

Entre souffles et soupirs

Guy Gilsoul (AICA), June 2018 — critical text for the exhibition at Marc Minjauw Gallery

At 55, Marc Renard has not finished with the rage that haunts his painter's gaze and thirsts through his creative mind. And since painting is a world in itself, he wants to know all its territories. From the Renaissance to the history of abstraction, nothing escapes him of the codes and manners among which he carves out his singularity.

As Manet taught him, he also seeks to immerse himself in the modern world, his own, while aiming for difference born of other cultures or other "trades". A few years ago, like Matisse before him, he had therefore looked towards the textile arts for new colours and unprecedented textures. Velvet, silk, satin and tulle were combined with traditional pigments in assemblages that also drew on the possibilities offered by computers.

But very quickly he returned to painting alone, embarking on other pictorial languages at the risk of distant exile. This time, Japan. Thus this work inspired by an erotic print. The alcove is suggested, as are the bodies. Let us not look for the courtesan and her client. Nor for the voyeur who, behind the rice paper, observes the lovers.

But only, as suggested by *The Tale of Genji*, the famous foundational text written in the eleventh century by a court lady, the beauty not of bodies but of flowing hair, of a profile that can be guessed, of an elegant movement, of sudden violence or of the brush of a fabric bearing a traditional motif.

Renard takes up this fragmentation of narrative that lies at the heart of the codes of representation in Japanese "Shunga". Space, in turn, abandons hierarchical order and perspective for a void inhabited by isolated elements, particular viewpoints, and a multiplication of moments within a single image...

This same conception (harmony?) also reaches the painter's writing, which transforms every gesture of the brush or palette knife into a completely controlled calligraphy, supported around it by work with a compressor and a ruler. Little by little, traditional Japan emerges from the non-figurative appearance.

Can you feel this dampness, these whispers, these breaths and sighs?