

La couleur positive

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The Positive Colour

Marc Renard's paintings

On the occasion of the ArtBrussels fair, the Triangle Bleu gallery (Stavelot) presents Marc Renard's new paintings. After four years of silence and refusal, the artist reveals a new lyricism rooted in the perception of the various signs of our contemporary environment. An abstraction in a "floating network", light, multiform, off-centre, and deliberately giving itself over to the pleasure it generates.

Marc Renard uses music; it is part of his daily life and resonates in the studio. These are not melodies but electrified hits that flourish on the airwaves, mix together and form — unbeknownst to us — our collective culture. When discovering his paintings, a system of synchronisation takes shape and the images respond to the fabric of sound. The light captured on the canvas comes alive, opposing its own signs to familiar urban rhythms. Like a stone thrown into deep water makes its echo resonate at the surface, musicality and plasticity come into harmony. Marc Renard's abstraction is a kind of central box to which the frequencies of the outside world are connected.

The Tested Foundation

Marc Renard has long pursued his path around painting — twenty years. But the formal nostalgia of his earlier oils no longer satisfies him. The foundation has been created; what remains is to test its solidity. In the midst of crisis, he throws himself into the void and experiments urgently. For four years, everything is destroyed in order to arrive at the "famous first painting". The tools have changed: oil worked as material in dark tones gives way to ink sprays, acrylic, collage and digital means. He confronts the heritage of the masters of abstraction, such as Gerhard Richter, Willem de Kooning and Cy Twombly, with the mobility of popular aesthetics, often sanitised. A trip to New York leaves a definitive impression on him. There he discovers the effectiveness of images, the diversity of lights and the optimistic expression of the American dream. A city full of promises that his art needs.

On the canvas, the rhythm of the expanses of colour relaxes the imprisoned threat of the beginnings, but emotion and fervour remain at the heart of the challenge. His paintings now sing the pleasure of colour; they restore its weight, value and healing virtues. "When the world becomes difficult to bear, I go down to my studio and let myself go into the colour of my paintings. Everything then feels much better... I would like them to have the same effect on the viewer," he says.

Like the neuronal phenomena whose complexity personally fascinates the artist, the painting has no centre. The incoming messages are displaced and scattered across the space of the canvas. Viewpoints are multiple and circuits change like those used on the Game Boy. The iconography of the leisure world (Pokémon, video clips, cinema...) combines with his experience of nature. The painting recovers the horizon line and its incessant power struggle between earth and sky. Thus orchestrated, the abundance of reference points rarely results in chaos.

The artist's new repertoire of forms, applied to the immateriality of backgrounds, creates an illusionistic effect of depth. The blur delivered in waves by the computer is confronted with the freedom of the human gesture. But where are the limits between one and the other? Have man and machine worked in courteous complicity, or have they assimilated and digested one another? Wanting to divide the forces at work does not seem to be the right way. How can one imagine separating what nourishes the work, what gives it meaning and what has allowed it to venture onto broader paths?

Failure is delicious. For Marc Renard's composition finds its autonomy in its value of contrast, its double signature. Agreements and dissonances, ruptures and repetitions, a burning spot ("fluorescent for its immortality") and melted colour, superimpositions and transparencies: opposites feed the flow of the painting and preserve its terra incognita. Marc Renard often evokes the element of unpredictability that accompanies his work. "The forms come impulsively, despite me... I feel helped," or again, "As soon as I paint, I become a spectator."

The artist is not an orphan, but the balance he allows us to glimpse is subtle and does not protect against vertigo. Alert before reality, its rapid transformations and the freedom it presents, his art is a fragile network of mobile connections.