



Louisa Gagliardi
La Belle Heure
February 19 - March 20
Opening Friday, February 19, 6-8pm

Their bodies are loosely balanced. Enveloped in a suffused light, their faces seem covered with a bitter-sweet veil. Everything is dimmed, muffled and somehow simulated. Via a series of 7 paintings, Louisa Gagliardi reenacts the intimate odyssey of a couple into the night. Flattened shapes slowly dissolve into a hazy dream-like atmosphere where proportions are approximate and perspective is only evoked through color shades. The couple poses smoking, playing with masks or teasing each other with a fishnet panty. Their bodies are colored by the screen halos of iPad and smartphones alike. Blue, yellow, red, green.

It is said that the development of public lighting and urban advertisement have destroyed the very concept of night. You walk down the street and find yourself gated in a permanent day. The dream of the 24h city has arrived and you can now sleep with your 5000 Facebook friends. The need for self-satisfaction never really vanishes, even at night. There is nothing more intoxicating than looking at yourself when you seem at your epitome on social media. Each like, each share, will palliate the destitution and fragility that are the primary conditions of self-exposure. Offering yourself to social media is to be held hostage for a few hours. Culpable, you become guilty of everything and in front of everyone – in that case even more than others.¹

One beautiful portrait of Sonja Schad by August Sanders haunts Gagliardi's work: Sonia's hand is caught a few seconds before reaching her mouth. Perched on a bar stool, her body is precariously balanced. Her second hand helps hold this assemblage together. The relative simplicity of the staging enters into sharp contrast with the sophistication of a posture that reveals a sense of both certitude and uneasiness. Posing is the reverse of inertia. It is a perpetual movement seized as a fragment of an infinite bricolage of attitudes and positions. Nails, toes, lids are burning like erogenous zones. Bodies do not exult but are still playing; they love to be partially covered by warm arms, legs but also by transparent and shiny material as rubber and leather.

While the day ends, the couple's ghostly silhouettes find their cocoons. The threshold of the door crossed, they languish on the sofa down to the slashing rhythm of their keyboard. They don't exist anymore for the anonymous crowd but they still perform for each other's gaze. Even alone, finally relaxed, liberated, there is still something that is adequately irreducible to force them to act beautifully. When facing their reflections, they can't help but freeze and strike the right poses, find the right angle. And even in the middle of the night, groping to the bathroom with their mucus dried, they end up absorbed by the mirror while quenching their thirst. Like Narcissus, they try desperately to capture what remains of the fragrance of their suspected soul. Torn between sealed secret and delivered truth, withdrawal and recognition of the other, never escaping the zone of discomfort, they are waiting for the Belle Heure to disappear.

– Pierre-Alexandre Mateos & Charles Teyssou

¹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment.