

## Jackie P.

Lots of stories could be told about Jacqueline Peeters. One of them could be about how many years ago, in the Netherlands, she embarked on a first career as an artist and was awarded the Royal Prize for Painting. She then moved to Brussels, but around 2000 she chose to focus on a career as a media analyst and on her family. Some fifteen years later, from her square farmstead near Geraardsbergen, the paintbrushes enticed her once again and through social media she now reaches a new audience.

Though her new work doesn't take a radical leave from her earlier paintings, she chose to overpaint a significant number of her old canvases. Not from a desire to delete something, but rather as a second wind. The romanticism of the past is entirely lost on Peeters—she seeks the here and now. Because of this method, black and white are prominent colours in her palette. The hidden layers of paint add a tangible – and sometimes nearly visible – dimension. Occasionally there is a literal glimpse of what is underneath: on the paintings with windows, or where she uses texts, titles or strips of canvas from earlier works.

Another narrative could be about how, as the child of a poet and a painter, Peeters always knew she wanted to draw and paint. Text plays an important role in her work as well. It is no coincidence that she sometimes uses pairs of words, joined by 'and' or 'or', like search terms can be connected by media analysts in online search queries. Sometimes words and names—in sentences, partial phrases, lists or family trees—are painted directly on the canvas; sometimes they are written on a scrap of paper that is sewn onto the painting.

There could also exist a narrative about how Jacqueline Peeters often plays with her own name—a name that sounds familiar, but that does not stand out. 'With this name, you can't become famous,' one would be inclined to think. When she lived in Brussels in the rue de Parme, she reflected that she should have been born Madame de Parme, now living in the rue Peeters. Occasionally, she uses a stamp with the text 'The Estate of Madame de Parme' (for of course, deceased artists appeal more to the imagination than living ones).

In a work from 2021, she creates a fictional exhibition, which on the canvas materializes as a sort of round dance of names, with other artists called Jacqueline. In other works, she plays with the wives or muses of famous men with the same name (think of Picasso's wife or Jacqueline Kennedy, who became known in her second marriage as Jackie O.). She thus creates a fictitious network for herself, from fellow artists to presidents' wives and even French chansonniers: on a large, red canvas, she features on an imaginary stage next to Jacques Dutronc. Together they are singing his song *Le plus difficile*.

Finally, there could also be a story about Jacqueline Peeters, the artist who in her paintings playfully criticizes the mechanisms of the art world. From her herringbone floors to her price lists and *Unsold Paintings*, the artist seems to mock the commercial aspects of art, especially the way artistic credibility seems to depend on it. Though there is definitely an element of criticism, rebellion is not what she aspires. For her, it is about a sense of playfulness, a wink, a nuance, a question that need not be answered, yet must be raised.

All these stories are true, but not in a univocal or absolute manner. They all constitute a possible reading of Jacqueline Peeters' work. The artist plays with all these narratives, explores them, only to disregard them at the right time. Surreptitiously and gracefully, with a delightful sense of relativism, she picks apart all roles that could be imposed on her. In all anonymity—all the anonymity her name can possibly convey—she perpetuates a unique status for herself with an oeuvre that breathes both natural flair and artistic urgency. The glamorous and globally beloved Jackie O. may have perfectly coincided (that is, for the public) with the role ascribed to her, yet her fellow-Jacqueline transcends this in every possible way. On to the next icon: Jackie P.

**Tamara Beheydt, January 2023**

Translated by Dirk Verbiest