

Intimate and Sensual Collages Showing Different Views of Femininity

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY / IN PICTURES



Katrien de Blauwer, scenes 166, 2016.

Belgian artist Katrien de Blauwer's work is on show now in London as part of a group exhibition at Cob Gallery

OCTOBER 26, 2018

TEXT Belle Hutton

In the collages of Katrien de Blauwer, contradictions abound. The Belgian artist balances intimacy and anonymity in her fragmented pieces, which generally comprise found photography and tears of paper and card. “I like to think of my collages as small personal histories. A union of autobiography and impersonality where I become a neutral intermediary,” De Blauwer explains. “Without being the author, I integrate them into my own interior world, a world I’m revealing in the third person.” The fact that De Blauwer introduces her own subjectivities when creating her collages – she has said that she hardly includes images of men in her pieces because her adolescence was absent a male figure, for example – does render them personal, but in turn the lack of faces, and especially eyes, allows for a degree of objectivity, and for the viewer to relate to the work.

There is a recognisable style to De Blauwer's collages, and she works on series somewhat thematically. Fleeting black and white scenes are spliced in *Rendez Vous*, for example, while *Single Cuts* offer different fragments of the same photograph compiled in a new way. The female – her body, her clothing – plays a central role in much of De Blauwer's work, as well as scenes featuring architecture, the natural world and the domestic. Having been making work for more than 20 years, she has a vast and varied archive behind her. As part of Cob Gallery's current group exhibition *New Work Part III: Subject*, De Blauwer's recent collages are on show alongside 14 female artists, from Nina Mae Fowler and Juno Calypso to Faye Wei Wei and Alex Prager. The exhibition considers the female gaze and its relation to power dynamics within art, and many of the works "straddle the poles of attraction and repulsion". De Blauwer's collages – featuring white lace underwear in various crops and a woman carefully holding a rose in her fingertips – provide an intimate and almost voyeuristic look at womanhood.