

Agathe de Bailliencourt***Making things go*****12.01 - 24.02.24**

Adrian Sutton Gallery is proud to present its second exhibition at the Paris space by the French, Berlin-based artist, Agathe de Bailliencourt. Her new body of work explores the poetic possibilities resulting from loss of control, collapse and acceleration via a process that de Bailliencourt has developed, which she calls the 'watercolour-chance-complex.'

Making things go brings together paintings, drawings and film, which use chance and repetition as a methodology. De Bailliencourt underlines the importance of Marcel Duchamp's *3 stoppages étalon* (3 Standard Stoppages, 1913–14) as a vital reference point for this series, tracing the unpredictable into something solid and yet, ultimately, arbitrary. A variable process is still its own kind of organisational model. This appealed to de Bailliencourt, who used the idea of chance as a catalyst for what she describes as her 'system of painting'.

Working with canvases that use two materials respectively, either raw cotton or linen, de Bailliencourt notes the references to east and west that these two series of work denote: the former being more indicative of the history of western painting, and the later, of painting from Asia, where the artist lived for a number of years.

In terms of de Bailliencourt's painting process, she sometimes spends up to six hours preparing her pigments, which are comprised of a combination of acrylic paint and water. Using great swathes of water in the painting method, especially on linen, means that the colour itself does not resonate in full until the work is dry, so there is an inherent embrace of the unknown in this approach. Precarity is also important: de Bailliencourt places her canvases on the floor, tentatively balanced upon rocks, after which she runs lines of tape down the canvas, breaking the surface plane into strips that capture and distil her method, creating gaps or moments of pause, which suggest a progression through time.

Moving around the floor-based canvas, de Bailliencourt often establishes zones of waters; once the material is soaked through, she initiates a chain reaction of painting, countering her own logical reality and working against gravity by employing a game of contradiction in the mark-making – each motion offsetting another. Take, for example, the gestural shapes in *77 – 01.06.23* (2023), with its rich blues and pale greys, which seem to rise and fall, float and sink in an elemental play alluding to the canalising forces of nature. Constantly assessing her level of control as she goes, de Bailliencourt brings her brush into the areas of water, allowing for precarious states of transformation by letting paint drift and bleed – a kind of disintegration in its own right. In the balance between finding control and letting go, there is a power and tension created in de Bailliencourt's commitment to variance.

Completing the painting process in approximately one hour, de Bailliencourt repeats this system, meticulously preparing the scene for her work and then painting with an intentional rapidity, experimenting with fluid movement to enable a space for conceptual and poetic resonance. The

title of each piece marks the painting's number in the sequence, plus the date on which it was created.

De Baillencourt's film *54–81 (2022/23)*, which runs on a loop, captures the briefest of moments in this sequence: a number drawn onto a lined sheet of paper (its own kind of film clapperboard) reflects the classification of each work, before it is pulled away to show the canvas itself, bare but for lines of tape, waiting in its state of precarity to be painted. As the numbers build, we gain a sense of the ritual enacted by de Baillencourt.

Indeed, de Baillencourt's interest in film as a medium also influences her drawings, which are made using a similar technique to the paintings, filling specific sections with water and then experimenting with movement. She even had in mind the split focus diopter when creating these drawings – after which each is titled – a half convex glass that is attached in front of a camera's main lens so that it can focus on a plane in the background as well as on a foreground element. *Split focus 6 (2023)* suggests a dual perspective, with both dissipated and clarified sections of Chinese ink separating the drawing into two sections. It is as if the lower half sets the upper half into motion, one action directly offsetting another: making it go.

It is precisely this idea that informed the title of de Baillencourt's exhibition, *Making things go*, which references the work of Peter Fischli and David Weiss. For their retrospective at Tate Modern in 2006, Fischli and Weiss unveiled *Making Things Go (1985/2006)*. This was a documentary shot by Patrick Frey that gave a behind-the-scenes view of the many experiments, rehearsals, and failures behind their sixteen-millimetre film *The Way Things Go (1987)* – a 100-foot long installation that used materials like tires, ladders and oil drums to create chain reactions.

It is in the spirit of such experimentation, conjured by de Baillencourt using her own medium, that she seeks to embody fragile, fleeting, and unforeseeable moments: instances that define the act of painting using forces beyond any logical or knowable reality.

Louisa Elderton