

Press Release

Sylvie Fleury Frankie Goes to Hollywood

10 June – 15 July 2023

Opening 9 June, 6 – 9 pm

“Welcome to the Pleasuredome” was the 1984 debut album of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, the British band whose name self-ironically evoked the beginnings of Frank Sinatra’s career in the American dream factory. Sylvie Fleury’s new show at Karma International, a gallery whose name merged the first letters of its two female founders’ first names into a karmic destiny, is neither a tribute to the band, nor to the singer. It is not an homage to the stellar cast of men who made the American minimal art, and neither it is a dismissal of their art. Fleury drops fake eyelashes, quite literally casting a glance on Carl’s floor piece; she has models wearing stilettos walk on Carl’s floor; she hangs clothes, arranges sundry micro-libraries of found books (including an obsolete collection of short stories “Reading for Men” and a catalogue of Anne Truitt, one of three women in the cast of forty-three artists of the iconic 1966 exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York), and sets up tiny architectural models built of lipstick tubes and makeup boxes on top of Sol’s cubes, taking them quite literally as furniture; she scratches, bends and stains the sheets of painted metal gently crashing a car into them (“today cars are all plastic,” Fleury said with some contempt)—perhaps thinking of John, or Andy, or Crash Test Dummies, about all of them, none of them, just for a while, or not at all.

There is a lightness in the feeling of melancholy pervading the exhibition, with a twist of irony, and just a tiny drop of cynicism. This cocktail evades categorizations as “appropriation art” (boring), critique of the male-dominated art and architecture world (that once was), or feminist reclaiming of the tools and materials of art. Art-as-commodity, happily colluding with the luxury industry—including fashion that is in the process of becoming a meta-category for all things artistic—is the vogue of the art industry of the 2020s. When things fall apart and time is out of joint, it all happens elsewhere, to someone else—but not to us and not in the art market’s insular paradise. Sylvie Fleury has been walking the alleys of fashion and lanes of the art world for awhile now and she is returning her observations of the flâneuse to the visitors of the exhibition: see the impressions of Frankie’s journey to the stars, as told by Sylvie Fleury—welcome to the reality, among the mirrors, neon lights, mascaras and discarded dreams.

– Adam Szymczyk