



Odonchimeg Davaaradj

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I recently finished a book by the American author John Green called *Turtles all the way down*. It was a nice discovery – I often go to the bookstore to buy books by unknown authors – to try to understand the evolution of literature. Anyway, what matters here is that the main character – Aza Homes –, a young high school student suffering from severe anxiety is dragged into a series of unfortunate events due to her condition. At the end of the book, she describes her disease in the following way: “It hurt, all the time, in a way language could not touch.”



Odonchimeg Davaaradj, *Collision*, Chinese Ink, 26 cm x 40 cm, 2015

When confronted to Odonchimeg Davaaradj's work – a young female artist born in Mongolia and currently working in Paris – we at last feel that our emotions take shape in her drawings and are being accurately addressed to. Faceless characters and faces without a body abound in the artist's universe, giving to her drawings an uncanny appearance. What makes them unreal is the lack of any narrative context or of any narratives at all, most of the white surface is left untreated such as in pieces like *Errante* or *Le Témoin*. The characters are completely isolated, they exist in a separated world from ours, the feeling triggered by the gap between them and us is one of loneliness, we feel adrift. Nonetheless, there is something primal in Davaaradj's drawings that makes them connect with us at a more profound level, we've seen this faces in dreams or while being in secondary states. The artist's drawings reminds us thus of long sessions with our shrinks or the psychiatrist, they seem to be products of the artist's psyche. Pulsions and dreadful thoughts take on the austere aesthetics of Davaaradj guiding us into her universe.



Odonchimeg Davaaradj, *Errante*, Chinese Ink, 28 cm x 53 cm, 2016

But softness is queen in the scenario depicted by Davaaradj, no wonder her work recalls so much female artists like Frida Kahlo, Ana Mendieta, Louise Bourgeois and even Chiharu Shiota. Davaaradj conveys such a finesse through her drawings creating a unique triade between her characters, herself and us. Despite her rejection to being defined as a “feminist artist” or a “politically engaged” one, her work explores the subjects freely without completely encasing them into this definitions. “When I create this characters, I don't think much about gender, race or the social background because this is exactly what I want to eradicate in my drawings. When we are in social situations we often feel the need to put on a mark and to pretend to be someone else. My drawings show vulnerable bodies that have feelings, they don't feel the urge to define themselves. They just are.”



Odonchimeg Davaaradj, *Uhel*, Chinese Ink, 20 cm x 18 cm, 2017

Indeed, there is something incredibly humane in Davaaradj's drawings. Though they might seem disconcerting at the very beginning, they transmute into vulnerable being having the ability to mirror our emotions. Everybody can feel connected to them for there is no race, gender or other defining them, nudity thus has the power to create empathy and to talk to all types of viewers. What the artist speaks about is love, lust, loneliness – yes – relationships and so on, her objective being to investigate the human condition in its purest form. If language can't give form to such powerful feelings, Davaaradj's drawings can for sure do it. Truth is seeked, even when it gets ugly, the latter shall succeed at the end.



Odonchimeg Davaaradj, *Femme aux yeux rouges*, Chinese Ink, 21 cm x 29 cm, 2015