

## CONCEPTUAL FINE ARTS

November 17, 2014

# Julia Rommel's intimate conversations on definite at Sorry We're Closed, Brussels

Once again, despite its catchy name, Brussels gallery Sorry We're Closed has recently opened its doors and lit up its window to present new paintings by American artist Julia Rommel.

During a conversation we had with her at the exhibition opening, Rommel told us that her paintings can be regarded as traces from a primary investigation into how abstract forms can succeed in being formal and personal at the same time, forms whose marks should feel as natural conclusions or as they have always been there to be discovered.

Her technical process normally begins with applying a monochrome layer of colour on the canvas, which can then be mounted on different wooden frames once it has dried or slightly moved in different positions on the stretcher, leaving at times extra material that needs to be wrapped around the edges. More colours are then applied and further canvas shifts are made in circles of work that eventually stop, leading to the final appearance of the painting.

Her choices in such process are a matter of developing intuition, a game of taking and giving from and to the painting, a dialogue between the artist and her material when listening and asserting are equally important moments.

What Rommel further explained to us about her view on colour is significant of her inductive approach to painting: "after I decide which colour to start with, I am never aware how this may change until I can call a painting finished". It is an exploration of the unknown side of the painting, a journey that ends when the work reaches a character that is then known to the artist, living despite the colours and the other elements explored in the process. Taken from pieces of her everyday life or memories of her past, the titles Rommel



Julia Rommel, *Gypsy*, Oil on linen, 64 x 79 inches, 2014, Courtesy of Sorry We're Closed

eventually gives to her artworks (e.g. *Yuri's Pool*, *Friday Night*, *Small Town*, etc) also function as intimate declarations of her personal view. It is also to bear in mind that most of Rommel's shows are introduced by texts that the artist writes herself.

Though what impresses us the most in Julia Rommel's paintings is how they seem to talk about her great ability to fix a picture-character while still giving away the potential infinitude of her process. In this regard, the 2014 oil on linen *Schoolgirls* shows its wooden stretcher and staples on one side and the folded canvas on the other. Such opposition implicitly communicates the other possible choices the artist could have made and therefore transforms the painting into an infinitely changing artwork in the mind of the viewer whose subjectivity begins a poetic conversation with that of the artist.