



A.ROMY

Lauren Coullard,
SI TU TE SENS FRÉMIR, MEURS, AVANCE, FRAPPE !

A.Romy Gallery
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Voices are heard from limbo: «If you feel yourself quivering, die, move forward, strike !» says Eliane Schubert like a rope to grasp on when the body wavers. This character invented by Antoine Volodine in *Frères sorcières*¹, sole survivor of an itinerant theater troupe, narrates her story of sex slave, kidnapped by a horde of bandits dragging her to her death, which takes her away as soon as her story is transcribed. The poetic *vociferations* that she keeps nestled in her entrails are the eternal resonances of a song destined to the little sisters of misfortune.

As a desiring researcher, Lauren Coullard tracks down future creatures who personify the negative forces that bite and animate her from within. In the immaculate pavilion of A.ROMY gallery, a frieze of monsters haunting her is displayed. The visceral noise of Antoine Volodine's wandering players that scream madness and obscenity joins her paintings score, each participating in the framework of a chromatic ballet. The words on the other hand withdraw from their dedicated places, impotent in front of the unspeakable horror. Nothing but gravelly slime comes out of the mouths of her inaudible and insatiable creatures, with rough tongues.

This procession of frenetic figures begins with images she collects and combines in her collages, corresponding to the embryonic phase of her paintings. From the patterns of these sources that she cuts up, tears up if not eviscerates to recover the heart of the matter, sutured faces are born. She draws up symbiotic entities, «patchworks of genders», to use Jack Halberstam²'s expression, which see their

1 Antoine Volodine, *Frères Sorcières*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2019.

2 Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows, Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Durham/Londres, Duke University Press, 1995, p.1.

skin and their swollen flesh hybridizing. For a time, these metamorphoses end in lycanthropes and cyborgs. Loosing control of the liquid that penetrates and pirates his DNA, Wikus, agent of a multinational in *District 9*, a film by Neil Bonckamp, takes on the appearance of the aliens he tortures. From this *infracuman*³, so qualified by Thierry Hocquet, one does not distinguish the predator from the victim nor sometimes the alienation of the emancipation.

Cyborgs are born from an alternative ground which assumes its own chaos. Sci-Fi authors draw strong figures from garbage, like Gally, the manga heroine in *Gunnm*. Inhabited by passion and equipped with her serrated Damascus blade, she devotes her cybernetic body and her life frozen in adolescence to combat. «*Let's finish this with a bang.*»

Gally is an artificial creature who thwarts the parental model, marking her obsolescence in the paradigm of not only cyborgs but also aliens who take advantage of the human body to bear children. «All women are Aliens⁴» says Olivia Rosenthal who portrays in her eponymous book Lieutenant Ripley played by Sigourney Weaver. Based on the determination of this eternal survivor of the *Alien* saga, she makes Ripley the double of the xenomorph. On screen, her bright red human blood mixes with the alien's greenish blood composed of molecular acid.

«*Red protects itself. No color is as territorial. It stakes a claim, is on the alert against the spectrum.*»⁵

Dracanea trees ooze a red resinous substance, called dragon's blood, *sanguis dragonis*, which heals wounds. Derek Jarman points to the beliefs that gave red healing properties, which explains why Edward II tried to ward off scarlet fever by lining his room with scarlet decorations. In *Chroma, a book of colour*, Jarman gives us his meditations which he dedicates to the figure of the Harlequin:

«*Mercurial trickster, black-masked. Chameleon who takes on every color. Aerial acrobat, jumping, dancing, turning somersaults. Child of chaos.*

*Many hued and wily
Changing his skin
Laughing to his fingertips
Prince of thieves and cheats
Breath of fresh air.*»⁶

In the image of this versatile spirit in costume, Lauren Coullard's paintings diffract the facets of human fever. Perhaps there is a sister of fire within her that cries out to be tamed and avoids being abandoned at all costs to the hands of the unconscious. This captive sister becomes the figure of anguish which, when it is pushed back too far into the darkness, returns burned by the underworld, wearing a blaze as hair. While painting can cast spells, it also serves to welcome and exorcise nightmares because «we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities⁷.» These creatures are revealed by the fire of our own detractors that hypnotizes and encourages us to reach our point of incandescence. In the limbo of the world where the artist ventures, the flames crackle and illuminate these figures that are agitated between the abyss and the ether.

We may have made a mistake in the distribution of roles. From our humanoid point of view, we have comfortably taken ourselves for the public while there can be no one else but us to have frightened or amused these sulfurous strangers who take the features of our reflections.

Lila Torquéo

3 Thierry Hoquet, *Les Presque-Humains: Mutants, cyborgs, robots, zombies... et nous*, Paris, Seuil, 2021.

4 Olivia Rosenthal, *Toutes les femmes sont des Aliens*, Paris, Collections Verticales/Gallimard, 2016.

5 Derek Jarman, *Chroma a Book of Color*, 1995, New York, The Overlook Press, p.31.

6 épitaphe du livre, *ibidem*.

7 “We need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities.” Judith Halberstam, *op.cit.* p.27