

HELL YES, IT'S AGATHE DE BAILLIENCOURT

Amelia Abdullahtsani

I first had the pleasure of stepping into Agathe's world when I visited her temporary working space in New York City during her last long stay. Against the backdrop of the pristine white walls were the luminescent paintings pulsating with shimmering colors: depths and splashes of fluorescent pink, blue, white, yellow and black, with scribbles spelling "Je m'en fous" ("I don't care") and "Hell Yes" permeating throughout the canvas. Inspired by the vibrancy of places like New York or Berlin, Agathe's paintings reveal her to be a dynamic painter, drawing her energy from contemporary metropolitan life. Stepping into her studio is like stepping into the mind of the artist itself.

All those paintings back then were still very abstract, though some of them were already showing emerging signs of vague space, where the dynamics of the city and the artist's sense of freedom became clearly visible. Mainly color has been used as construction element to define space, while bit by bit, bold lines were tenuously evolving towards architectural perspectives. I am very excited to see the direction in which Agathe is now heading, where she clearly and freely defines her own, almost utopian territory.

Agathe's paintings celebrate the individual in a changing society. The seemingly disjointed marks that we find on them are a reflection of the contradictions and difficulties she encounters as an individual searching for an all-out liberation. Agathe's deliberate use of any material available investigates directly into the human condition of being open-minded and entangled at the same time. And she emotes this inquiry and its findings directly and uncompromisingly onto the canvas.

I cannot escape from Agathe's paintings. She takes me to a different plane that transcends definitions. She defies labels. It is precisely these categorizations that she rejects. Forget the hype of portraiture. Throw away still lifes and landscapes. And certainly forget the label Abstract Expressionism.

To throw overboard all your knowledge and ways of thinking and to completely free yourself from what you've learned is a very difficult, if not a painful and an impossible task, which demands a lot of strength and character. It demands a willingness to destroy, and this provides her with a truly contemporary ground for creativity, which is to be open to something really new. I think it is for exactly this reason that we find "Je m'en fous" all over

her work: it is an ever present, ever repeated reminder to hold on to an ideal.

Instead of thinking of categories, think of your own potentialities and perspective of life. Not only during your encounter with Agathe's paintings, but also when her vibrancy breaches the limits of the canvas and bursts over its edge. Not content to stay within the confines of painting, Agathe's marks have already shot past the two-dimensional realm onto the street and into the light. Through her three-dimensional installations, she is following the world beyond the white cube and the studio. Here, we are taken unprotected. This element now distinctly repercuts back into her work on canvas and paper.

I cannot wait to continue the journey with her, where she takes us further into the irreconcilably dialectical explorations of being Agathe de Baillencourt.

Amelia Abdullahtsani has been working in the art world for nearly ten years, most recently as director of the Stellan Holm Gallery. In addition to working closely with collectors and artists, she curated exhibitions that were reviewed by The New York Times and the Village Voice. She studied architecture at the National University of Singapore before receiving a degree in art history from Columbia University.

Amelia is co-founder of Lu Magnus, a salon-style gallery that seeks to expand upon the functions of a traditional art gallery: an incubator for cross-collaborations between artists of different mediums and art forms. The founders' dedication to maintaining a rigorous program encourages a different way of interacting with art, instilling the love of art and collecting through an active outreach program that educates and engages collectors and art lovers alike.