Une peinture en duo

The Editors

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A Belgian painter working with a fashion designer on abstract compositions. Unheard of.

Marc Renard

Where do current investigations in abstract painting stand, now that it has recently made a major comeback on the art scene? In this field, Marc Renard occupies a singular position. First because, with more than thirty years of combative practice, this colourist knows that everything, always, is played out in the complementarity between violence and subtlety, cries and calm. Chromatic intensities are joined by nuanced textures; broad areas by trembling contours; gloss by mattness; greasy tones by others pearly to the point of kitsch.

As for the compositions, sometimes on very large surfaces, they are first explored on the computer screen or on small sheets of paper. They belong, but only partly, to the realm of a geometry in which lines and surfaces, orthogonal and oblique forms, expanse and movement intersect. Yes, Marc Renard is one of those great painters in perpetual search. Furious, desperate, intoxicated.

One day, he meets the fashion designer Hripsimé Afsarian. He liked textiles. She works with them. She proposes a creative partnership. The result: works in which silks, tulles, wools and velvets appear alongside painting and papers. Each element becomes a sign with equivalent powers. The transparency of superimposed textiles functions like glazes; their contours evoke the cloud-like quality of a Rothko, while coils of wool form a line of controlled stridency.

Between, behind, at the edge of, or in dialogue with them, painting alone remains, exploring in turn the vocabularies of tradition, whether they come from Veronese or Olitski, Newman or de Kooning, the masters of American abstraction.

Brussels, MM Gallery, 68 Place du Jeu de Balle (1000). Until 25 October.