

galerie frank elbaz.

## Chloé Delarue

*TAFAA - Sycamore Rabbit (Give Em The Love Tonight II)*

February 25 - April 22, 2023

Opening Saturday, February 25, 6-8pm

It is a perilous exercise to want to give meaning to poetic brilliance. In the same way that there is something infinitely reductive in wanting to comment on a work's minute detail, poetic exegesis contains a strong deceptive potential. To flatten out its means of expression is to risk letting its terms run aground of a certain magic – such terms which, precisely, confer the power to the work to speak beyond its own vocabulary.

If I go by way of this reflection to introduce Chloé Delarue's first exhibition at galerie frank elbaz, it is because I felt a pleasurable curiosity when she told me the title of this new stage in its cycle – *TAFAA (Toward A Fully Automated Appearance)*, this technical acronym linked to her work since the 2010s. A feeling that is difficult to explain: the result of a rapprochement, relatively cryptic, of two names that seemingly designate nothing other than a type of tree and a mammal. Similarly to the way that I've always been amazed by certain sculptors assembling unrelated ready-made objects<sup>1</sup>, this particular use of words seems equally able to open semantic gaps, to catalyze the imagination. *Sycamore Rabbit* and its outcome of suave evocation could already be a fragment of work in itself, retaining as many references to contemporary mythologies as to a story beyond age<sup>2</sup> – like a shift in the timeline.

But this poetic extension precedes a conceptual foundation that is constantly being updated. With the five letters *TAFAA*, Chloé Delarue's exhibitions can be understood through a theoretical postulate suggesting that, in a fully calculable and operational world, reality as we perceive it tends towards a form of total automation. The works produced by the artist – without seeking to demonstrate this thesis in our shared environment – rely on the latter to create multiple duplications and reconfigurations. If the general aesthetic can evoke a cinematographic atmosphere, where

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1 A method that Chloé Delarue doesn't in fact use... instead of the ready-made, her approach favors imprints of forms and a sort of hacking of existing technical devices: the link to external things is made in a more indirect way.

2 At the risk of dimming a bit of mystery, the artist mentions, in a note, a nod to the "Sycamore" chip created by Google, which made manifest the superiority of a quantum calculator over a conventional computer. The rabbit is a narrative element of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as well as in the movie *The Matrix*: it signals the arrival of twists that undermine the logical meaning of the stories. Finally, note that the essayist Pacôme Thiellement, in a recent book entitled *Sycamore Sickamour* (PUF, 2018) insisted on the symbolic dimension of the sycamore in William Shakespeare's oeuvre. In the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, the tree becomes the refuge of "sick amour" – sick love.

screens and neon lights continually gleam, it is still less in a futuristic projection that the *TAFAA* project attracts its spectators. The future, or the futures, as Mark Fischer once said, are “lost”<sup>3</sup>; anticipatory narratives have become obsolete in a society controlled by algorithms, data analysis and the simulation of all expressions of reality. Following the exact contours of predictions made decades ago, a sea change is largely accomplished. *TAFAA* is an exacerbation of the present, of a world where the vision is the result of a prism, of technological allegory. This is how the emergence of a simulated reality springs forth, arriving not to substitute itself but to insinuate itself, reconditioning our material and affective environments.

Theories as such, scientific or otherwise, have never been sufficient enough to produce interesting works of art. Malaise and doubt, on the other hand, are effective agents of aesthetic turmoil. I’m speculating, but it is this state of mind that accompanies Chloé Delarue in her plastic decisions. *TAFAA* can be considered a formal matrix bringing with it the transformation of elements resulting from a reality shared by the majority. However – and this is an important fact – it is not a question of creating a decor or a potential living environment: each work, asserting its autonomy, represents rather a shift in perception, or the sudden eruption of signs that shape our lives and whose upheaval threatens certainties. Thus, everything here manifests its familiar presence: the moss-covered ground, the animated bodies, the worshipping faces as well as the memes that ironically punctuate dreamy navigations. Everything is recognizable but nothing has ever seemed so foreign, so absent from itself, so devoid of meaningful substance when everything becomes synthetic.

What this new occurrence of *TAFAA* refers us to – without dissecting its effects – is this inability to precisely identify what escapes us: the famous Freudian *unheimliche*. We have learned that reality is only a subjective realization, one among others allowing us to justify the meaning of our actions. Alice’s rabbit would teach the precariousness of these myths, which hold us back so obediently. Such is the poetic force of Chloé Delarue’s project, which starts with a few words or combined objects, and transmits this fundamentally recalcitrant essence of the surrounding world.

- Franck Balland

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3 “Lost Futures” is Mark Fischer’s first chapter in *Spectres de ma vie, écrits sur la dépression, l’hantologie et les futurs perdus*, Entremonde, Geneva, 2021.