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ROOM**

## GILLES BARBIER «BANANA RIDERS»

22 APRIL - 24 MAY 2009

OPENING TUESDAY 21 APRIL

The banana has been a recurring element in Gilles Barbier's vocabulary since the beginning of this decade. In addition to its standard humorous connotations (the banana skin), for Barbier the banana is one of the elements that come into play in his notion of sliding ("Sliding is an activity and a way of thinking that makes it possible to skirt contradictions and lubricate differences, not in order to produce closed syntheses, but so as to experience their extremities, the two ends, a space that cannot be broken down." *Un Abézédaire dans le désordre*, 2008, Éditions du Regard).

Thus a half-eaten wax banana appeared to have been carelessly "chucked away" in a corner of his exhibition at the gallery in 2003, just above a big drawing entitled *L'usine de vaseline onirique* (Dream Vaseline Factory). Later, bananas began to slip into his sculptures (*Paysage mental*, *Mega Maquette II*, *L'inconséquence des gestes*, etc.) and drawings, even congregating in major works on paper such as *Banana Riders* and *Banana Riders – The Way Back* (2006), which prefigure the installation that we are presenting in the project room on 21 April.

*Banana Riders* is a charge by over a hundred bananas that could be deemed grotesque or heroic – it's impossible to say. Like a herd, the first fruits are dashing, gathered in a compact group, mounted by figures in riding coats and top hats, brandishing their standards to the glory of moistening agents (cocamide MEA, cetylpyridinium chloride, etc.). At the back of the cavalcade, the bananas are rotting, going black, and some are no more than dead, soft skins. This three metre-long garland floating in space at eye level is a technical and visual feat (each of the bananas is a hand-painted resin casting). Seen from a certain angle, the ribbon becomes a circle, with the old bananas joining the head of the troupe.

Gilles Barbier is at *La Force de l'Art 02* at the Grand Palais, Paris, from 21 April (curators: Jean-Yves Jouannais, Didier Ottinger, Jean-Louis Froment) with a monumental installation of previously unseen works on paper. Starting on 29 May, the exhibition *Vraoum ! bande dessinée et art contemporain* at La Maison Rouge (curators: Pierre Sterckx and David Rosenberg) will feature the first French presentation of *L'Hospice*. Finally, Gilles Barbier is currently preparing a solo exhibition at Villa Arson, Nice, to open on 25 June.



*Banana Riders (the way in)*, 2009

### UPCOMING SHOWS

24 APRIL - 1ST JUNE: LA FORCE DE L'ART 02  
(WITH BORIS ACHOUR, GILLES BARBIER, ALAIN BUBLEX, VIRGINIE YASSEF)

23 APRIL - 27 APRIL: ARTBRUSSELS STAND 3B08

29 MAY - 19 JULY: PILAR ALBARRACIN // PROJECT ROOM: ARNOLD ODERMATT

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