

# Laura Bruce

## To Kiss or Kill

January 27<sup>th</sup> - April 7<sup>th</sup> 2018

In her solo exhibition "To Kiss or Kill" Laura Bruce shows works made from ink on paper for the first time. They originate from her fascination with Francisco de Goya y Lucientes' print series, "Los Capricos" and "Los Disparates". As a painter of the Spanish Enlightenment, Goya aimed at "uncovering the common errors of society," as the Spanish writer Benito Jerónimo Feijoo wrote in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. But Goya also became an increasingly harsh critic of this era of rationality and progress, and created works that focused on the irrational and symbolic essence of mankind. This essence is also visible in Laura Bruce's work.

For the artist, born in the USA in 1959, Goya's body of work serves as an initial point of departure, in order to artistically address the *conditio humana*, which is reflected in her solo exhibition, "To Kiss or Kill". The Shakespearian-like exhibition title puts emphasis on the condition of „Ether...or“. What would happen to the figures if they shed their protective cover of sometimes darker or sometimes brighter colors like orange or yellow? What happens when the figures encounter others and are confronted with judgment? The figures and shapes in Laura Bruce's ink on paper works deal with the proportions of power — and not purely on the level of interpretation, but also compositionally. Spatial forms appear that leave behind the blaze their trail on the paper.

These rounded shapes look like color filled bubbles that seem to float through space yet also resemble the human form. They are either enclosed within heavy black contours or sometimes seem to burst open, as in the work entitled "Under", where the forms become large heavy surfaces of color that cover most of the paper.

But Laura Bruce also models these shapes and areas by applying the ink with expressive strokes. The juxtaposition of round and calm elements of color and loud, stirring elements all oscillate between "to be or not to be", "to love or not to love", or between "to open up or to lock shut". A kind of sweet cruelty can be seen in the rounded shapes of color, which refer to the fundamental essence or dilemma of human existence: it is the balance between love and death.

Claudia Cosmo

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