

Not even in their wildest dreams could Fellini or the masters of Shunga have imagined these bodies made up of arabesques, their lines and contours deliberately traced to flow beyond the frame, their forms contorting between the very boundaries that try to constrain them. Grotesque and naked, these figures seem to revel in their own emptiness, transforming before our very eyes and leaving us dumbfounded by the realisation that we are not entirely one of them.

Once they were human beings, or on the point of becoming human, but now their androgenous nature makes them equally attractive and destabilising. Languid silhouettes often turned upside down, they sometimes hold a flower – perhaps caught in the instant before swallowing, – a yet undigested plant that has bloomed after evading the grasp of Carlotta Bailly-Borg, who gathers them during her physical and mental wanderings. The texts of the books in which the flowers are pressed suffuse the flattened stems and leaves with snippets of text until, having become as delicate as a sheet of tissue paper, they are directly transferred onto the canvas.

These unstable figures, neither completely white nor entirely blue, are set against brightly coloured backgrounds that encourage Bailly-Borg to let herself be surprised. They seem to be involved in moments of ecstasy that are hanging by a thread, orgies that constantly repeat, only to be thwarted allowing their participants to escape and simultaneously slip from our grasp.

But who or what are these silhouettes that have a life of their own, an energy infused by the artist as she draws their contours, her own body standing the test of their bodies and then ours? Anthropomorphism and the plant kingdom merge, ready to dissolve at the very heart of colour and metamorphose from one canvas to the next in order that these intriguing characters, as yet unborn, may multiply.

Others are, on the contrary, well and truly present, true to themselves so many centuries later and all the stranger for that, caught in the fastidious act of reading, writing, chanting or copying. Each copyist has his own flower, a portrait that mirrors the scribe/reader on the eve of the circulation of an infinite

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number of fragments that have been copied or drawn one after the other: illuminated Revelations, psalms and books of hours from time immemorial. And yet here the pages of the caricatured monks are blank and the painted diptych becomes a metaphor for the double-page spread of a book in the making.

And who knows if these funny little men with their naked buttocks and bald heads, may they be good or bad, are not also just about to give substance to something strange, a bizarre parade outside of time and space that is exhibited by their side: the story of a polyphonic dream that unfolds in respectful silence, a respect for these creatures displayed on the facing page.

Marcelline Delbecq

**Carlotta Bailly-Borg** (born in 1984 in Paris), lives and works in Brussels. Carlotta Bailly-Borg graduated from the *École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy* in 2005, then from the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris* in 2010. Her work has been shown in several solo and group exhibitions, including: *Ballon Rouge*, Brussels, BE (2022); *VITRINE*, Basel, CH (2022); *Praz-Delavallade*, Paris, FR (2020); *Michael Horbach Foundation*, Cologne, DE (2020); *Bourse révélations Emerige*, Paris, FR (2019); *Palais de Tokyo*, Paris, FR (2019-2013); *Fondation Ricard*, Paris, FR (2019) or *Karma International*. Los Angeles, CA (2016).

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