

## GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

### PRESS RELEASE

## Mathilde Rosier

### *Impersonal Empire, The Buds*

Mathilde Rosier, *Impersonal Empire, The Buds*  
Kimsooja, *To Breathe – The Flags*

via a. stradella 7  
via a. stradella 1-4

**opening reception tuesday march 13th h. 7pm - 9pm**

**march 14th – may 5th 2018 | tuesday – saturday h. 10 am - 1pm / 3pm - 7.30 pm and by appointment**

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is pleased to announce *Impersonal Empire, The Buds*, Mathilde Rosier's third solo show at the gallery. The exhibition will run concurrent to her participation in Castello di Rivoli's group show *Metamorfosi* (March 5th – June 24th), curated by Chus Martínez, and to her exhibition project *Figures of Climax of the Impersonal Empire* for Fondazione Guido Lodovico Luzzatto, which takes place at the historic home of the famous Milanese scholar and art critic (March 13th – May 6th).

Rosier's research is focused on the creation of suspended environments that allow viewers to lose their perception of time and space, offering an entryway to other possible dimensions of being and existing. Building upon her interests in the psychological and physical experiences of ancient rites and rituals, Rosier works across painting, performance, music and video, evoking a journey between realms that are close to the subconscious, but remain grounded in consciousness.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the French artist produced a video and is showing oil paintings on canvas, building upon a number of themes already present in her work. The human figures, the intimacy of the space, the paintings and the video are all part of a "choral machine" that aims to refine our sensibility towards what we consider real. The intention at the core of these works is to transport us to a space for contemplation, where time is dilated by the encounter with the large canvases on view, a "secluded" and quiet place for meditation. As the artist herself wrote in the text that accompanies the show "one should look at the paintings like in a movie theatre, sitting down, forgetting about their body, forgetting about time."

The video that opens the show stems from a performance recorded a few days before the opening: two waltz dancers wear costumes designed by the artist and dance across the gallery space, repeatedly removing the letters and signs drawn on the floor. The viewers bear witness of a birth, the budding of a new language and thus that of a new reality, yet one that is too young to be codified. The dance also acts as an introduction to the installation of recent paintings of the *Blind Swim* series, in which visionary figures, placed within portals, live in a different world than ours: a fluid and ever-changing atmosphere invites us to meditate and, as Rosier herself stated "when it works, painting, like music, interrupts the incessant functioning of language in the always-agitated mind; it creates a moment of silence, like a landscape after a long walk. It makes us forget our story and our face. It's a kind of joy that makes ones rejoice, hoping to find something deep within us." Language and faces are tools that allow us to communicate and function in our society, but they don't play a role in the deep meaning of existence that defines life. By leaving the faces almost blank and allowing the artwork to be exhibited with the figures upside-down, and thus free from rules and conventions, Rosier invites us to free our "functional sight" to reinstate a "primordial sight."

We can "understand" what we are looking at only once we renounce the desire to interpret it. This attitude is linked to the traditions of Japanese *haiku* and Zen *kōan*, both very close to Rosier's own practice, in which the simplicity and brevity of impressions provides depth and perfection. In this sense, interpretation is considered a descriptive cage that goes against the intention of suspending language.

Mathilde Rosier was born in Paris in 1973. She lives and works in Bourgogne, France. Recent works and performances have been shown at: Fondazione Luzzatto, Milan (2018); Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2018); Der Tank Institut Kunst, Basel (2016); Razem Pamoja Foundation, Krakow (2015); Fiorucci Art Trust, Stroboli (2015); Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2014); Kunstverein Dortmund (2012); kestnergesellschaft Hannover (2012); Kunstpalais, Erlangen (2011); Camden Arts Centre London (2011); Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2010); Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (2010); Serpentine Gallery, London (2009). She will participate in the fifth Biennale Gherdëina, Ortisei, Val Gardena (2018).

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**EXHIBITION TEXT**

**Mathilde Rosier**

***Impersonal Empire, The Buds***

*Mid summer night*  
*Lovers in disguise, say:*  
*Release me from my own company*  
*Disguised, I am deprived of identity*  
*Dispossessed come union*

*Impersonal Empire*  
*Out of the Alphabet*  
*Alphabet swept by the dance script*  
*Swept*  
*Possessed*  
*Dispossessed*  
*Reset*

*Drop off your luggage*  
*All words said*  
*Fall in a hole*  
*Forgotten they stay*  
*Happy like worms*

The only fragment of life that is unforgettable is that which goes without narration, it is the feeling of mere existence that brings us closer to all living things, animals and plants combined. It is the impersonal realm, the permanent budding.

I spent a lot of time elsewhere. I escaped a lot. Not necessarily to flee, but to better understand, with distance. I saw other things, different people. Those who live outside of this society. So I traveled, I shared lifestyles, I participated in activities radically different to those done here.

But I also stayed at a house in a rural area where Claude Levi Strauss also had his home and lived his final years. He said that human society there was as interesting as in that of the Amazon. Perhaps he thought so because ambition and competitiveness are not so recognized there. This is a form of resistance to the general order of the world. To be marginalized by fate and by choice.

Those who live on the margins are transparent, as they do not take part to the spectacle, to the society of spectacle. Therefore they have no mask, and no Persona. As a matter of fact, faces are social masks, and those who live on the margins have no faces; nevertheless they exist, and they exist intensely.

The experience of existing without the constant burden of an identity is a universal temptation, for kings and for crowds, a festive attempt through masquerades, carnivals and ceremonies, on each continent and in every age.

Blurring the face is like scrambling language; this is also practiced in ritual festivals where cacophony is involved. The face is an alphabet; it is like language, which seems to differentiate us from animals, and give us a singularity. However, the human exclusivity of language and faces is challenged by science.

Evidently, animals also have a language and a face, but what is even more interesting, what the knowledge we now have on the animal and vegetal kingdoms reveals to us, is that there is something beyond the face and language, and not only something below. For if a tree or an animal have a language and a face, they do not base their perception of existence on their identification with a face or a language. The language and the face are merely tools that allow for communication and provide functionality to life in society. This is already a lot, but they do not intervene in the deep sense of existence that defines living. The feeling of being alive is the impulse that makes germs germinate, or cells "cellulate." It is a form of universal and impersonal enthusiasm.

Honoré de Balzac, in *Le chef oeuvre inconnu (The Unknown Masterpiece)*, described the impossibility of painting the singular traits of true life; the true face always escapes representation. It is "unrepresentable," its real presence is thus never represented.

To question face and language is therefore also to question painting, in its social function and its ability or inability to portray the living, the budding. This is what traditional Chinese painting calls "the breath."

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The painterly style is also a costume. Here it is a mixture of Caribbean and Latin American influences, but if it were related to an era, it would be linked to late Renaissance, because of Shakespeare and Raphael. It was a glorious time (Raphael) and yet already a worrisome one (Shakespeare), daunting for the consequences of its discoveries, a mix of joy and lucidity.

And if there is indeed an ontology of painting, it cannot be perceived just like that, standing up, for a minute. One should look at the paintings like in a movie theatre, sitting down, forgetting about their body, forgetting about time, not doing anything other than looking at them, and not thinking about the rest. When it works, painting, like music, interrupts the incessant functioning of language in the always-agitated mind; it creates a moment of silence, like a landscape after a long walk. It makes us forget our story and our face. It's a kind of joy that makes ones rejoice, hoping to find something deep within us.

A "filmed ballet" shot in the gallery space a few days before the exhibition's opening functions as an introduction to an installation of large paintings.

— Mathilde Rosier

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