

## SYLVIE FLEURY

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### SHE-DEVILS ON WHEELS

PARIS MARAIS

12 May 2020 - 20 Jun 2020

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*The gallery has taken careful measures to ensure the safety of all visitors and staff in accordance with governmental guidelines. It is with great pleasure that we now invite visitors to experience the displays first hand.*

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Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to present a new exhibition of historic works by Sylvie Fleury, celebrating more than twenty years of collaboration with the Swiss artist. The title of the exhibition, *She-Devils on Wheels* is a direct reference to the automobile club founded by Fleury in the mid-1990s. Inspired by the eponymous 1968 film, the 'club' boasts an exclusively female membership centred around a shared appreciation for American customised vehicles. The starting point for a whole series of works, this project first inspired Fleury's emblematic installation '*She-Devils on Wheels Headquarters*' (1997), which functioned at the same time as a garage, the headquarters of a 'fan club', and a shopfront selling luxury automobile parts – today in the collection of the Migros Museum, Zurich. The spirit of Fleury's automobile inspired aesthetic is permeated throughout this exhibition.

Painted with the same psychedelic font as the original 1968 film poster, a mural-size slogan over 10 meters long announces the title of this exhibition. The series of six photographs included are taken from Polaroids which depict close-up details of a person wearing high-heels, focusing on the interactive space between the shoes and the vehicle's built-in parts (featuring pedals, the driving wheel, the gear stick ...). Through these snapshots, Fleury confronts stereotyped viewpoints and challenges gender norms by interplacing female attributes within an environment which is generally considered to be masculine. In these pictures, the blurred rendering, the dramatic lighting and the implicit use of objects with fetishistic undertones renders in each scene a mysterious sense of atmosphere, evocative of film noir.

Moreover, the chrome bronze motor is a sculptural work which is characteristic of Fleury's continued engagement with the ready-made. By recontextualising the original Ford Cosworth motor into the realm of art, the artist revisits the essentially Duchampian gesture of appropriation and displacement of an industrial object. The object's mechanical function is transformed as an aesthetic value in and of itself, a desire-producing machine with strong psychosexual connotations.

The inclusion of a racing suit hung to the wall, adopts the stylistic codes of Formula 1, thus recalling Fleury's wider interests in the fields of fashion and the customs of the automobile world. Here, the zip of the racing suit has been purposefully altered to enhance the clothing's strongly gendered implications. The inner lining of the coat depicts flames, a symbol of speed and power borrowed from the airbrush flame drawings often found on custom trucks and cars.

The works of Sylvie Fleury are often linked to her performances. Fleury's positively 'affirmative' sensibility, her use of image-types processed from mainstream culture, and her use of a post-feminist vocabulary, is shared by an ensemble of practices which emerged in the 1990s and continue to be developed to this present day.