Die Zeit, FAZ Quarterly, Pro Helvetia, Fachstelle Kultur Kanton Zürich and WOZ die Wochenzeitung.

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