

## Music of the sensation

Behind all the scholarly accounts that we will provide in order to explain the fact that we like a painting, sometimes there is a sensation that is conveyed by language. It is a waste of time to try and spread our words in front of us and order them to create a more or less logical speech, or one that is more or less tinted with poetry and inspiration.

Indeed, we always hope that the vocabulary and the syntax can surrender and give in an equivalent of what occurs on the canvas. But faced with the painting that catches up with us, words hesitate and contort themselves while painting, on the contrary, will suddenly offer itself.

During my last visit to Jérôme Boutterin's studio, I again experienced this stroll of the language that endeavours to describe the drips, the juices, the brushing effects, the level of pigment or its liquid dissolution into waves, puddles, layers, bulges and recurrences, coverings, I will spare you the long list of possible equivalents that may resurface in the vocabulary. Because in Jérôme Boutterin's works there is this profusion that could be described as "vitalistic" and which, while not really relevant in science anymore, remains effective to talk about his paintings. This feeling that something *really* animates them comes from the movement that is almost systematically present in his works. Not the movement of the "existentialist" body that would be entirely involved in the painting, but the nervous movement that only involves the motricity of the forearm and that is used for greeting as much as it is used to give someone the finger.

Jérôme Boutterin has been wary of that movement, as it can become a mimicking, a sort of signature which is worth an "authenticity certificate" of the *Artist's* print glorified by the history of art.

In these paintings, it is a movement that is, let's say, "without inhibitions", for want of a better term, and which finds its primary source everywhere: in comics, in classical painting, in kitchens, street and maybe more simply, in life. A good amount of it can be found in his work, tinted with a certain humour and an essence of lightness, especially in the slightly broader shapes that seem to "conclude" several of his works, and which take "courgettoid" or "auberginoid" forms.

In reality, the word "conclude" that I use is a bit pretentious: to use it, we would have to determine with a bit of assurance the order in which Jérôme Boutterin designs his paintings, and that is near impossible. Yet it is an exercise of deconstruction to which we quickly lend ourselves in front of his work: We take, almost in spite of ourselves, a time machine in order to track down the chronological origin of the staccato of brushes, of the syncopation of small juxtaposed juices, or of the cloud in *appoggiatura*. The conductor was manoeuvring, he now comes and looks for the wise music lovers among us with his gaze... So, we look, we examine, we decompose this composition that, at once, gives itself—the uniqueness of the colour contributes to it a lot—and then breaks up and branches out under our study. It is a bit like fireworks where we would simultaneously see the explosion and all the animated stunts, but without any virtuoso unpacking: indeed, he is not looking to either prove anything or mystify anyone.

All of this, it seems, happens through a window. Jérôme Boutterin's paintings are rarely bigger than human size, and often establish themselves between the body and the mind, in other words between the environment and the image. The size of a beautiful geography map, as if not to conceal that the artist knows a lot about landscapes, since he taught this discipline for several years. Is there really a connection? There certainly is.

Geography sees things from above, and landscape brings them back to face us. Maybe it

was the opposite before the 21st century, but now that we know the other side of the world under Google Earth's eye a lot better, than our neighbour's small landing, it is clearly the supposed "objective" representation of our universe that has outclassed the intimate knowledge that we should have of it. However, it doesn't matter, Jérôme Bouutterin also often starts from flat, from above if you will, but he subsequently talks with the canvas facing him but with a necessary -and nevertheless contained- physical implication: the hand, the brain, the chest. He shuts the frontiers here or there, opens passages, saturates zones. We imagine that, sometimes, the painting is making very quick progress. Is it holding up? And compared to the others? Does it have something to say? It's a close call, one less stroke, one more stroke. To tell the truth, they discuss it among themselves and it is the place where the modest commentators that we are cannot go: in this updated dialogue between the history of painting and that of the painter.

It is a bit like the *kiss of death*, where all the Past with a capital P comes to attack you all of a sudden, in less than two square metres of canvas. Where all the great figures and the great works parade, where we imagine, not without humour, the weight of responsibilities that weigh in one go on the painter's shoulders... Should this work be added to the already too big history of art...

It can also be decided at a later date. Jérôme Bouutterin says he has thrown away works on several occasions; a gesture that is far from obvious for an artist... Indeed, we should be wary of artists who keep *absolutely everything*, because the overpopulation of works in studios generates narcissistic diseases. Bouutterin, on the other hand, maintains a distance that is pleasant for his visitors: he never pours out his ego and maintains a broad analytical openness in front of his work. And so sometimes, according a change in the studio, a small intellectual tidying up becomes necessary, so that the paintings that have passed away can nourish the soil of what is to come.

From that angle, the paintings we see are a bit like survivors: we have to keep them in mind in order to appreciate this work that needs no instructions.

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