

# Wilde

## PRESS RELEASE

*May Be Closer (Part I)*

16.11.2022 - 20.01.2023

WILDE | BASEL

Seline Burn  
Adrien Chevalley  
Mathieu Dafflon  
Patricia Kaliczka  
Françoise Pétróvitch

"Objects in a mirror may be closer than they appear" is a text found on the rear-view mirrors of cars in several countries, including the US, India, and South Korea. It asserts or rather warns that our perspectives are skewed and do not reflect reality. The artists in this two-part exhibition\* question how we see the world, the absurdity of the human condition, the notion of self, and its counterpart, the other.

According to existentialist philosophy, the way a human mind "intends" or sees the world depends on the values that a person has set for herself. The work of Patricia Kaliczka elucidates this theory; she uses painting as a form of storytelling. The narrative in her work alludes to collective myths, unconscious experiences, and the environment as symbolic manifestations of an inner world. Kaliczka repeatedly portrays traditionally female figures in vacant spaces set mostly during dawn. The characters are depicted as contemplative, gazing inwards in search of a more profound truth. She often depicts the moon, a representation in astrology of an inner world and of change, and iridescent clothing, suggesting light is glowing from inside the figures. Kaliczka's painting unfolds the course of experimental and emotional transformations that genuinely occur within ourselves.

Françoise Pétróvitch's art reveals an ambiguous world, willingly transgressive, playing with conventional boundaries and eluding any interpretation. Her work touches on the themes of intimacy and disappearance alongside those of transition and cruelty. In her recent oil paintings, bold swathes of color and selective strokes make up striking compositions without artifice. The artist uses her signature red outlines to delineate figures that escape individuality and shroud faces behind hands and a blindfold. Their body language signals a desire to disengage with reality, or an overt criticism of it.

Using colorful interplays of light and shadow, Seline Burn conjures evocative images where intimacy and radical strangeness are delicately balanced. Burn allows the viewer to immerse in distant dreams and internal processes of her inner life in a practice that she understands as an ongoing personal diary. Overshadowed by cool shades of blue, *The Secret Garden* depicts two women lingering in undisturbed togetherness. The women represent the same person, where the figure of the present embraces her past self as a moment of consoling oneself and alleviating past trauma. In *Hell or High Water*, a female figure rests on boundless water, representing a woman that must navigate her position within the stream of the present society. *Freedom Land* brings an irregular transition from the king blue sky to the opposing water element through the buttermilk shades of a dune's horizon. The woman stepping out of the water recalls the grace and freedom of change.

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The painting of Mathieu Dafflon shifts from abstraction to figuration, from monumentality to minute details. Dafflon often draws inspiration from art history, which he appropriates and reinterprets with irony and a certain irreverence. In *Niklaus' Grättimaa and the Broken Earth* (2022), Dafflon illustrates a still life painting from 1918 by the Basel-born artist Niklaus Stoecklin of a Grättimaa. The original painting has undergone two alterations which give the Grättimaa more human characteristics: the eyes of the baked pastry have become more detailed, and two pieces of macaroni sit on the table. The figure is standing in what appears to be representationally resembling a mixture of paint on a palette. For Dafflon, it symbolizes waste and the universe, an allusion made to the work's title, which he borrowed from *the Broken Earth* trilogy written by N.K. Jemison. "At its core, [the books tell] a story about who holds...power in this world, and how society uses and profits off of those that it marginalizes, as well as the destruction that absolute power can mete out."<sup>i</sup>

In addition to his painting, the exhibition includes a collaboration between Dafflon and his friend Adrien Chevalley. Chevalley created small-format ceramic objects inspired by "everyday objects, childhood memories and human organs."<sup>ii</sup> Within them, Dafflon has created miniature paintings where "love and fear, physicality and masculinity, the naturally grown and the man-made"<sup>iii</sup> come together. "Pop cultural references meet personal worlds of experience, dreamlike scenarios meet intimate domestic scenes, and seemingly trivial everyday aesthetics meet art historical models. The result is an intimate collaboration where the two artists invite the viewer to engage in their dialogue, to listen and to be seduced by the tenderness and playfulness of the objects."<sup>iv</sup>

The essence of understanding the exhibition is to "focus on 'existence' as the unique way that humans are in the world, as opposed to other sentient beings, namely the choice of being in the world and how to be in the world, how one relates to the world. The artwork is the most striking example of the power of human consciousness to turn towards the world in such a way that it takes in from it certain elements and blanks out others.[...]. This existence therefore is closely tied to freedom (and ontology). The emphasis on the capacity of human consciousness to 'derealize' the world amounts to a defense of the artist's creative freedom[...]: 'freedom grants the human being the capacity to reveal essential features of the world and of the beings in it. Since artistic practice is one of the prime examples of free human activity, it is therefore also one of the privileged modes of revealing what the world is about.'<sup>v</sup>

\*The second part of the exhibition will open on 2 February 2023

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<sup>i</sup> Liptak, Andrew, *N.K. Jemison's Broken Earth trilogy is a triumphant achievement in fantasy literature*, The Verge, 11 November 2022, <https://www.theverge.com/2017/8/17/16156416/n-k-jemison-broken-earth-trilogy-the-stone-sky-fantasy-book-review>

<sup>ii</sup> Knüsel, Eva Maria, *Terreau Terrible*, Mayday, 15 November 2022, <https://maydaymaydaymayday.ch/assets/uploads/floorplan.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Deranty, Jean-Philippe, *Existentialist Aesthetics*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 11 November 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-existentialist>

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