



Laetitia Gendre - Like a Slug Sticks to the Ground

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Is every image a riddle? A search for a word? There is a gap, it is often assumed, between images and words, what we see and how we describe it. But there is also a gap within this gap, where the words employed are themselves images creating unexpected relations: the simile – *eikōn*, in Aristotle's Greek – an image, or likeness. "Like a Slug Sticks to the Ground", a particularly slimy simile, is the title of Laetitia Gendre's exhibition, which playfully, but carefully, pries open these trompe l'oeil-ed trap doors of mimetic expression. In a series of graphite drawings entitled "Secret Passages" – each drawn on three layered pieces of paper, cut-out, creating a stage-like depth – we see such literal and metaphorical escape routes. Cartoon-like, each reveals a sort of primal scene. We gaze through a lock, the round crevices of a cave, a hole in the wall, a hatch – which reveal? Another hole. And beyond that?

A hole is a hole is a hole. Perhaps here the primal scene remains the lock itself? These passages are also apertures, stand-ins for the desire to look at, or to make, an image, whereby the creative act of projection might fill in for an absence, for that which we cannot comprehend, or simply haven't seen. Their revelation, in other words, is that there was nothing to be revealed in the first place. But the hole, lest we forget, is also an image, a cultural trope itself laden with meaning. And these secret passages have been pilfered from various Tintin comics, turning the work into a taxonomy of sorts of a popular narrative device, a cliché, a ploy, an escape route.

Gendre has long been fascinated with the vicissitudes of mimetic desire and the possibility of performatively staging such a desire, toying with both theatricality and literalness. Here, her gouache paintings of visual search engines rendered into abstract color fields play with the other side of the coin: machines that promise to seamlessly translate word into image, a wasteland of literalness. A glitch anticipates those images as they load with colorful squares instead. Reading the paintings' titles, the words queried – „Hell“, „Peace“, "War" – you might find yourself imagining what the images they are proxies for might have shown, a sort of reverse engineering of the literal into the projective. It's tempting then to try and search for some sort of color-theory, to ascribe to them some hidden meaning, a metaphorical exit. You think you found the answer. But then the space (the gallery space that is, all around you) is punctuated... literally, by an array of odd dots: ... ,'. . . : ...

Commas, and colons: these, too, are signs with semantic significance, but here they stretch and morph into something more than mere punctuation, a performance, a choreography, a mural, an image.

Or is the wall riddled with holes?

Boaz Levin

Laetitia Gendre (born in 1973) works in Paris and Brussels.

Laetitia Gendre graduated at HEAR (Haute Ecole des Arts du Rhin) in Strasbourg.
Gendre's work has been presented in group shows like "Bye Bye His-Story", Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image imprimée, La Louvière, Belgium, 2021; "One More Thing" (with Jo De Smedt), SECONDroom Antwerpen, 2019; and earlier at Wiels, Brussels; Tent, Rotterdam; as well as solo shows at La Maison Rouge, Paris; Ron Mandos Gallery, Amsterdam; and Galerie Thomas Fischer, Berlin.

Her drawings were recently published in Medor Magazine; MLQ magazine (Ed. L'association, Paris); Support Magazine (Paris). Forthcoming publications include a drawing Zine, Nieves ed.; and the new issue of the experimental comics magazine LAGON (December 2022).

Laetitia Gendre teaches at KASK & Conservatorium/HOGENT en howest in Ghent, Belgium.

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