



PRESS RELEASE

SOLO SHOW NATHALIE PIROTTE
MÊMÉTÉS

3 SEPTEMBER – 21 OCTOBER 2023



'Echos' by Nathalie Pirotte, 2023, oil on canvas, 2 x (140x100 cm)

Husk Gallery is delighted to present 'Mêmetés', the second solo show with Belgian artist Nathalie Pirotte in its gallery space. Oil painting is key in her oeuvre – both the desire to paint and to render beauty underpin her artistic practice. The exhibition features her recent series of works titled 'Mêmetés', a French neologism referring to the concept of mimesis and identity. In recent years, Nathalie Pirotte has been focusing on human figuration, mainly creating images of women. In early 2023, she started painting diptychs, in which she doubles her model through mirroring without distortion. The inverted paintings are presented together, forcing us to compare the double paintings by identifying differences and similarities. Through the motif of the double, she explores questions of difference and identity, and provokes thoughts about the painting medium.

The construction of the female identity is at the centre of Nathalie Pirotte's body of artworks. As a painter, she has a striking preference for young and beautiful models. Her subjects are inspired by advertisements and media from popular culture which she appropriates in her unique and personal style, characterised by smooth brushwork and an intriguing fusion of bold and vivid colours. After selecting a model, the artist continues her research on the composition, the colouring, and the destruction of the model's gaze. When looking at Nathalie Pirotte's former 'Tags' paintings, her genuine affinity with painting becomes obvious. The absence of the eyes induces the spectator to a more pictorial reading, going from the face to the context. The tags or highlights manifest themselves as abstract marks on the relatively carefully painted images of women, as a reminder of the painter's gestural act. Nathalie Pirotte always places her models against a plain abstract background, directing our gaze to the construction of her female figures.



'Tags blancs' by Nathalie Pirotte, 2023, oil on canvas, 2 x (70x50 cm)

Nathalie Pirotte's figuration relies largely upon mimetic representation. Mimesis is the art of imitation through which the artist portrays and interprets reality. In her recent paintings, she explores different modes of doubling as she reproduces by repetition, by inversion, by splitting or shadowing the painted subject. Through doubling her anonymous figures, she forces us to look even closer. When two similar images are presented together, our eyes see 'double' and compare them. On the subject of how she paints detailed copies of her human figures, it could be argued that Nathalie Pirotte has behaved like a robot, albeit an imperfect one. This painting process indicates that painting reveals a human touch, creating a unique skin on a surface. Painting, as manual labour, is never a pure conceptual medium. The content of a painting can never be separated from the feel of its surface.

The inventor of painting, according to the poets, was Narcissus. What is painting, after all, but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?

Leon Battista Alberti, On Painting (1435)

In his 15th-century treatise 'De pictura'- 'On Painting', Leon Battista Alberti creates a new founding myth figuring Narcissus as the inventor of painting. The young and beautiful Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in the waters of a spring and died; the daffodil flower that bears his Latin name blossomed where he died. According to Alberti, the surface of the pool is equivalent to a living mirror, a perfect plane of reflection that makes the origin of painting evident in an embellished, poetic way. The story of Narcissus and the nymph Echo in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' warns of the danger of the irresistible mirror: the image of ourselves we're unable to stay away from. The myth of Narcissus is also often associated with beauty and vanity. In Western art, the mirror has frequently been used as a symbol for the vanity of women.



A subtle reading of the Narcissus myth encourages reflection on the concept of beauty and self-awareness. By representing women modelled on beauty stereotypes, Nathalie Pirotte deals with vanity and identity politics. A small mirror flanked by two painted hands is a kind of 'prelude' to 'L'éphémère', a subseries that encompasses ten paintings of the same female model featuring gradations of her image. The mirror installation invites the spectator to reflect on the ephemerality of their own image. The physical reflection in a mirror encourages philosophical self-reflection about the nature of youth and beauty. Unlike a painted portrait or photo, one cannot grasp one's image and freeze the moment of beauty. Nathalie Pirotte's work invites us to both reflect on and discover the unique realm of the painting medium by analysing each painted image in the flesh.

Detail E05 of the 'L'éphémère' series by Nathalie Pirotte, 2023, oil on canvas, 10 x (70x50 cm)

Short CV



Nathalie Pirotte (°1965, Albertville) is a Belgian painter who lives and works in Brussels. She completed her Master in Painting and 3D Research in La Cambre, Brussels. In the past years her work has featured in solo shows in Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. In 2020 Husk Gallery presented *Pretty Chimeras*, her inaugural solo exhibition at the gallery. Recently in 2023, her extensive solo show *Montré-Caché* was on view in the Alter Schlachthof in Eupen. She has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions in Belgium and abroad. Her work can be found in the following collections: Communauté française de Belgique, Unisys, BSB (B), Town of Ettelbruck (GDL), City of Dudelange (GDL), City of Luxembourg (GDL), Sanrio (It) and in private collections in Europe, the United States and Australia. Since 1995, Nathalie Pirotte is a painting professor at the Arlon Academy of Fine Arts in Luxembourg, Belgium.

Opening

Sunday 3 September 2023 from 2 to 7 pm in the presence of the artist

Extra Rivoli Opening Days

Thursday 7 September 2023 from 11 am to 9 pm

Friday-Saturday 8-9 September 2023 from 11 am to 7pm

Sunday 10 September 2023 11 am to 7pm

Rivoli Open Sunday

1 October 2023 from 2 to 6 pm

Opening hours during exhibition

Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 2 to 6 pm

or by appointment

For further inquiries:

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Installation view 'L'éphémère' by Nathalie Pirotte, 2023, oil on canvas, 10 x (70x50 cm) at Husk Gallery



Installation view 'Mêmetés' by Nathalie Pirotte at Husk Gallery, 2023



'Mêmetés' by Nathalie Pirotte at Husk Gallery, Rivoli-building #12? Brussels, 03.09 > 21.10.2023,