

Chloë Sai Breil-Dupont
I NEVER BROKE UP WITH YOU
October 7 — December 1, 2022

I NEVER BROKE UP WITH YOU — I love this title because it calls forth both the impermanence of relationships and their eternity. If we consider love, friendship and all our other relationships from the perspective of a linear timeline, it is as though they are amputated. In order to touch their dark truth, we need a paradigm shift and to pass in a quantum conception of time. Indeed, on the quantum level, everything that happens happens forever. The most seemingly insignificant of experiences - the shortest kiss, the smallest piece of fruit I put in my mouth, the slightest hint of a landscape hitting my retina - swirl in space and exist there infinitely. This does not mean that we are condemned to relive what once happened, but that we will have to navigate through everything that was, is and will be, even if we cannot see anything and can trust only the sonar of our beating heart. I never broke up with you, the memory of the world never ceases to testify. The sum of our attachments draws in the dark night the possibility of a romance that only you and I can fulfill. I never broke up with you. All the forms that once affected us continue to swirl around us. For all these reasons, I do not believe that the notion of representation is the most appropriate to reflect what is happening in Chloë Sai Breil-Dupont's painting. The artist does not reflect on the image, as is often said of those who apply pigments to flat surfaces. Her pictorial research is rather concerned with sensations, feelings, that is to say what we perceive, what we feel, what affects us and changes our lives, again forever.

A few months ago, perhaps even a few years ago, I undertook a performance where I proposed to the people present that they implant an acacia thorn in their left hand by means of a latex prosthesis applied directly to their skin. I then posted a photo in which one could see a thorn emerging from my own hand. Having seen it in passing, Chloë Sai asked me to send her the photo, with the idea of painting it. Her request was all the more understandable since I had bought her a small painting, a few months earlier, in which one could see a drop of blood pearling from a finger touching a rose thorn. I tell this anecdote because I believe it carries a kind of secret knowledge: what interests Chloë Sai are the thorns that prick us and secretly enhance us. The affected creature, now an emotional creature, is covered with thorns. These thorns form less a protective device than a sensitive archive of the affects she has experienced. Now it seems to me that this is exactly what Chloë Sai's painting is working towards: to compose a sensitive archive of the affects that we go through and that go through us. Affection is interstitial, taking place between things where hybrid creatures are born that we call relationships. Chloë Sai uses paint to navigate through these interstitial waters.

This story of sensitive archives and intermediate worlds reminds me of what occultists sometimes call the Akashic record. This is a kind of cosmic memory of an etheric nature, which, like a sensitive film, would record the events of the world. These recordings would come to feed a kind of deposit of phantom forms where all lived experiences would be reproduced as images, in the very broad sense of imaginary forms. I like to imagine this archive as a big house suspended in space, or as a moving cabinet with thousands of drawers. Chloë Sai's cassettes resemble, I believe, all those documents piled up in this four-dimensional cabinet-house.

By embracing the world from this perspective, we understand why Chloë Sai's portraits have, despite appearances, nothing to do with the pictorial genre of the same name. The great tradition of the portrait aimed at pictorially transcribing the personality of a subject, mobilizing for this purpose a symbolic grammar capable of informing us about their identity. Of course, Chloë Sai adopts certain stylistic traits specific to this tradition, and in particular to the art of the Renaissance, but make no mistake: her portraits seek to approach something radically different. They will never serve as identity papers. Quite the opposite: the painting here disfigures and de-identifies. What Chloë Sai gives us is a wonderful gift. Moreover, all the figures she paints hold in their hands, or clutch to their hearts, small paintings on wood that really exist and that the artist has been composing for years, as if to form a constellation of islands which, if connected in the right way, would

undoubtedly reveal a sort of portal allowing access to a dark zone in whose reliefs I already perceive the vibrations of another world. By placing her friends on this threshold, the artist seems to make them the guardians or guides of the zone that lies behind. For this reason, I cannot conceive of the portraits of Chloë Sai's as anything other than mystical portraits, in the wildest sense of the word. The dark zone that Chloë Sai documents in a low voice is not really her secret garden. It is in fact a common zone – perhaps even the most common of all – and it seems to me that the artist chooses her subjects precisely because of their specific connections with this dark place. It is not surprising, therefore, that the area in question is directly related to the feelings one feels for beings, things or representations. Friendship, in the broadest sense of the term, is thus the emotional substance from which all the work of Chloë Sai Breil-Dupont seems to proceed.

Shortly after we first met, Chloë Sai confided in me that she had discovered a substantially liquid and sometimes even wavy black paste which, she said, surrounds us and passes through us. The nature of this discovery immediately enchanted me. And for good reason; I had just written a text in which I affirmed my desire to make the human being melt into tears, and the possibility of happiness seemed to me more and more like a matter of dissolution. Chloë Sai had read this text and had written me a very beautiful email entitled “ok to be a tear”. I thought that was so right. She perfectly understood that a decision had to be made: to melt or not to melt, to become a tear or not to become a tear, to enter the common zone or not to enter it. There was no doubt that she had made her choice. I can still imagine her, groping her way yet with confidence to the slimy land where all tears converge and dark matter thrives. Today, all of this is so much a part of her life that the black paste vibrates all over her canvases. I deem this a triumph, even if it's something very dark and deeply spectral.

From my point of view, this story of black paste comes to prove the primary equivalence of our aesthetic concerns and our visceral quests. To put it another way: Chloë Sai once made an important discovery: she passed somewhere and decided to document this passage and perhaps even to reveal its secret, so that everyone could make the journey; she then summoned all her technical skills in order to concoct a kind of pictorial potion which acts, I believe, as a true revealer, in the almost apocalyptic sense of the term. The black paste reveals the truth of her work: her extraordinary paintings are not only intended to represent the complexity of subjectivity or to document a personal archive, but also, and above all else, to open the doors to another dimension, where everything is entangled until supreme softness. Chloë Sai Breil-Dupont thus composes her own secret society, while taking care to leave all the doors open so that the common zone remains open forever.

— words by Romain Noël
translated by Reiss Joshua Madden

Chloë Sai Breil-Dupont was born in 1990 in Les Lilas, France, and joined the École des Beaux-Arts in Biarritz in 2010 to develop her painting practice. In 2015, after graduation, she moved to São Paulo, Brazil, where she studied Philosophy. After three residencies, at Les Ateliers Wonder, Dune Pondicherry and la Villa Belleville, the artist moved to Carrara, where she lived from 2018 to 2020, to focus on the practice of oil painting. Her work has recently been exhibited in Nicodim Gallery in Los Angeles; Newchild Gallery in Antwerp; the Biennale ArtPress, in Saint Etienne, France, among others. The artist has been nominated for the prestigious Jean-François Prat prize in 2021. She lives and works in Berlin.

I NEVER BROKE UP WITH YOU will run from October 7 to December 1, 2022. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.