

LYSE LEMIEUX

Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver

She follows a line only to let it run wild: bending, morphing and transgressing itself. This gesture, a constant throughout Lyse Lemieux's practice, erupted into rhythmic colour in "Painted Drawings," a solo exhibition of works that danced between abstraction and figuration, sombre reflection and fantastical delight. Quite simply, they refused to behave. Spread wall-to-wall in the gallery, Lemieux's works intermingled drawing, painting and fabric in haptic fluidity, manifesting an interdisciplinary bleed that liberates categories and teases painting's supposed purity, as if to say: mediums don't sit still, nor should they.

Lemieux is well-known for demonstrating drawing's sculptural, performative and expanded capacity, often transposing it from paper to installation-scale and integrating a wonderful vocabulary of fabric, including industrial wool felt and familiar garments. In "Painted Drawings," she indulged in hybridity, both in content and form. Mediums masquerade as one another: droplets of soft wool behave like painting and squiggles of fabric become drawing; painted naiads perform as fabric cut-outs and drawn hairy legs convey sculptural texture. It's a welcome disorientation of form, a physical in-person encounter that an image cannot capture. Her gathering of naiads, nymphs and other mythical nature spirits conjures a non-human space for sprawling interconnection, where play is the order of the day and beings roam free from the normative categories that box in our world. In *NaiadSexyzone* (2018), eyes and orifices interchange and multiple limbs and mouths merge in hedonist revelry, while the overlapping identities of a Greek sea goddess reverberate in *Thetis* (2018), her heads encircled by tendrils of energy and enlarged hands extending toward us.

Bodies and body parts are abundant, often appearing dismembered or disproportionate, signs of feeling awkward or displaced. In *L'Avenir est Long; Upside Down. Thinking* (2018), two legs extend to different endings: the hairy one to a striped-sock in a kitten heel, and the fleshy one to a head, a possible nod to the absurdity of the cerebral and the potentials of its inversion. Energy bursts from the abdomen of a winged figure in *Red Painting 1* (2019), an open-ended image that can be read as expressing gut intelligence, fertility or trauma. A similar figure reappears in *Salmacis was an Atypical Naiad* (2018), her back turned beside a disconnected phone, which Lemieux links to an early childhood dream of feeling absolutely alone. Other works nudge at the emotions and energies stored within the body, while quieter abstract pieces allow their materiality to convey, and also obscure, inarticulable feelings. In

L'Avenir est Long; A Conversation (2018), a long-nosed figure exudes jagged orange energy to another, whose interior cells bubble agitatedly but remain unexpressed. In *Mon Hiver Chez Toi* (2019), abstract black shapes are misted over by a paper winter fog that is painstakingly sutured with black thread, as though mending a wound.

Much of this recurrent symbology reflects Lemieux's own deeply embodied process. As she described over a summer studio visit, it begins with a material craving, a hunger for a certain colour or texture. Working with the materials themselves unearths associative memories and subconscious sensations. The collaging of seemingly disparate materials is her way of attending to multiple selves. Moving through the entanglements of human experience, Lemieux transposes sensory intuitions and syncopates emotions with a dose of humour-as-resilience. As the parallel poem written by Juliane Okot Bitek for Lemieux's exhibition captures so beautifully: "sometimes I'm awake & I think about paper / other times I think about how your laughter bounces back from the sky / & splinters into shards of light onto the page before me." "Painted Drawings" ignited our sensorial intelligence, luring us into synaesthetic translations that are yearning to be released. —JONI LOW

