

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

VALÉRIE BELIN

Modern Royals

March 24 - May 14, 2022

91, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, 75008 - Paris



Portrait of Scarlett (Modern Royals), 2020

Pigment print

Framed : 175 × 132 cm (68 ²⁹/₃₂ × 51 ³¹/₃₂ in.)

© Valérie Belin

Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *Modern Royals*, Valérie Belin's fifth solo exhibition at the gallery. The new series, after which the exhibition is titled, is shown in its entirety at the new 91 rue du Faubourg St Honoré location. With its very painterly feel, it is presented as a group of "tableaux" based on the theme of the vanities.

This new corpus comprises eleven portraits of women, fictional characters who are nevertheless designated by their first names, posing seated on a sofa. The title of this series suggests that the figures might be celebrities or "wordly women," meant as illustrations for a romance novel. Each portrait represents a different personality, played in the studio by the same female model, whose looks vary from one picture to the next, depending on her appearance (dress, hairdo, jewelry worn in a conspicuous way), and also on her pose and attitude. Paradoxically, this imbues the portraits with a mixed impression of strange singularity and similarity.

According to the artist, "these portraits seem to have been realized spontaneously, in the soft glow and intimacy of a living room, lit as though by a television screen in a dark room. The motifs added to the image (photographs of neons, of illuminated signs, etc.) also suggest that we might be observing the scene through a pane of glass that reflects the city lights. Bizarrely, the model seems trapped between the décor in the background and these reflections of the outside world in the foreground. Sometimes, she appears totally captivated by something happening outside the frame, while at others, on the contrary, she gazes at us distractedly. The photographs are realized precisely in this in-between: between the moment when the model is still reflecting on her 'inner world' and that when she abstracts herself from it in response to the needs of the pose and the representation."

Though these photographs were conceived in the manner of a genre scene, due to the tight framing, they look like details. To

contribute to the effect of a universe that is not so much bucolic but domestic, urban and contemporary, the “backdrop” of these portraits was realized afterward, by superimposing and juxtaposing vernacular motifs from different photographs taken by the artist and sourced from her stock of images: parts of shop windows, neon signs, advertising typography, graffiti, printed fabrics with painted motifs, and pseudo-luxurious decorative objects arranged as a still life. These different elements are layered, in the same way as one would glacia, and contribute to forging the painterly character of the resulting images. The digital artifices she uses also add to a confusion or perversion of the genres, at the crossroads between portrait and still life—and between photography and painting.

To borrow Phillip Prodger’s writing on Valérie Belin’s work, we could say that each of these photographs is simultaneously “a portrait and a still life; a deep dive into the psychology of a ‘semi-anonymous’ woman and a reflection on our society characterized by the overconsumption of images. Her work’s undeniably feminist commentary also conveys a more universal message in the form of questioning: What place do we give identity in our consumerist culture? How are we, as individuals, accomplices to our own failure to find authenticity in the life we lead?”¹

¹ Phillip Prodger, *Alter ego – Une histoire du portrait en photographie*, Textuel, 2021

Born in Boulogne-Billancourt (France) in 1964, Valérie Belin lives and works in Paris (France).

She graduated from the École Nationale des Beaux Arts de Bourges (1983–88) and gained a DEA (the equivalent of a Master of Advanced Studies) in Philosophy of Art at the Université Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris (1989).

Valérie Belin also participated in numerous significant solo exhibitions (selection 2007-2019) : *Reflection* at the Victoria & Albert Museum (UK, 2019) ; *Painted Ladies* at the 50th edition of les Rencontres d’Arles (France, 2019) ; *China Girls* at the Multimedia Art Museum of Moscow (Russia, 2019) ; *Valérie Belin : Méta-Clichés* (traveling exhibition in China) at Three Shadows Photography Art Center (Beijing) and at SCôP (Shanghai Center of Photography) in Shanghai and at the Chengdu Museum (China, 2017) ; *Valérie Belin* at the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez in Bordeaux (France, 2017) ; *Surface Tension* at the DHC/Art Foundation, Phi Center, in Montréal (Canada, 2015) ; *Les Images intranquilles* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (France, 2015) ; *Illusions of Life* at the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow (Russia, 2014) ; *O ser e o aparecer* at the Casa Franca-Brasil in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil, 2011) ; *Hungry Eyes* at the FotoMuseum Provincie in Antwerp (Belgium, 2011) ; *Valérie Belin: Made-up* at the Peabody Essex Museum in Essex (USA, 2009) ; and *Correspondances* at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris (France, 2008) ; the Musée de l’Élysée in Lausanne (Switzerland, 2008) ; the Maison Européenne de Photographie in Paris (France, 2008) ; and the Huis Marseille – Museum voor fotografie in Amsterdam (The Netherlands, 2007). She has also participated in numerous significant group exhibitions especially at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (France, 2016), at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (France, 2016), at the Huis Marseille - Museum voor fotografie (The Netherlands, 2015), at the Maison Particulière (Belgium, 2015), at the MOMA - Museum of Modern Art (USA, 2014), at the Centre de la Photographie de Genève (Switzerland, 2013), at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (France, 2013), at the Seattle Art Museum (USA, 2012), at the Mori Art Museum (Japan, 2011), at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Korea (South Korea, 2011), at the Musée Nicéphore Niépce (France, 2010), at the Centre Pompidou (France, 2009), at the International Center of Photography (USA, 2009).

Works by Valérie Belin can be seen in leading private and public collections, such as in France those of the Centre Pompidou – Musée National d’Art Moderne, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Fondation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Fond National d’Art Contemporain, Bibliothèque nationale de France, FRAC Limousin, Franche-Comté and Ile-de-France, MAC/VAL, Maison rouge, Fondation Antoine-de-Galbert, Musée Galliera ; in the United States, at the MoMA – Museum of Modern Art (New York), LACMA – Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco), Norton Museum of Art (West Palm Beach), International Center for Photography ; in the United-Kingdom, the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), in Switzerland, the Kunsthaus Zurich (Zurich) and Musée de l’Élysée (Lausanne) ; in Luxembourg, le MUDAM - Musée d’art moderne Grand-Duc Jean ; in the Netherlands, at the Huis Marseille (Amsterdam) ; in Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, (Melbourne) Parkes ACT (Canberra) ; and in South Korea, at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Korea (Seoul).

Valérie Belin won the Prix Pictet in 2015 for her project *Disorder*. The travelling exhibition of which it is a part is being presented between 2015 and 2017 at Somerset House (UK), the MAXXI in Rome (Italy), the CAB Art Center in Brussels (Belgium), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva (Switzerland).

Valérie Belin has been represented by the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, since 2013.

Paris Saint-Honoré

Wang Keping

Metamorphoses

January 15 - March 12, 2022

Valérie Belin

Modern Royals

March 24 - May 28, 2022

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Patrick Faigenbaum

Photographies, 1974 - 2020

January 18 - March 5, 2022

Youssef Nabil

Memory of a Happy Place

March 18 - May 8, 2022

Brussels

Agnès Varda

Calder, Richier, Schlegel, Székely par Agnès Varda

January 14 - March 5, 2022

Joris Van de Moortel

Foolhardy Boarding A Lost State of Mind

March 17 - May 1, 2022

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