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Cosima zu Knyphausen
Closet Drama
Oct. 7 - Nov. 15.

Closet Drama

In the beautiful town of Venice night-time is slowly closing in. Lady Happy eagerly awaits their return of Christine and Hélène, two juvenile spirits, the best of friends, she's grown so fond of and feels almost motherly affection towards. Whilst she welds in sweet delight over the perfect golden yolk at the centre of her six-and-a-half-minute boiled egg, the door is suddenly flung open.

Enter Christine and Hélène

Lady Happy: There you two are, you've been out all day!

C: Oh Lady Happy, what a disaster! We've been all over the city, knocked on every framer's door, but nobody wants us and I don't want them either!

Lady H: My child, what on earth is the matter?

C: It's Helène's portrait. What I have crafted with the uttermost depths in my heart, must now forever remain unfinished as no frame seems suitable. We've tried everything; the most majestic gold leaf, small and subtle oak, silky birch, yet as soon as the portrait is enclosed the shapes and colours, her dainty charm, seems distorted. Thoroughly incompatible, defiant even! As if it had a will of its own...

Lady H: I see..

H: It's true.. The painting refuses to be framed!

The three women gather to inspect the work.

C: *Sigh.* I felt so much love for it but now I'm beginning to despise it. Something is just not quite right..

Lady H: My dearest Christine, do not woe. Are you truly surprised? You write from the depths of your heart and your body, have created such exuberant forms, yet you expect them to thrive within the given limits of existence?

C: How do you mean?

Lady H pauses for a moment, swallowing a spoonful of egg.

Lady H: Well, you see, the image of the world we live in has been moulded by man. Begin in your bodily experience and you begin beyond the frame of this image. From that place, the first act lies beyond the boundaries they erect. How could you expect such visceral beauty to be confined in those pre-conditioned frames?

Christine sits, by now calmed and curious. Hélène absentmindedly begins stroking the pet lion whilst listening attentively.

C: Well what shall I frame my painting in then?!

Lady H: Oh what do I know, these eggs for all I care! Point is, we have been driven away from writing, from creation, as violently as from our bodies. And its rediscovery is accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful.

C: You know, when I paint, when I write, it is everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love.

H: Lady Happy, I had a dream last night, or more a waking vision, where I felt my body, my desires so vividly. I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs.. Do all lovers feel as if they're inventing something?

C: Yes! Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst! -burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinkin' fortune. Yet we've said nothing, shown nothing; I didn't open my mouth, I didn't repaint my half of the world...

Lady Happy (rises, victoriously): Beauty shall no longer be hidden!

H: Oh to speak freely like this my dear friends, I feel liberated - this chamber remains a haven for my thoughts. In the city our roles are written with only little room to improvise.

C: In that case we must build our own! With reason, rectitude and justice, where our overflowing bodies roam boundlessly.

By now thoroughly joyous, the three women agree to go down into the lovely garden to enjoy a glass of wine, it is dark by now, yet the stars in the cloudless sky illuminate - and so they set off gaily, taking each other by the hand and walking down the stairs. Cheery chatter fades into off.

FIN

Text by Dara Jochum and Hélène Cixous