

When I Will Be Little

With style and mark, Francoise Pétrovitch surprises us with the power of her images of contemporary icons. The series of drawings, *Supporters*, *Présentation*, *Tenir Debout*, *Poupées*, *Twins*, *Masculin/Féminin*, are drawn with wash on large paper. The raw paper, simultaneously strong yet inert, is often left partially untouched in the drawings; the blank spaces better reveal the figure. Where the artist does draw she does so lightly with a sparse colour pallet. This restraint does not come at the cost of complexity; the flood of colours contains many nuances. Some parts of the drawings are vague and messy while others are clean and precise. The lightness of her touch diffuses and enlivens the subject of the drawing, regardless of whether the mood is serene or not.

In *Féminin/Masculin* the children have an ethereal silhouette that at some points feel fragile and vulnerable and yet at other points seem fierce and insolent. The uncertainty of their mood accentuates the ambiguity of their age. All of Pétrovitch's drawings share this instability. According to the philosopher Clément Rosset this uncertainty can be attributed to an unresolved difference between a real double or a simple shadow, "the double is without a doubt the major symptom of the refusal of the real and the principle factor in the creation of illusion; but on the other hand there exist doubles that guarantee something's authenticity: take for example a woman who doesn't have shadows, reflection, or an echo." To cite Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the narcissist looks at his reflection in the water and realises that it is not just his image but himself.

This uncertainty in person is mirrored in Pétrovitch's colour pallet. The artist employs an array of unnatural blues, greens and greys. Pétrovitch explains this choice: "it made me think of the linings of clothing, the satins that are close to our skin, colours that we cannot easily define. We might be able to turn the clothes inside out, but we don't. These are the colours that others do not see, between our skin and our clothes."

The reference to the body, that which we can touch, that which is simple, is a constant in the work of Francoise Pétrovitch.

- Barbara Forest

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