

# The approach

Cris Brodahl

*lightyears*

18<sup>th</sup> February – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Preview: Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016, 6 – 9pm

The Approach is pleased to present *lightyears*, an exhibition of new works combining painting and sculptural constructions by Belgian artist Cris Brodahl. Continuing to develop her interest in configurations of fractured beauty that carry undertones of violence and sexuality, the subconscious, love, death and the uncanny, Brodahl presents a series of vibrantly coloured portraits of anonymous female subjects, inspired by commercial photography from a bygone era.

The surfaces of these skillfully rendered paintings become three-dimensional in appearance through the use of trompe-l'oeil, emulating the collaged layering in which the paintings' origins lie. Worked for the first time onto sharply angular shaped grounds, some wall mounted and some freestanding with intricate white wooden backings, the paintings sit ambiguously between traditional portrait painting and disorientating sculptural representations. Interlocking and fragmented painterly planes are constructed by Brodahl with masterly precision. Throughout *lightyears*, the sitter's hair, jewellery and facial features are central to the compositions, alluding to traditional portraiture, where clothing and accessories would provide clues to the sitter's standing in society, but also to modern commercial imagery, where gender often becomes the site of objectification.

While Brodahl continues to explore the hauntological; ideas of the past and the future, bleeding into the paintings' present, she now brings this thematic concern to experiments in three-dimensional form. Where her paintings often veer between Surrealism and Symbolism, photography and painting, these new works also explore the limits of form and structure. The duality of portraiture on the front of the relief and the modernist geometric constructions behind create a recto/verso effect; the backs of the paintings, the otherwise invisible, are given equal aesthetic consideration here.

This duality creates a temporal confusion: times of past and present are placed back to back, as structural supports holding one another up. The title *lightyears* alludes to a notion of timelessness and distance, which can be detected in this body of work. Where the front echoes conventional historical portraiture and boasts a subtle luminosity of colour akin to pre-Raphaelite painting, the reverse makes association to twentieth century modernist architecture. The strength of the works lies in their ability to seek beauty not just from the surface and within, but also from the reverse, and through doing so marks an arresting new direction for Brodahl.

Cris Brodahl (b. 1963, Ghent, Belgium) lives and works in Ghent. She studied at Saint-Lucas Placique Kunsten, Ghent. Selected exhibitions include: *Initials*, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, Belgium (2015); *Somos Libres II: Works from the Mario Testino Collection*, Pinacoteca Gianni e Marella Agnelli, Turin, Italy (2014); *Inner Journeys*, Maison Particulière, Brussels, Belgium (2013); *Biennial of Painting: The Image of Man*, MDD, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2012); *Secret Societies*, Curated by Cristina Ricupero, Alexis Vaillant and Matthias Ulrich, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany (2011); *The Waiting Room*, Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2010); *Cris Brodahl*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA (2010); *Sometimes The Earth Smells Like Heaven*, The Approach W1, London, UK (2009); *Sphnixx*, Modern Art, London, UK (2008); *Cris Brodahl*, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, Belgium (2008); *The Yellow Tree*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, USA (2007)

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*avatar*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
55 7/8 x 40 1/8 x 8 5/8 in.  
(142 x 102 x 22 cm)

*addicted*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
37 3/8 x 29 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.  
(95 x 75 x 11.5 cm)

*marquise*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
41 11/16 x 36 9/16 in.  
(106 x 93 cm)

*faun*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum, wood  
and gesso  
48 13/16 x 27 1/2 in.  
(124 x 70 cm)

*pierrot*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
38 3/16 x 26 3/8 in.  
(97 x 67 cm)

*maudite*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
35 3/8 x 29 7/8 in.  
(90 x 76 cm)

*lightyears*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
24 3/8 x 20 13/16 x 7 13/16 in.  
(62 x 53 x 20 cm)

*poet*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
41 5/16 x 35 3/8 in.  
(105 x 90 cm)

*mother*, 2015

Oil, canvas, aluminum,  
wood and gesso  
78 11/16 x 59 in.  
(200 x 150 cm)