

ALMINE RECH

Feeling of Light

Apr 19 — May 27, 2023 | Brussels

The most famous myth about the birth of painting is probably the one told by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* c. 75 AD: the story of Dibutade's daughter, the young woman who drew the outline of her lover's shadow in charcoal on the wall of her house before he left for a long journey, capturing his silhouette to give his presence the illusion of eternity. This woman, whose first name Pliny omits to mention, was the first painter in history. Kora of Sicyon—her actual name—created painting as an antidote to absence and disappearance, and invented an art whose necessity has been continually affirmed ever since.

It is to this woman that we owe the invention of representation, the form we give to the impossibility of forgetting. Kora of Sicyon thus made it possible to offer an ultimate attention, a final light to an image before it disappears, this famous “feeling of light” of which the poet and painter Etel Adnan speaks. All the artists, historical and contemporary, gathered and invited by Almine Rech for this exhibition have a shared dedication to that particular light produced by a work of art. This light that allows us to imagine other worlds, spaces and landscapes that are more free, more ambiguous, more daring and fluid than those we know, places where human and non-human beings meet to write new stories and forge new relationships. This light that moves towards the most vulnerable, the most overlooked, the least recognized, to bring them, finally, out of the shadows. A light that lingers on these scenes of contemporary society and captures what it does to us, with its deification of consumption, production, and accumulation. A light that turns to the female body and what is done to it, from its hypersexualization to a possible liberation from archetypes, emphasizing a vision of a powerful woman, in control of her body. Female beauty is here granted the leisure to be distant, indifferent, unusual, and subversive. This freedom can also be expressed through the self-portrait. Many works embrace humor as an emancipatory territory, in which laughter, the grotesque, the caricatural, or the monstrous transform the frameworks of our perceptions.

The subject of innocence as it has been expressed throughout the history of art, and in particular through the motif of the still life, is invoked here and offered new properties, celebrating the power of the beings who inhabit our daily lives, their delicate and so often unnoticed presence. Finally, it is possible that this light lands on a still unknown language, traces whose history has not yet been deciphered. As if our signs and languages weren't convincing enough to express the infinite subtlety of the impressions and emotions that inhabit the living. The exhibition “Feeling of light” illuminates a certain state of our world, constantly expanded and reinvented by the energy of the women who create it, ever since Kora of Sicyon first shed light on it.

- Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel