

Claire Tabouret – Yuz Museum Intro

The Yuz Museum will present Claire Tabouret's "The Dance of Icarus" from November 12, 2017 to January 21, 2018.

In the atrium of the Yuz Museum, suspended above the visitor, Claire Tabouret presents her most monumental works to date. Across four massive panels, a larger-than-life figure spins, weightlessly dancing across canvases washed in vibrant color. Rhythmically rising and falling, the figure is captured in a dream-like trance, frozen in time but in a state of perpetual motion. He animates the atrium as he ushers the viewer from one canvas to the next in a circle around the room, mimicking his gesture.

The Dance of Icarus marks a departure from Tabouret's stately posed portraits toward images of dynamism and spontaneity. Her brushwork and sprayed-on paint leave traces of frenetic action. The paint splashes about, streaks upward, swirls around in lyrical gestures. The vivid colors that have typically flickered through the background of Tabouret's paintings here appear in the foreground, creating a luminous fog out of which her dancer emerges.

The *Circle Dance* paintings in the exhibition present more figures caught in motion, this time children who hold hands in a ring as they frolic to unheard music. Groups of children frequently appear in Tabouret's paintings, often with a preternatural seriousness about them. Even here, caught in a moment of communal merriment, the subjects wear expressions of gentle repose, old beyond their years. The work suggests the cyclical nature of life, fleeting and eternal.

Alongside the paintings, Tabouret presents a series of thirty monoprints that served as studies for *The Dance of Icarus*. Some of these depict the same twirling dancer who graces the atrium in a variety of color schemes and techniques, evoking dramatically different moods from one to the next. Others continue her exploration of female portraiture in a series known as the *Makeup* portraits. Here women's faces are distorted by dramatic smears of color: lipstick splashes violently beyond the outlines of the mouth, suggesting blood and questioning the innocence of the ubiquitous ritual of cosmetics. Tabouret draws a comparison between the elevated paint on the canvas to the more mundane painting of the face, and color becomes an instrument of oppression. The bold pairings in these monoprints – neons paired with muddy grays and browns – push this investigation even further, washing out the women's faces to the point that they are rendered nearly featureless. Nevertheless, we detect unmistakable strength in the expressions of the subjects, turning these images into transgressive declarations of agency.

Tabouret's figurative works strongly recall the foundational themes of nineteenth-century Romanticism with an emphasis on the individual and emotion. This school of thought advocates the ability of aesthetic experiences to conjure profound and perhaps otherwise untapped depths of humanity. But while these paintings recall Romanticism, they also question and undermine its ethos. The individual disappears in Tabouret's paintings, figuratively as her subjects become emotionally ambiguous and enigmatic, and literally as they bleed into their backgrounds.