

It would be saying little, and wrongly so, to state that Lise Duclaux is interested in plants. She is interested in the living, in everything that has to do with swarming life and knows no limit; in playgrounds, in children going to school, in all us who live as best as we can in the company of plants that grow between the cobble stones. She is as much concerned with their own life as with what will become of them when she offers “cuttings to be reaped” and is equally concerned about their growth and the names they have been given informally. Because it is in the familiar, in the fraternal might I be tempted to say, that we--and they--become part of the world of the living to the same extent as the moles that dig galleries in the ground and the humans who meander on its surface.

Words designate images and are images that arise in our memory through speech. What is unsettling in Lise Duclaux’s work is that the word that refers to a generic appellation is the same one that also designates a singular, poetic and individual existence—a name, that of plant you know, love and care for. And when you accept the notion (obvious indeed), that each flower, like any living being, has a singular life that differentiates it from its peers, it then bears a first name: Monthly Marigold, Bird Weed, Venus’ Hair, the Hare’s Ear.

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Things do not stop there, you be the judge. Hence this last plant with soft leaves, covered in a silky grey velvet is equally called in French “Hare’s Ear”, “Rabbit’s Ear”, “Lamb’s Ear” or “Bear’s Ears”, whereas in the English language it becomes “Jesus flannel » or « Lamb’s Tongue ». This is how men, under different skies or circumstances, hoped to express what they felt when they saw and felt the downy pearl grey leaves.

And it all seems like it all should never end as Lise Duclaux also offers, invents and brings other names to life, names that are no less legitimate than those, whether scientific or popular, that have been established by tradition: “The Delicious Companion”, “The Exquisite Madwoman”, “The Lovers’ Piquée”, “The Replete With Powdered Feet”, “The Glazed Voluble” and so many other “Blushing” or “Voluptuous” ones.

And it seems endless, so much so does her work embrace the world, and so much so is the language tender, funny, loving, moving, caustic etc., as inscribed on the

*sign Plants of Brussels, original works up for adoption on the days I will be in the office of plants for customary formalities.*

And then all of this, and even more, is taken up in atlases, lists, inventories in which the scientific competes with diction, where the living in all its shapes takes the place it is owed in the great hubbub of existence that does not separate humans from plants, animals from their earth on which, let us remember, the mass of earthworms is more important than that of all other animals combined, including humans!

And if this did not suffice, Lise Duclaux publishes books, post cards and posters, uses the beauty of typography, toys with the clarity of layouts to make appear, in the midst of a deep and magnificent poetic vein, the possible and happy confusion of languages written and read: *An observatory of the simple and the mad that can help us heal wounds and scars, but not those of the heart.*

Laurent Busine.

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