



PORTRAIT of an ARTIST

Claire TABOURET

By FABIEN FRYNS

On visiting Claire Tabouret's 400sqm studio in Frogtown, Los Angeles, one certainly gets the impression that she is one busy artist. She has had more than 30 solo or group shows in galleries, museums and institutions around the world since the start of 2015. In the summer of 2017

alone, she had six projects underway, the most notable of which were the Villa Medici show in Rome she shared with Yoko Ono entitled *One Day I Broke a Mirror*, and the four-week residency she took up at the 17th-century Château de Fabrègues, Haut-Var, Provence (owned by the interior designer and collector Pierre Yovanovitch), where the resulting monumental fresco is composed of 85 life-sized portraits of children, a recurrent theme in her work.

Born in France in 1981, Tabouret graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2006 and moved to LA in 2015 amid a strong comeback for figurative painting. Her LA debut, *Eclipse*, was at Night Gallery earlier this year and led to one of her works joining the LACMA.

In Europe, she is represented by Bugada & Cargnel Gallery in Paris. Her first exhibition there, *Les Débutantes*, consisted of nine large-scale paintings, inspired by the annual Debutante Ball in Paris. In these visually seductive works, Tabouret's signature style comes across through frontal crowds of fashionable adolescents, at once calm and serene, lucid and intense. More recent portraits, of young girls with smeared makeup based on photographs and magazine clips, recall Elizabeth Peyton's early paintings, such as the Kurt Cobain series: "Beautiful in a slightly awkward, self-effacing way," according to Roberta Smith, who commented on Peyton's tribute to the rock star in 1995.

Tabouret paints in two steps. The artist explained in an interview with *Flaunt* magazine, "First, I paint a portrait of a child—nice and tidy. Then I cover it with makeup as... a child's first primitive gesture related to painting. The makeup is about painting, but also about wearing a mask. Makeup, when it is not neatly applied, can be disturbing, and evoke madness, or brutality."

At the time of writing, Tabouret is working on her upcoming solo show at the Yuz Museum in Shanghai. Her new works are inspired by a piece of chamber music by Olivier Messiaen, composed in a prison camp during the Second World War after the Frenchman managed to obtain paper and a small pencil from a sympathetic guard. The work was created in difficult conditions, and played for the first time for the camp's prisoners. "The quadriptych I will paint... is about this special relation to time, a magic time," she says. "It's one of the most ambitious subjects for an artist I think. A ray of light, music, a painting; sometimes these can make time disappear. It's a strong and beautiful experience. I think that's what art should be about: the end of time." □

Claire Tabouret, photographed on July 20, 2017, at her studio in Frogtown, Los Angeles