

Sultana

Sally Ross

26 mars 2015 - 16 mai 2015

Unashamedly fascinated by pictorial tradition and convention, Ross' artistic influences range from early Flemish painting to Francis Picabia, but the core of her practise feeds on the images the artist gleans from old, often educational publications or digital photo archives. Ross' pictures transcend their almost nostalgic point of departure to produce an unusual intersection of illustrative or traditional painting genres with the curious mass of photographic images and information we process from the earliest age.

Through her ongoing practise of transforming pre-existing visual material - thrift store books and found photographs, Sally Ross pursues her singular take on landscape and portrait genres. Her paintings revel in a painterly wrangling with the random opposition of representational/abstract, objective/subjective, male/female or the past/present. Her fertile, idealised landscapes or her pastel-coloured portraits are disrupted by snaky abstract planes or the strangely unnatural presence of big hair.

Ross' portraits are unlike selfies, they are not beckoning, attentive, available nor smoulderingly seductive. Her new portraits continue to avoid direct eye contact with the viewer, they are not thinking about you, nor looking at you. Ross explores a simple question: how is a man or a woman supposed to appear? Some of these portraits have been made from a book documenting drag stars and cabaret performers from the 60/70s in various stages of grooming themselves to become alluring 'female impersonators'. Her androgynous drag performers recall Cocteau/Man Ray's 1926 collaboration *Barbette*:

"Indeed he appeals to those who see the woman in him, to those who sense the man in him, as well as to others whose souls are moved by the supernatural sex of beauty."¹

The exhibition's co-existence of landscapes and portraits liberate the viewer from a particularly logical theme or 'sense' of the presentation, leaving our imaginations and perceptions to infinitely fabricate/distort any meaning derived from the paintings. In the relatively uncomplicated task of transforming found images into painted pictures, Sally Ross pursues her obsessive landscape fantasies and the imaginative possibilities of picture viewing, embracing both fantasy and folie and its resemblance to the real.

Sally Ross, born 1969, lives and works in Melbourne, Australia (previously based in France). Her work is represented in private and public collections in Australia, Europe, the United States and Asia.

Ref: 1. Jean Cocteau, 1926, *Barbette*, Jean Cocteau/ Man Ray, reprint 1988, borderline/Verlag, Bonn Germany, 1988.