

TEMPLON

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ODA JAUNE

HONG KONG GALLERY GUIDE, février 2011

interview



So Quiet by Oda Jaune, Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm, 2009

Oda Jaune Paintings with no stories

Text: Cristina Sanchez Kozyreva

Images (pages 42 to 45):

Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris

Photos : B.Huet/Tutti

Her oils and aquarelles “live a life of their own”; they show merging bodies engaged in sensual fusions, morphing heads and burnt fingers, hybrid creations seeking comfort in liquefying their fleshy members and kissing their soul mates’ feet, faces or sausages. Oda Jaune’s works are described as flirting between surrealism and expressionism; they innocently arouse discomfort, familiar feelings and aesthetic satisfaction. While often referring to an artificial glare, her palette also draws from warm tones and applies uneven lighting to realistically intimate, or creatively transformed, anatomical body parts - set against silky or furry fabrics in dark corners.

Oda Jaune was born Michaela Danowska in Bulgaria in 1979, and studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Academy of Arts) under the late painter Jörg Immendorff, who she eventually married and had a daughter with. She now lives in Paris and is represented by Gallery Daniel Templon. Her works have been exhibited in Germany, Italy and China. Cristina Sanchez Kozyreva caught up with the artist during her second exhibition in Paris called *Once in a Blue Moon* to talk about medium, control, power and the freedom found in the act of painting. ▶

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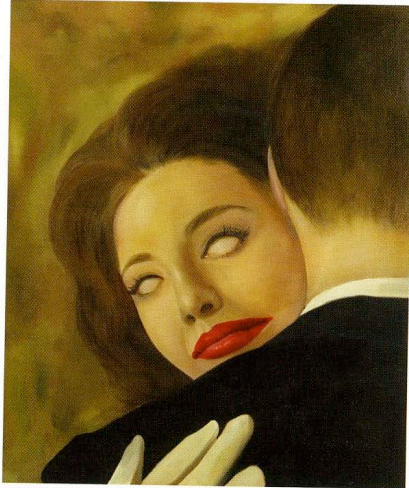
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Lover Ungrateful by Oda Jaune, Oil on canvas, 55 x 44 cm, 2009

Oda was raised in the dusty and crowded city centre of Sofia, but would spend every weekend at her family's house in the Balkan mountains, "with no TV; no toys; where the village was my kingdom and imagination knew no borders". Her father was a graphic designer and an artist, and so is her sister who lives in Germany "it encouraged me to study in Düsseldorf. An international environment, students from everywhere, "the freedom to work" gave Oda the opportunity to do what she liked, exploring her own path in painting without constraints.

Painting - water and oil are Oda Jaune's favoured media "The question of doing something else never came to me; watercolour, ceramic sculpture and oils are enough for me for now - I have so much to express. I find it so natural and fluid, I don't think about colours and materials, it is such an old technique and yet a very free way of creating without making compromises. I like a white canvas, a moment of fear and happiness where everything is possible".

She likes all kind of artists; Mondrian, Modigliani, Louise Bourgeois, Sarah Lucas, Cecily Brown, Tracey Emin, drawings by Sandra

Vasquez de la Horra... She also likes very much Jonathan Meese who is having a show after hers in the same gallery. "I like new media, performance, I just discovered Tino Sehgal's works". Oda was touched and impressed by his latest solo show: scenes played and staged by performers of all ages in the Guggenheim Museum that had been totally emptied of its artworks.

When she begins, she has an idea in mind, but from then things are "very soft and moving". She doesn't construct and draw beforehand, doesn't stick to precise sketches, "many things could change until the end, it grows - stops - grows - develops. And at one point, it doesn't let me do anything else: all that had to be done is done". She works on various paintings at the same time, taking one to two years for completion.



Away by Oda Jaune, Oil on canvas, 195 x 130 cm, 2009

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"What you see is what you see, but what it means to you is another story". Oda Jaune often shares her inspiration found from reading the Banquet of Plato: the Gods felt threatened by men and women – back then creatures of one whole two-headed symbiotic growing body, with four arms and four legs - so they split them up. Ever since, humans are fragmented and in search of their missing halves. But in looking at her paintings Oda Jaune doesn't want to impose her vision, there are no stories, there are no words, only what it means – or doesn't – to each of us. "What makes one happy or complete? Things we love and go back to again and again to fill ourselves: food, film, music or even being pregnant. Often the searching process is painful - like birth can be painful." Indeed in her images, what can at first seem filled with doom and provoking; actually comes with soft corners. Experiencing that incongruity makes one feel alive and in the present.

Oda Jaune speaks of her pieces as if they were her children, her travelling companions or childhood neighbours, "sometimes the painting leads me, sometimes I do, there is a lot of control, and at the same time there is no control [...] this is the first show where I added titles, they are names rather than titles". Since she can name her favourite paintings, like Picasso's Guernica, she thought it would be more convenient to be able to refer to her works when talking about them. "But the story is the one you do, it isn't literature; they aren't illustrations; it is quite abstract".

The notion of control and also power emanates from the canvas, her response to this is that "we gather power from nature. The more someone has power the more they use it, and sometimes against themselves". When painting a series, she isolates herself; avoids books and movies, "of course I have things I have to do, but during that time I am very much inside, and when I finish a series I go back to enjoy-

ing life", a little like carrying a baby to term or a pilgrimage or some other personal trip - and then letting the memories go.

Every painting has its own life, "what you see at certain points in time also evolves, like the seasons" or life before and after taking a photograph.

Particularly for the oil paintings - hidden parts and paths remain under the layered colours. Within the technique there might be some control, for example for the watercolours: the water is floating, the colours grow, and the artist makes some adjustment here and there. But aquarelles remain free while being created, "water and colour like each other so much! And then comes the paper [as a love triangle]".

Oda Jaune develops a language where sensual hints reveal a genuine thirst for life by simply mixing gentle and strong attractive flesh and physical elements - a carrier of purity of the soul within their blown up details.

"There are no limits in art, in normal life there are so many limits; we have so many limits. My paintings are little signs I leave, the aim of every human being is to live forever; I leave little marks, like a little heart sign on a tree". ■



Grace Silika by Oda Jaune, Oil on canvas, 185 x 180 cm, 2010