

Downs & Ross

96 Bowery, 2nd Floor, New York NY 10013

RUTE MERK

SS20

July 08 – Sep 13, 2020

I got up. I went to work in the morning. New York Fashion Week was still being held, but on a smaller scale. Designers sent models down the runway in face masks, gloves, and even scrubs, many branded with designer logos. The accessories industry exploded. The last show of Fashion Week was Marc Jacobs, whose spring collection eschewed obvious references to Shen Fever and aimed for something more subtle. Held at the Lexington Avenue Armory, the show featured the drop-waist, boxy dress silhouettes of 1920s flappers, rendered in muted shades of stone, black, baby blue, the gentlest seafoam. If these were party outfits, they were for the most somber party.

Most noticeably, the clothes incorporated translucent materials, from the cellophane organza of the tiered skirts to the see-through plastic of the boots and pumps, which left parts of the models' bodies, incongruously, uncomfortably exposed. Reviewers commented on how the transparent features highlighted the way that we had all begun assessing each other's bodies, in fruitless attempts to detect Shen Fever. Fashion was beside the point. We didn't look at a woman to appreciate her outfit, we looked at her to evaluate her potential sickness.

At my desk on an especially uneventful afternoon (production jobs placed at Spectra were slowly drying up), I watched a video of a backstage interview. He spoke in his low, characteristic drawl: I didn't want it to feel real.

– Ling Ma, *Severance*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), pp. 211-12.

Rute Merk (b. 1991, Lithuania; lives and works in Berlin) received her BA in Painting from Vilnius Academy of Arts in 2013, and is acquiring her painting diploma at Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Munich. Solo exhibitions: Downs & Ross, New York; Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai; Vent Gallery, Vienna; Editorial, Vilnius. Selected group exhibitions: Kunstverein Munchen, Munich; Marburger Kunstverein, Marburg; Rupert, Vilnius; Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, Vilnius; 427 Gallery, Riga; Vartai Gallery, Vilnius; Art Hall, Tallinn; Tate, Liverpool; Malmö Konsthall, Malmö. Her works are included in institutional collections internationally including M Woods, Beijing; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing; and X Museum, Beijing.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

First Room (clockwise from elevator)

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 45, 2019

Oil on canvas

31^{1/2} × 22^{1/2} inches / 80 × 57 cm

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 51 and 61, 2019

Oil on canvas

61 × 80^{3/4} inches / 155 × 205 cm

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 7 II, 2020

Oil on canvas

31^{1/2} × 23^{1/4} inches / 80 × 59 cm

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 36, 2020

Oil on canvas

72^{3/4} × 43^{3/4} inches / 185 × 111 cm

SS20/1, 2020

Oil on canvas

63 × 78^{3/4} inches / 160 × 200 cm

Hallway (approaching Second Room)

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 33, 2019

Oil on canvas

35^{1/2} × 54^{3/4} inches / 90 × 139 cm

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 7, 2019

Oil on canvas

27 × 32^{1/4} inches / 69 × 82 cm

Second Room (clockwise from entrance)

BALENCIAGA, SS20, 36, 2019

Oil on canvas

69^{1/2} × 59 inches / 177 × 150 cm

Taihei, 2020

Oil on canvas

52 × 41 inches / 132 × 104 cm

BALENCIAGA, SS20, Look 89, 2019

Oil on canvas

86^{1/2} × 86^{1/2} inches / 220 × 220 cm

SS20/2, 2020

Oil on canvas

67 × 78^{3/4} inches / 170 × 200 cm