

CATHERINE BALET • MOODS IN A ROOM

Catherine Balet does it again! After the success of her last series *"Looking for the Masters in Ricardo's Golden Shoes"* in which she revisited the history of photography, Catherine Balet returns to her first love, and pays tribute to her own past. Through a series she has been working on for nearly twenty years, the artist calls for a pictorial practice abandoned at the end of the 1990s and gives rise to unclassifiable cubist compositions, playing with transparencies and surrealist collages made from photographic images.

In the manner of a painter, though thanks to a palette of digital tools this time, Catherine Balet works on her own canvases. The images she collects from her personal archives - family or intimate photographs - or from the Internet, nurture her imagination and become the ferment of a multi-faceted work. Painting meets photography, and the artist invites men, women, children, dogs and everyday objects to come together in the same setting, disturbing the viewer's gaze as he or she seeks to unravel the intertwining of a story being written.

Catherine Balet depicts in these picture-paintings some kind of hallucinatory closed doors scenes from which her characters do not seem to be able to escape. Isolated, facing themselves or prisoners of their screens, these hieratic figures evolve in a contemporary world, a world of modernity and technology. Yet our eyes detect here and there reminiscences of the past. Time is suspended. Men and women, the destiny of whom is quite uncertain, seem lost in the spaces in which they evolve. They look like they were ghosts acting in a film, a play or posing for a painting. There, in a form of unreality, where small scenes of our everyday life are played out, those who were thought to be passers-by gradually turn into real actors, witnessing to our lives.

In her gesture of accumulation, Catherine Balet has been building for years the successive layers of a memory sedimentation, a palimpsest, drawing references to the great movements of painting from her overactive unconscious nourished by the history of art. Hockney, Ingres, Bacon, Manet, Monory, and so many others invite themselves to her table, interacting with the work in progress. Yet the artist deliberately freed herself from the great masters and fed on many other materials. And it is indeed in this overflowing imagination, in this irrepressible desire to express the world around her, that Catherine Balet reveals our desires, fantasies and fears in the open and claims in an artistic posture at crossroads, a great freedom of expression, embracing the possibilities of creation with its ever-expanding limits.

Fannie Escoulen
Curator of the exhibition