



VALÉRIE BELIN

PAINTED LADIES

2 March – 31 March 2018

Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York is pleased to announce an exhibition of Valérie Belin's most recent series, *Painted Ladies*, for the artist's fourth exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition of eight large-scale black-and-white photographs will be on view 2 – 31 March 2018.

Over the past two decades, Valérie Belin has created a body of work that challenges and manipulates the indexical nature of the photographic surface to explore ideas of beauty, artifice, and illusion. *Painted Ladies* continues Belin's fascination with the human body as a powerful vessel for abstraction and projected meaning. Inspired by early twentieth-century expressionist painters, Belin collaborated with make-up artist Isamaya Ffrench to paint models with various brushes in the manner of initiatory tribal rituals. These brushes lend their names to the individual titles of the works, such as *Lady Round Brush*, *Lady Pastel*, and *Lady Inpainting*, and also mirror the equivalent digital retouching tools found in the image-processing software that Belin employs.

Belin has stated that her work originates from painting. In these works, the models' faces are metamorphosized and reduced to canvas-like surfaces, whose expressions have been assigned and actualized by the artist. The pictorial quality of each image, abstracted beyond portraiture, is created by the painterly interventions on the models before the photograph is taken and the digital processing of the images after the photography occurs. This interrogation regarding the nature of the image, the process involved, and what the viewer is actually looking at, creates a sense of uncertainty that questions the power of surface as a signifier. The affected stylization of Belin's subjects carries a conspicuous veneer of artificiality that mirrors our culture's mainstream acceptance of staged and hyper-edited images as reality. Presenting these meta-clichés in a larger-than life scale, the series reframes the recurring questions of the relations between photography and painting, figuration and abstraction, and reality and fiction.

Valérie Belin (b. 1964, Boulogne-Billancourt, France) has exhibited extensively both domestically and abroad. One-person exhibitions of the artist's work have been held at the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, Bordeaux (2017-2018); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow (2013); Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA (2009); Musée d'Orsay, Paris (2008); Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris (2008); and Huis Marseille, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2007) among others. In 2017, the artist's first retrospective in Asia travelled to Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, Beijing; Shanghai Center of Photography; and the Chengdu Museum, China. Work by the artist is included in museum collections worldwide, including Centre

EDWYNN HOUK GALLERY

Georges Pompidou, Paris; Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Kunsthaus Zürich; Los Angeles County Museum; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Belin was the recipient of the Prix Pictet in 2015. In 2017, she was made an officer of France's Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Belin lives and works in Paris.