

**galerie laurent godin**

**CAMILA OLIVEIRA FAIRCLOUGH**

*Venez comme vous êtes*

**Opening, Sunday January 24th, 12 - 6pm**

Exhibition : January 26th- March 13th, 2021  
Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 6pmh

Born in 1979 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Camila Oliveira Fairclough lives and works in Paris. Her work was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at ESAD in Amiens (2020) and she participated in the group exhibition Points de Rencontres at the Center Pompidou in Paris (2019). On the occasion of the latter, a catalog was published under the direction of Frédéric Paul. She has notably exhibited at the FRAC Pays de la Loire (2020), at the FRAC Nouvelle Aquitaine (2020), at the Art Museum of the province of Hainaut in Belgium (2020), at the FRAC Normandie-Rouen (2018), at the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean in Luxembourg, at CREDAC (2019), MuCEM (2017) and FRAC Ile de France (2016). Her work is present in the collections of the Center Pompidou, the CNAP, and in several FRAC: Ile de France, Bretagne, Alsace, Normandie-Rouen.



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## CAMILA OLIVEIRA FAIRCLOUGH

### *Venez comme vous êtes*

Frank Ocean seems to be a singer particularly appreciated by this category of fans who turn the slightest phrase of their idol into a quote. The kind of quote that can then be found on google image, in a wallpaper aesthetic. One of them says: «when you're happy, you enjoy the music, but when you're sad, you understand the lyrics». One could apply this maxim to the work of Camila Oliveira Fairclough, translating music as 'painting' - and lyrics as 'words'. And thus compare the impact of her paintings with the effect produced by the songs.

Like Frank Ocean's words, Camila O.F.'s works provoke great impulses of appropriation. Even before seeing her paintings in exhibitions, one can already observe this phenomenon in the emojis-filled reactions to her instagram posts. Emojis have not replaced our emotions, but the words that were used to express them. This withdrawal of language in favour of a more direct and childlike (or infantile) mode of expression is particularly interesting in the case of an artist who seems to place a fairly similar value on words and images. To learn how to read Camila O.F.'s paintings, one could therefore add to the letters of the alphabet the images she uses - just as to our comments on the internet we can add smiles, flames, hearts or applause (without forgetting their negative equivalents).

One can love or hate a painting at first glance; one can also understand it more deeply. If Camila Oliveira Fairclough's paintings were people, they would at first seem a little familiar in the way they speak to us. We might feel like putting a slight distance between them and us, to signify that we do not yet know each other well enough. But we should give these paintings a little more time, because Camila O.F. doesn't seem to judge her own works with conventional criteria, aesthetic criteria that would allow us to separate the good paintings from the bad ones, but rather with the attitude of someone who would try to accept people as they are. The realm of literality thus extends to the criticism of value judgements: an exhibition is a meeting

of paintings that have been made and are as they are. Or as the French slogan of McDonald's (and the song of Nirvana) says - who have come as they are.

Under the entrance sign to the city of Aberdeen (USA), birthplace of Kurt Cobain, is the sentence «come as you are». It is a tribute to the eponymous song of the band Nirvana written by Cobain. For several years now, this phrase, translated literally into French as «come as you are», has also been the slogan of McDonald's restaurants in France. Between the words of the song, its interpretation as a welcome message, then its reduction to an advertising concept, what happened?

Words are mercenaries and they have no honour. I recently discovered that there was a clothing shop in Paris for young men from good families but relatively trendy anyway (I don't know if this social category exists but you know what I mean), whose name seems a provocation to all those to whom the brand is not addressed: Commune de Paris 1871. In the same vein, I remember a discussion with the son of my gallery owner, who was six years old at the time: he didn't understand, when I said I was renting my studio and flat, that I was the one giving money to the landlord. I then realised that the verb «to rent» didn't have the same meaning depending on whether you are on the side of the person who gives the money or the side of the person who receives it.

Sometimes words are so crazy that the same sentence can mean two opposite things. In fact, the meaning simply goes to the highest bidder, who then takes away the meaning. If C.O.F. often uses language in her works, it is because it takes us into this hinge zone between image and painting, meaning and nonsense. As the painter Walter Swennen explains in an interview, a word written on a painting tends to lose its meaning, to empty itself of its substance, to become a pictorial element in its own right. It is the same process that takes place in song, between music and lyrics: the words acquire an autonomy that makes them in a way free of rights. Difficult to interpret, easy to appropriate.

Because the painting is an object that belongs to everyone. It can be found in

museums, fairs and galleries, but also in restaurants and hairdressers. What is practical with the painting, said Olivier Mosset, is that we don't need to say that it is art. Before any value judgement, a canvas stretched on a stretcher is art, because it is for this purpose that this object was invented (the painting is a ready-made, just like the sugar sachets, napkins or sandwich wrappers that Camila sends directly to the framer). So perhaps the painting is an old-fashioned, commercial and conventional object, but perhaps this convention is the bond shared by all that allows it not to be placed immediately above its viewer.

There is something popular (in the sense of the songs that play on the radio) in Camila O.F.'s painting. Something of the love song, that old-fashioned genre that speaks to us only when we are going through periods of sentimental setbacks. Perhaps the magic of song comes from its ability to revive the commonplace, and sometimes to remind us that we are alive. As Frank Ocean says, when we are happy, we enjoy the music, but when we are sad, we understand the lyrics, and we can feel that a song tells our story - that it was written for us. So take a good look. Some of Camila Oliveira Fairclough's paintings were painted for me. Others have been painted for you. You'll soon find out which ones.

Hugo Pernet, december 2020