MARGUERITE PIARD
DIEUXIÈME CORPS

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18 rue Dauphine, 75006 Paris, FR

She opens the door with her belly round, bare, welcoming. A belly like that can come as a surprise. Her paintings rest on the cradle of the child to come, leaning against the walls of the room, the easel set before the window.

On these canvases, nude female bodies with faces that turn away, bathed in the glow of the day's end. Once, one might have taken it for a thinly veiled eroticism. And yet something tells us that this is not what is at stake. In this studio-bedroom, there is the woman, there are the brushes and the gaze. She seems to want to tell us something. She thinks better of it.

We drift from painting to painting as through a logbook whose pages are slowly shed, one suspended moment after another. Naps, baths, embraces... so many memories. The summer passing. Marguerite Piard sounds out her skin-world. What might look like a stroll across the surface is in truth an unceasing journey between the inside and the outside. Her subjects are measured out by the fingertip, against the grain of staged poses, drawn from stills taken from candid videos. She captures her sister, her friends, her lovers, and travels across her own body. Like a stranger, she explores her own shedding of skin from the outside, in search of her desires. She reconnects with a body once polished, disparaged, coveted, photographed, left to the gaze of others. And yet inhabited. The artist works with painstaking care on the second body: her own, in the midst of change, the body of the other, and the one yet to come.

Perhaps, then, one must go against the grain of the skin with Marguerite Piard. Ask what lies dormant beneath the gouache, beneath the fading light, behind the supple, naked silhouettes, behind the iconography unwittingly summoned. The keys lie hidden in the apparent silence, in the omnipresence of water, in the colors and the compositions. In this respect, the single still life in the series becomes a telling counterpoint. The carabiner might evoke a dissident femininity, the letter an invitation to confide, the dishcloth a motif of the traditional home... But the stretchers are sealed like airtight chests, and the edges carry the line onward, pledging them to secrecy. Marguerite Piard also paints on solid wood panels, which she prepares layer after layer with filler and plaster, like so many deposited epidermes. One must lose oneself in those thicknesses, those of the repeated gesture and the smoothed surface, in order to read what does not quite give itself up. Resist the urge to turn the canvases over to understand what they hold. The intimacy offered is right here, no more, no less.

And so, alongside the artist, uncertainty becomes a place where one can stand. The bodies on offer and their stories remain enigmas we give up trying to decipher. And perhaps it is there, in the gap between what is shown and what slips away, that a way of being in the world takes shape.

To be here, simply, with a round belly, bare and welcoming.

—Eulalie Juster