

LEA BELOUSSOVITCH

« LE CHANT DES CYGNES »

EN

23.04.22 - 18.06.22

Opening on saturday April 23rd

From April 23rd to June 18th, PARIS-B presents the third solo-show of Léa Belousovitch : "Le Chant des cygnes".

Accused of "corrupting the youth and introducing new divinities" and condemned to death by the city of Athens in 399 BCE, Socrates, locked in his cell, addressed his friends one final time before swallowing poison hemlock: "(...) when they sense the hour of their death approaching, these birds sing their most resounding, most beautiful song; they are filled with joy to go and meet the god they serve. (...) I do not believe that they sing out of sadness: I think, on the contrary, that being the birds of Apollo, they have a prophetic gift and since they foresee the good things that await them in Hades, they sing on that day more joyfully than ever."

In the words of Socrates, as written in Plato's *Phaedon*, which describes the last moments of his life, we find the origin of the expression Swan Song, used to signify a farewell discourse or performance and more generally the most beautiful and/or final accomplishment realized by a person before their death – their final opus, their final wishes, their final words, their final image of who they are, their final vision or gesture. In the figurative sense, the term is employed to indicate that one is about to take leave of the people with whom they have shared a period of time.

Gravitating around this poetic and emotional expression, the exhibition by Léa Belousovitch presents works that relate to one another through notions of the goodbye, of violence imposed by the photographic object, of human vulnerability to the culminating points of our existence, and of our relationship to images representing death and universal suffering, whether they are temporally before, during or after the event. The song in these works may be metaphorically substituted by images, colours, textiles or words.

At the gallery entrance, on a textured, marbled velvet, two large pieces from the series *Perp Walk* theatrically impose two portraits, the subjects of which are hidden under coverings. The *Perp Walk* - the shameful walk of someone who has perpetrated a crime – is a judicial and photographic act, carried out under the constraints of law enforcement officers. It consists of subjecting a suspect or convict (generally in the context of a trial) to the photographers' lenses, making him or her pass in front of them by force and sometimes handcuffed. It is an act in which the subject is made to completely submit to photography, which becomes in itself an accusatory and burdensome pressure. Here, the subjects hide themselves under luxurious fabrics, trying at all costs to preserve their anonymity and hiding their utter shame. The artist drastically re-frames the image – almost to the point of an abstraction – and the format of the printed image transforms the masses into swirls that make us question what we are seeing.

The velvet, a theatrical and attractive fabric, vibrates with the fabric present in the image, as well as with its fabric in the sense of a "skin".

The backbone of Belousovitch's drawing work over the last several years – works on woolen felt made freehand with coloured pencils based on fragments taken from news images – are presented here in two new series.



Perp Walk, Fingers, Print on marbled velvet, 142x173 cm, 2019

The point of departure for *Les Pleureurs*, an ensemble of small format works, is the re-framing by the artist of photographs of tearful faces, which precedes a process of freehand drawing on felt in which she preserves the hues and the general composition of the image. Attacks, shootings, migrations, scenes of public mourning, population displacement... These are so many human tragedies captured by the lenses of international journalists that are composed, selected and then disseminated, and which contribute, despite their initial documentary intention, to the constant visibility of pain. This extreme vulnerability, this moment of maximum emotion originating from an intimate world, is treated with the characteristic blurriness of the artist's drawing practice, which aims to take a distanced, sedating and respectful representation of the figure, allowing the viewer to confront these images without having their gaze or judgement paralyzed by the intrinsic violence of the subject.



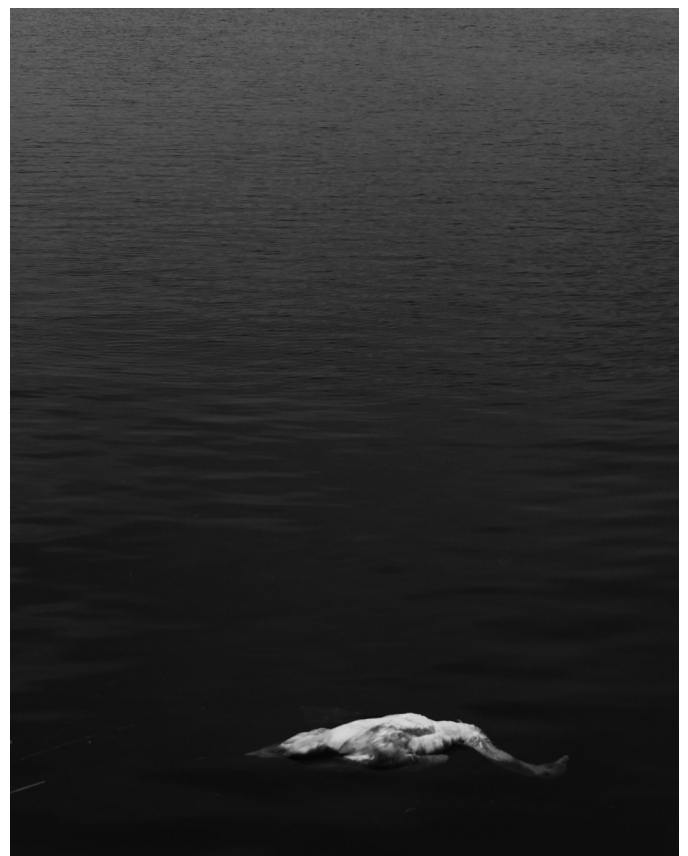
Pleureurs, Ramallah, Palestine, 2 septembre - 2021, Drawing with colored pencil on felt, 35x45 cm, 2022

The series of large format works, *Wrapped Bodies*, borrows from images featuring the bodies – wrapped by means ranging from the meticulous to the improvised or archaic – of people who lost their lives during the pandemic. In these images, the dignity with which the body of the deceased is usually treated has been hampered by necessity, urgency and lack of means or sanitary conditions, and they have produced in our contemporary vision an extreme fear of both death and of the dead themselves. Our inability to recognize the subject of these images creates a state of contemplation, imagination and in some ways doubt as to the veracity of what we are seeing.

From the series entitled *Executed Offenders*, the works Joseph and Richard present the last wishes and words of people sentenced to death in Texas, found on an online database from the Ministry of Criminal Justice that is cold, formless and dehumanized. Hand drawn

with a ballpoint pen, the characters nevertheless betray a manual gesture in the vain attempt to create a “perfect” visual. On these large sheets of white paper, the emptiness and silence of “the moment after” is imprinted with a sense of heaviness, purified by the whiteness, giving physical form through the appearance of a drawing to these words uttered at the culmination of a man's life.

The image that closes the exhibition – a swan on an expanse of black water that seems to stretch out infinitely – once again leaves an ambiguity in our reading of the image, poetically evoking the legend of the swan's final song. But will the remains of such a noble animal ultimately be left to drift, abandoned, after the song has been sung? Are we always able to be attentive to the vulnerability that passes before our eyes through the images that inundate us? Through these bodies, wrapped, curtailed, wounded, constrained and tearful, we see the final images of the “self”, the final abstract images of a trauma, the final words; they all bear witness to a vulnerable existence “that was”, a nebulous destiny after the moment captured on film, and the singing of a final melody.



Le chant du cygne, photography, 40,3 x 52 cm, 2022 (detail)

Born in Paris in 1989, she currently lives and works in Brussels. After receiving a master's degree in drawing from the ENSAV La Cambre in 2014, she was nominated for the 2016 edition of the Prix Révélation Emerige, she is also the winner of the 2018 edition of the Young Talents prize of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. In 2020, she was rewarded by the Prix des partenariats Musée d'art moderne et contemporain Saint Etienne Métropole in France.