

# RAPHAËLLE RICOL, EXORCISM BY CUNNING

TEXT : MARGUERITE PILVEN

I see the work of Raphaëlle Ricol as working like a kind of “exorcism by cunning,” as Henri Michaux described his poems. The grotesque and the obscene, that which is *behind the stage*, bursts out from pictures with disorienting subjects: a snake’s jaws shoot out from a human bust, a man is expelled by a “pubic head,” while a woman in a swimsuit energetically scrubs her doorstep in what we can guess is a destructive gesture, as if to “clear the decks.” In other paintings, mutant figures turn their backs on us, their limbs assembled from multiple origins describing an uncertain and fragmentary identity. Elsewhere, their personality is manifested in touches, by attributes or sartorial codes associated with alternative communities, lifestyles and cultures (white collar, rasta, geek, gay, hip-hop, rap, skateboard and snow sports).

In a more indirect way, Ricol belongs, it seems to me, to a pictorial tradition in which the act of seeing is at once the moment of a drama and a recognition of desire. The trashy, sexed or bloody character of his paintings expresses the conflictual nature of complex relational exchanges, sometimes perverted by fear of the other. Two recurring figures in her work signal this relation to the other: that of the voyeur/witness, whether in the form of a camera, giant bulging or isolated eyes, or a secret or spied moment of intimacy, and, the second, which is a pendant of the first, that of a monster or the person pointing to it. The witness can, *by virtue of what he or she has seen or knows*, be seen as a monster ordered to be silent, or give voice by means of multiple tricks of expression<sup>1</sup>.

When I spoke to Ricol about the place of the viewer in her works, she told me that she was particularly attracted by paintings that keep her at a distance. By way of an example, she mentioned *The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds* by Georges de La Tour, in which the knowing looks exchanged by the protagonists around the table exclude the beholder. She also mentions a famous painting by Max Ernst from 1926, *The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child Before Three Witnesses : Andre Breton, Paul Eluard and the Painter*. Here, the three artists are in confab behind the Virgin Mary, who is vigorously beating her child in what is a comical, familiar and sensual way of evoking a religion based on chastisement.

## SEEING WITH HER EYES

Ricol’s work can also be placed in a moralist tradition whose tutelary figures include Dante (she is a great admirer of *The Divine Comedy*) and Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Her paintings construct the beginnings of plots, suggest relations of power and influence between archetypal figures (the one who knows, the one who thinks he knows, the one who acts, the one who observes, the one who works, the killer and the victim). Her compositions describe negotiations and manoeuvres between people whose stakes are hidden from us (painting of *pink worms*, *Witness*, *Figure Holding a Luminous Bag*). Something is being put together whose form, as surrealist as it may seem in the paintings, awakens a shared memory. Therein lies the power of Ricol’s painting: the way it summons, without naming or illustrating them, the fundamental worries and collective fears underpinning them, notably with regard to what is brewing in the inner circles of power (*Merchants of Death*, *Asshole*, *The Hammer*, *The Talking Moustache*). Ricol’s paintings are revealing agents, triggers of emotions around a common realisation.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the writers Mikhail Bulgakov (*The Master and Margarita*) and Jean Genet (*Our Lady of the Flowers*).

*Raphaëlle Ricol and Patricia Dorfmann dedicate this exhibition to Jean-Michel Marchais.*

## EXHIBITION

Raphaëlle Ricol, *Je t'Âme*<sup>®</sup>  
November 26<sup>th</sup> 2016 – January 7<sup>th</sup> 2017.

## OPENING

Saturday November 26<sup>th</sup> 2016 from 2pm to 8pm.

## A SUNDAY AT THE GALLERY

*With the support of the "Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art".*

Sunday November 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 from 2pm to 6pm.

Meeting with the artist and signature  
of !BAAM! Published on the occasion of  
the exhibition *Je t'Âme*<sup>®</sup>.

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