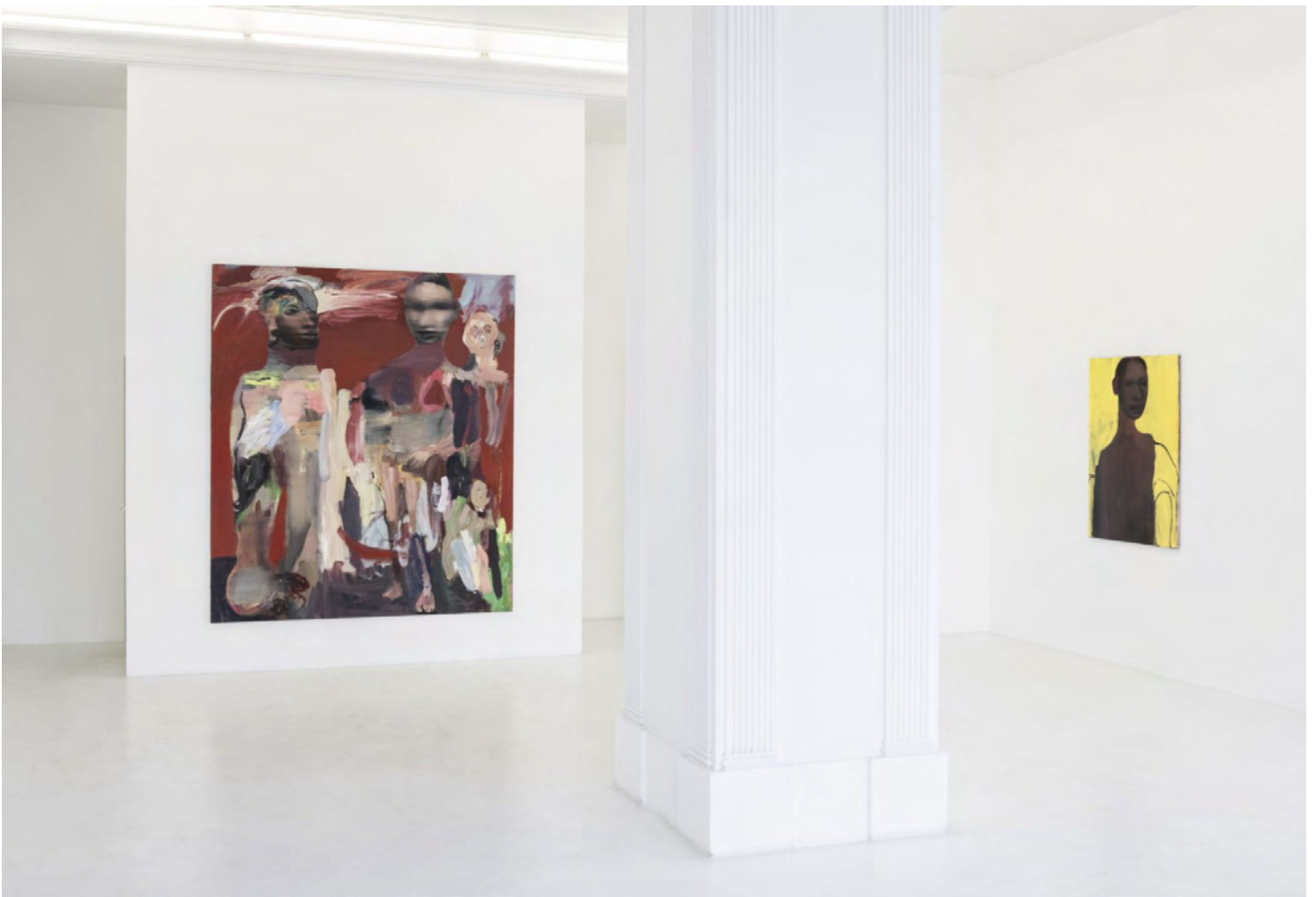


Chaos has reigned lately: George Rouy's "Shit Mirror" at Peres Projects

REVIEW

4. April 2022 • Text by Alexandra Karg

"Shit Mirror", is the cryptic title of a new exhibition at Peres Projects in Berlin, which features large-scale works by the British artist George Rouy. The figurative paintings mark a development in the artist's practice - from silent figuration to a chaotic inner life.



The young British artist has devoted himself to figuration. Figure-like shapes that were once whole figures, distorted features that were once faces, and abstracted limbs that once formed a body - these elements form the foundation of George Rouy's paintings.

George Rouy's second solo exhibition "Shit Mirror" at the Berlin gallery shows not only new works but also a new direction for the artist. Whereas in his earlier works he chose clearer contours, a more restrained style with deeper colours, where his figures, with their clumsy, elongated limbs, clearly had recognisable faces, but now blurriness, bright colours and chaos prevail on the canvas.

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A total of eight of these latest paintings are spread across the spacious gallery, whose huge windows flood the space with daylight. While the large windows supposedly reveal everything to the outside, a clever hanging on the inside opens up an exciting world: inside, an exciting game of seeing and not seeing unfolds. The walls and columns of the gallery direct and break the visual axes. This facilitates both an overview and concentration on the individual works.



“Future Proof” (2022) hangs prominently on the west axis of the gallery. The work at first slowly draws the onlooker towards it and then completely absorbs the viewer. The painting shows a serene scene that is typical of Rouy: an ensemble of four figures, three standing in the background, one lying in the foreground. The bodies of the two figures in the upper left plane are recognisable as individuals, but their heads are fused together. In the painting, a moment of distortion and abstraction unlocks the exhibition for the viewers, which can be observed throughout the entire show.

The themes of Rouy’s large-format paintings - some are 2.30 x 2.10 metres in size - oscillate between figuration and abstract expressionism. Through colour and style, bodies are both drawn and broken. Their limbs stand out on the canvas as independent structures, while the faces, regularly drawn beyond recognition, blur together. The naked eye is hardly able to make out the blurring of the facial features as something clear. This becomes particularly apparent when a phone camera is pointed at the work and the automatic focus of the camera is sharpened - focusing more than the eye itself can.

When visiting the exhibition, it is not clear what its rebellious title “Shit Mirror” refers to. Is it a quote from the

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eponymous song by the band Nine Inch Nails? The rocking sound of the song could be a fitting reference to the chaotic lines and deconstruction of the figures in Rouy's most recent works. There are moments of punk, which appear in the brushwork and choice of colours of the paintings.



If you get close enough to the multicoloured paintings of the London based artist, you can see the rough brushstrokes, in some places possibly even made by a palette knife, and other unevennesses on the canvas. This suggests that the artist's body has become enscribed in the work through stronger movement and unrestrained lines in his paintings. There is an impression of distance, yet a feeling of closeness and intimacy with the work and with the artist himself.

Rouy's second solo exhibition "Shit Mirror" at Peres Projects in Berlin is promising testimony to the artistic development of the young painter. The works on show are complex and multi-layered, clearly indicating a shift from the past through to the present. It is a change from silent figuration to chaotic inwardness. And what's more: in this colourful chaos, a promising future is emerging.