

## Press Release

Sylvie Fleury – *JOY*

November 23, 2019 – January 25, 2020

Opening November 22, 6 – 8 PM

Sylvie Fleury's third solo exhibition with Karma International has its origins in her latest series of works based on the app Bitmoji. Fleury has long been fascinated with this program, which allows the creation of an avatar to represent your own person in chats. The clue in the process is that while an affinity to the real subject is constantly suggested, in fact the app simultaneously only enables a schematic approximation: Bitmoji avatars are ageless/youthful and have a cute facial appearance. It is a stylized, modified, consumable image: "Bitmoji has done the heavy lifting for us, marrying our own sense of self with our public image, yet in a safe, quirky way that we ultimately control."<sup>1</sup>

Within digital communication Bitmojis connote an intimacy and closeness with the person with whom one is in dialog. At the same time they also mediate an image of autonomy and sovereignty—glamour and power. Since her artistic beginnings the artist has worked with ready-mades and has been interested in the ways and means by which contemporary medias structure and manufacture subjectivity—be it by her appropriation of magazine covers or, as in this case, popular chat add-ins. What we are given a glimmering of is the issue of the portrayal of the artist—her image. These new works have wacky qualities, for instance when one sees how Fleury's avatar brushes its teeth together with the cat, when it's stuck in a jell-O dessert, or when it's groaning under the weight of everyday troubles. Although each Bitmoji avatar always has a self-ironic side to it, it nevertheless remains controllable. One creates a reductively synthetic, loveable person. The awkwardly scatterbrained is not simply intrinsic to the program, it is the program.

*I'M WEAK* is contrasted with the text ready-made *JOY* that gives the exhibition its title – the lettering derived from the eponymous fragrance by Dior. The Polaroid photos in the back space of the exhibition are similarly transgressive. They originate in reality, bearing witness to a lived life; they are, as it were, the obverse of the language of symbols of the app—a differently standardized form of representation. The photos are drawn from the artist's own personal archive. The varied photographic material shows portraits, performances, fashion shootings and spontaneously taken shots of installations.

A further new series of works by Sylvie Fleury are her paintings, the forms of which are reminiscent of specific makeup sets (Tom Ford and Chanel). The works bear the titles of the respective products, such as *Turbulent*. At the level of their motifs, the paintings themselves take on the identity of paint-boxes or palettes. Fleury's interest in art-historically-saturated and male-dominated gestures/motifs, as well as her personal proximity to the artists of the Neo-Geo movement, can be read through these works. The paintings consist of shaped canvases that are pieced together with painstaking craftsmanship. In terms of their theme, the works explore the fetish-laden connotations with which consumer items are injected, equally applicable to makeup sets and paintings alike, and testimony, in equal measure, to Fleury's passion for "hard edge" painting practices as well as the visual world and the language of symbols in fashion and cosmetics.

Fleury's exhibition does not follow a defined narrative, nor does it suggest a semantic coherence. Instead the artist is interested in open-ended plays of meaning. Her re-designation of social symbols is to be understood neither as moral instruction nor as an affirmative gesture, rather it expresses the potential of agency.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/fashion/my-bitmoji-my-better-self.html>