



Louise Bonnet

# Louise Bonnet Contractions and Explosions

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Interview Bill Powers  
Photography Ye Rin Mok

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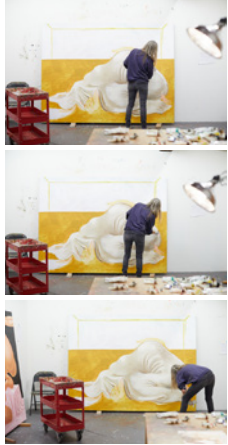


Louise Bonnet (b. 1970, Geneva) lives and works in Los Angeles. Known for her paintings of exaggerated proportions and grotesque features, she explores emotions of melancholy, loneliness, nostalgia throughout a strong sense of corporeality. Bloated noses, swollen hands and feet are represented in bending extremities and precise movements of body parts. She will have a solo show in London at Max Hetzler Gallery opening on January 16th, 2020 and another one in Los Angeles at Nino Mier Gallery on February 21st.





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BP Should we assume all these figures are self-portraits on some level? Or avatars of you...

LB I guess. But I don't really think of them as people exactly. They are more an emotional receptacle for me.

BP Is comedy important? I'm looking at a nude by the seaside with a rope wrapped around their butt cheeks.

LB I am interested in constraint or containment, control. The rope is holding the butt shut. It's funny. Nothing comes in or out.

BP Do you ever feel like "*am I allowed to make this?*"

LB The trick is never to ask for the permission to make a painting. Or to worry about what people are going to think. I wasted a bunch of years doing that.

BP Tell me about the different backgrounds you employ.

LB With the figure standing on a swath of pink fabric, I was thinking about those old Hollywood portraits where a movie star like Elizabeth Taylor would be leaning against a pedestal with a mustard seamless behind her.

BP And then the way it's backlit almost has a sfumato glow?

LB Well, don't you think that's what those photographers might have been attempting? To turn some starlet into an old masters' painting, consciously or not.

BP Tell me about these physical spaces. Is there an architect you look to for inspiration?

LB Adam [her husband] gave me a book of the architect Luis Barragán. And I really love his brand of architecture. I find the hard edges in a minimal setting allow you to really look at the bulbous figure inside it.

BP It almost echoes the industrial architecture you find in Ed Ruscha's "*Course of Empire*" paintings.

LB I like the aesthetic contrast, to have a figure sitting in this super stark environment. It also makes it funnier.

BP Do you project an emotional state onto a figure, say, looking out at the ocean?

LB I tend to think they're pretty dignified.

"*Under the Skin*" again. When she's eating cake but can't swallow it because she doesn't have a throat. Amazing.

BP What about the painting of someone ripping hair out of their head.

LB I imagine they're lost on a boat somewhere.

BP You titled another painting, "*The Wind*." Can you tell me about the title? The background feels very Northern Italian Renaissance.

LB The interesting part is how the toes are curled around this tree trunk to keep the figure standing up against the wind. I read that the ancient Egyptians thought that vultures could get impregnated by the wind. They're a symbol of motherhood.

BP Why do you obscure all their faces?

LB I'm not interested in you having a dialogue with the figures. It takes up too much emotional space. I'd rather you be a voyeur.

BP Sometimes you also use a translucent veil.

LB I like to highlight how we mask the fact that we are really just animals. There's something ridiculous about the concept of underwear. To emphasize how we hide. The see-through veil has no practical application. We tend to overcompensate as humans.

BP The overlap between your work and Guston's "*Nixon Drawings*" is undeniable, the way he rendered Nixon's nose in particular.

LB I had not seen the "*Nixon Drawings*" before recently. You can believe me or not. I'm sure Guston is in my brain whether I want it coming out or not. I feel closer to John Currin in terms of how I feel about the human condition.



- 91 *The Slap*, 2016.
- 92 *The Floor*, 2017.
- 94 *The Stump*, 2017.
- 95 *The Pond*, 2018.
- 100 *The Wind*, 2019, (partial on the left).  
*At sea*, 2019.
- 101 *Interior with Pink Blanket*, 2019.

