

LIZA LACROIX

*Try laughing at something*

September 1 – October 21, 2023

Liza Lacroix approaches painting through its temporality. In *Laughs two hundred and eighty three times a day* a suggestion of a rectangle peaks above a salvo of pink, yellow, and nude strokes. This ghostly rectangle—wiped away, covered over—is on the edge of disappearing, and yet, claims my attention more than the rest of the painting's frenetic activity. This is perhaps because disappearance, and, in turn, the struggle to remain visible, functions as the thematic backdrop to the works on display in *Try laughing at something* at Galerie Gisela Capitain in Cologne.

In painting, the process of making is like any experience of time—it's a constant accumulation. In Lacroix's paintings, the forms produced by this accretive method are like small events. But within any of her canvases, such as *You can't enjoy a laugh with other people*, there is no discernable linearity to the event structure. If we were to study this painting's grammar we might find an intelligible disorder of tenses, even a multiplicity of speakers. Still, like in all of Lacroix's paintings, there is a punctuation mark, a form that gives the painting its closure.

Often there is an argumentative tone to Lacroix's event structure. For example, the script-like title for one of the diptychs on view—*(suddenly stops laughing. Gloomily.) Me? Laughing? I'm not laughing*—verbally refutes the omniscient narration of an action. The denial of laughter is left hanging in the background as if the painting's decisive lines of burnt red are also meant to refuse what lies beneath them. Even the construction of the diptych stages an argument. By joining the two panels together, Lacroix highlights the antagonistic quality of their pairing. As a result, there is a generative division to their dialogue. And while the graphic shift in light and dark between one panel and the next signals their relation to one another, the dramatic cut down the center emphasizes their disjuncture.

In film, "the cut" is a phrase used to refer to the process of editing scenes together. It references the original form of the medium in which film strips contain a series of still frames that can be cut up and reassembled to create movement. Both procedurally and formally, Lacroix's diptychs splice two different times together. As our eyes flicker between the two frames, the similarities in palette produce a spatialized movement. The installation pushes the paintings even further towards cinema. By setting the surface of the canvas flush with the wall, the diptychs rhyme with the light projections we typically find in the darkened space of a theater.

This association between painting and screen is pronounced in the room that holds both the diptych *What's the funniest thing that happened to you today? This week? In your life?* and the projected photograph of a lost painting titled *What now? Just trying to find the right thing to laugh at*. Her display of this crude iPhone snapshot gestures to painting as a temporal unfolding in which forms build on one another, not just on a canvas, but through history. Instead of idolizing the materiality of paint—a habit that has marred the discussion of abstraction—Lacroix asks us to reverse what exists only in memory.

The video used to announce the exhibition shows one of the gallery's staff members wiping dust from a small black table in the non-descript caverns of art fair space. "It's like a little painting," Lacroix quipped to me. "Isn't it funny?" The table becomes wetter and darker after the damp cloth passes over it. "It is funny. But not in an ironic way," I note. "It's just silly." Like the exhibition's title, Lacroix's directives—whether made in text, paint, photographs, or sound—may upon first glance seem self-serious. But the suggestions of laughter made throughout the exhibition are playful taunts. For laughter, like any expression of feeling, is ephemeral. What else is there to do besides let its sounds disappear?

—Noa Wesley

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce the first major solo exhibition of artist Liza Lacroix (b. 1988 Montreal, Canada) at the gallery. Liza Lacroix has exhibited at Zweigstelle Capitain III, Napoli (2023), Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2022, 2021), Albertusstrasse, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne (2022), Zweigstelle Capitain II, Rome (2022), Midnight Projects, New Jersey, NJ (2021), Peana, Monterrey (2018), M23, New York, (2018), AC Repair, Toronto, CA (2016) and Popp's Packing, Hamtramck, MI (2015).