

PRESS RELEASE

Chantal Joffe

Night Self-Portraits

Opens Thursday May 14 from 6–8 pm

Exhibition continues through June 20, 2015



Topless Self-Portrait in Blue Knickers 2014
oil on canvas 20 1/8 x 15 3/4 in

Cheim & Read is pleased to present an exhibition of recent self-portraits by British painter Chantal Joffe. This is Joffe's third show at the gallery. It will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue with an essay by Louise Yelin. *Using, Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Chantal Joffe* will open at the Jewish Museum on May 1 and be on view through October 18.

Chantal Joffe is known for larger-than-life, boldly-colored oil paintings of often solitary women. Culled from fashion spreads and photographs, her subjects exude a sort of fearless exhibitionism while simultaneously conveying an intimacy and emotion expected from more familial sources. Fascinated by beauty and the female form, Joffe has commented on the "imaginative narrative" these images provoke, encouraged by the patterns, fabrics, and textures—as well as the gaze—of sumptuously-clad models. Yet while she finds inspiration in popular culture and art historical precedents (Alice Neel and Paula Modersohn-Becker are noted influences), she has also continued to revisit her own image with similarly incisive observation, delving into truly personal territory. This exhibition at Cheim & Read

brings together fourteen of her recent self-portrait paintings which question notions of motherhood, femininity, perception and representation.

As Louise Yelin posits in her essay for the exhibition, Joffe's self-portraits comprise a sort of serial autobiography. Though the artist has made clear that she doesn't work with overarching themes in mind, her tendency to paint herself as subject recurs throughout her career. For Joffe the impulse is visceral—she paints in the now, representing herself in the present moment, in her present physical and emotional state. Though several of her images are startlingly big, this immediacy remains fresh. Constructed with blocks and fields of saturated color, they are painted wet-on-wet, their thick, viscous surfaces at times distorted by wayward skeins and drips of paint. But while the lush canvases at first seem loosely executed, they are also obsessively observant. The pattern of a chair's upholstery or the way a dress falls over a form is rendered in few brushstrokes, but its essence is palpable. This eye for detail also appears in her titles, which emphasize the colors and types of clothing Joffe wears, echoing her more fashion-based work.

Painted at night, Joffe's current self-portraits have a stark, unblinking effect. Minimal in format, they are dense with psychic presence, capturing the brief glint of a passing moment or thought. All have the cool white glow of artificial light, the shades drawn against encroaching darkness. In this quiet, domestic setting Joffe represents herself in various stages of undress, and is most often naked. She sometimes makes multiple versions of the same scene in different sizes, her compositions slightly readjusting; a shift of the eyes or a repositioning of legs suddenly conveying different emotional terrain. These variations conjure questions about perception and, perhaps more importantly, about how one is perceived. Sometimes awkward and exposed, and at others placid and confident, Joffe is unabashed about revealing her body. In pictures with her daughter, she situates herself in a gendered role, the effects of motherhood and age heightened by the juxtaposition of her nude form with that of her young, clothed child. As is evident in these paintings, Joffe's work is not about a cool objectification or idealization of the figure. Instead, it probes beyond representation to shed light on the female experience, and in this way celebrates femininity. The largest of her paintings—six, seven and eight feet tall—confront and overwhelm, belying their seemingly intimate nature. The artist exposes herself—physically and psychologically—on a grand scale, and in this way challenges the viewer to reassess preconceptions about the representation and codification of the female form.

Please join the conversation with #CheimRead on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter via the hashtags #ChantalJoffe.

Jack Pierson: *onthisisland* opens June 25 and remains on view through August 29.

Cheim & Read 547 West 25 Street, New York