

FIONA MACKAY

PRESS RELEASE

La Salle de bains

1 rue Louis Vitet

69001 Lyon

JULY - OCTOBER 2021

*Babe*, summer 2021

*Babes*, september 10<sup>th</sup> - october 9<sup>th</sup> 2021



# Biography

## **Fiona Mackay**

(1984, Aberdeen, Scotland), lives and works in Marseille.

A graduate of the Glasgow School of Art (2006), Mackay has taken part in numerous group and solo shows throughout Europe: opium, Belsunce projects, Marseille (2021) ; La psychologie des serrures, CAN, Neuchâtel (2020) ; dreams, Klemm's, Berlin (2019) ; Running Away, New Joerg, Vienna (2018) ; Ether, Une, une, une, Perpignan (2018) ; prolog, Apes&castels, Brussels (2017) ; Foreign Place, WIELS, Brussels (2016).

[http://klemms-berlin.com/files/klemms\\_fmackay\\_portfolio.pdf](http://klemms-berlin.com/files/klemms_fmackay_portfolio.pdf)

<http://www.martinvanzomeren.nl/artists/fiona-mackay>

<http://www.manuelagernedel.co.uk/europeanpaintingtour.html>

**Fiona Mackay**

*Babe*

summer 2021

juillet - août 2021

# BABE

## FIONA MACKAY

LA SALLE DE BAINS

1 RUE LOUIS VITET  
69001 LYON

Mercredi – Samedi 15-19h

[lasalledebains.net](http://lasalledebains.net)



La Région  
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

VILLE DE  
LYON

# FIONA MACKAY

## BABE

F,

During our last call, I asked you what you were going to do during the summer. Surprised, you exclaimed, "I'm going to work on the show, that's all I do, work on the show!" Then you told me about your new studio in the hills above Marseille and its great big windows. "Fortunately, they don't look out on the city. That would offer too many distractions." Like each of our conversations, this one began with the kind of weather we were having, "Is it nice out?"

I have to admit I like this view of things, the artist completely absorbed by her work in her studio perched high up and facing the sea, while here (down below), each week in the scorching streets her mysterious images appear on large posters. It's not so much the myth of the Romantic artist that that conjures up. Rather, it's for the observation that little malfunctionings of time and uses of space (in particular, of the exhibition) can excite the imagination and even presage a slight shake-up. And then that assigns to you a slightly more suspicious role, stressing the premeditated character of this affair, I mean this exhibition.

So initially the space will be empty, then closed in August, as usual. The show will begin the same day and in the same place where it would normally have been announced, i.e., on the free billboards of Lyon's 1st Arrondissement. It will run there for the whole summer, like a communications campaign in slow motion, until the second part of the show opens in early September at the beginning of the new fall season. Although this project was initially postponed because of the closing of cultural sites, you have taken advantage of the reopening of exhibition venues to reaffirm your decision to display your work in public. There, in that particular space it will be mixed in with posters and billboards that make plain the resumption of cultural, community and militant activities in the neighborhood. And there will be no accompanying discourse, no framing context indicating (and protecting) as artwork what you put up. In a way, these images will live their lives here as it were while you'll be over in your studio, precisely where the drawings happen in the intimacy of your thoughts and the immediacy of the line drawing, exactly in that place where you selected and photographed these five engravings which were enlarged on the posters, along with the distancing that such a process implies. These images then, offered up to the eyes of passers-by and those simply out for a stroll, will be free, during the dog days, to tell the stories they seem to harbor and reveal something in bits and pieces and incomplete episodes.

So it begins like the flyleaf of a romance novel, a work that is a touch slushy, mushy, and sentimentally gushy. It features a young woman lounging in finely worked stone seat. The mass of patterns done in dry point framing the image could be the manifestation of some intense psychological activity whose mood is transmitted perhaps by the two enormous peacocks perched on the back of this armchair.

J.

*Babe*, set of five posters, digital print, 3.3x2.3 ft, on the free billboards of Lyon's 1st Arrondissement.

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La Salle de bains reçoit le soutien :  
du Ministère de la Culture DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes,  
de la Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes et de la Ville de Lyon.



























*Babe on the free billboards of Lyon's 1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement*

Photographies : Jesús Alberto Benítez





**Fiona Mackay**

*Babes*

September 10<sup>th</sup> - October 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

10 septembre - 2 octobre 2021

# BABES

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# FIONA MACKAY

## BABES

### *Babes*

The text introducing the last chapter conjured up the image of the guest artist in the solitude of her studio, completely immersed in a summer of intense work. During that time, in the sleepy streets of the city, posters sporadically appeared, although they displayed no written message; each week they distilled slightly erotic visions, like an intermittent story but also like a nonchalant communications initiative.

Depending on the day and hour, anyone could have surprised those figures of Apollo and Narcissus (sometimes the both of them together) still wet, freshly slapped up on their signboard, or puckering quite a lot from the heat and weather. Occasionally you would find them partly covered over by other ads, which these beautiful young men displayed, although they did contemptuously, as if such a foreign presence were an irreverence to their classic beauty.

The second part of the Fiona Mackay show at La Salle de bains lays out an experience of her work that is the exact opposite. In this case, the simple plural designation affixed to the title – *Babe* becoming *Babes* – is one of several misleading appearances. We should note, too, that “babes,” unlike the singular, isn’t used as a pet name for one’s “love object,” which lends an iconoclastic note to the addition of that *ess*.

Introducing a difficulty or confusion between the plural and the singular draws attention to the complex relationships that an original has with the copy in a show that began with the massive exposure in public of reproductions of works of art. Moreover, the engraving technique used by the artist (dry point and monotype) leaves the status of the artworks in limbo, an in-between state between the unique piece and the multiple, given that color is reapplied to the plate before each printing. This can give the same drawing extremely different looks according to the lightness of the inks or the density of the pigment, just as a face can express to a terrifying degree variations of mood.

Those running through the six prints on display at La Salle de bains are ambivalent at the very least, leaving all the more open our interpretations of an incomplete fable featuring a young woman and an object of desire. We might want to beware then of hastily associating the appropriation of a style with a certain temperament, be it the cartoonish traits of some figures descended from Lewis Carroll, or the kinship certain scenes have with the symbolist universe of an Odilon Redon. That is, a melancholic figure can just as well translate a state of shock. What is certain though is that the homoerotic reverie that

might seemingly pop up when you turn the next corner has given way to a chillier atmosphere for sheltering this head-on confrontation with the original editions. The exhibition’s specific display design underscores the issues surrounding that encounter in a way that is a tad perverse, forcing the body to go along with the act of looking, at the risk of responding to that attraction with an uncomfortable reflection.

From left to right:

*For real*, 2021

*Valium*, 2021

*Fortune and promise*, 2021

*A young age*, 2021

*Always summer (never winter)*, 2021

*Scandal*, 2021

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exhibition view *Babes*, Fiona Mackay, La Salle de bains, 2021



Fiona Mackay, *For real*, 2021





Fiona Mackay, *Valium*, 2021





Fiona Mackay, *Fortune and promise*, 2021





Fiona Mackay, *A young age*, 2021



exhibition view *Babes*, Fiona Mackay, La Salle de bains, 2021





Fiona Mackay, *Always summer (never winter)*, 2021





exhibition view *Babes*, Fiona Mackay, La Salle de bains, 2021



Fiona Mackay, *Scandal*, 2021

Photographies : Jesús Alberto Benítez

# LA SALLE DE BAINS

La Salle de bains is an association (law 1901) dedicated to the production and the diffusion of contemporary art. It was created in Lyon in 1998 by a group of artists and designers in the heritage of artist run spaces (such as *The Kitchen* which has existed since 1971 in New York). Therefore, it has been characterised by a sharp, forward-looking and international programming, affirming its commitment to a decentralised cultural requirement. It has thus organised the first exhibitions in France of artists who have become major figures on the art scene.

Since 2016, and after several seasons *hors les murs*, La Salle de bains has relocated to a small space in the centre of the city from where a programme is developed according to modalities induced by the size of its premises and deduced from a certain vision of the sharing of art in public space and time. Each invitation made to the artists gives rise to the production of a project in three stages, three appointments given to the public here or there, in the premises of La Salle de bains or elsewhere in the city, like three chapters of the same story, three rooms of an exhibition in an extended definition. This format is conjunctural and transitory. As long as it is applied as a framework for artistic programming, it invites us to perceive and think about the works as much as the ways in which they appear.

La Salle de bains  
1 rue Louis Vitet  
69001 Lyon - FR

Open from Wednesday to Saturday, 3pm to 7pm

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