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March
05
2021
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PIERRE SEINTURIER

The little house they used to live in

Pierre Seinturier's new exhibition might have been called "Fiat Lux", such is the central place given to light - the guest of honour, the main key of his latest paintings.

Pierre Seinturier's new exhibition might have been called "Fiat Lux", such is the central place given to light - the guest of honour, the main key of his latest paintings. The artist has recently taken up photography.

Perhaps one thing explains the other. The images that he captures and uses as sources and materials in future works reveal his formal obsessions: angular rooves, modern architecture, and rural and suburban landscapes are recurrent themes. Pierre Seinturier shoots in the old-fashioned way, with an analogue camera, and arranges his black and white and colour prints in chronological order, in numbered folders. His photography practice influences and informs his painting. He imagines and develops his paintings with his camera-eye, without giving them a photographic finish for all that - far from it. He frames his scenes, plays with contrasts and depths of field, alternates between blurry images and sharp focus, and captures light on the canvas. His great skies, painted in oil, take pride of place in his recent canvases, which are more luminous than ever. Their subtle shades, ranging from white to blue, catch the eye, making the rest - the plots and the stories that play out in their periphery - almost accessory, if not a foil. We can sense the pleasure he has taken in painting these vast empty flat spaces, in accumulating the layers and playing on the nuances of colour.



Muddy waters, 2021

Pierre Seinturier has painted two almost-identical large canvases depicting a small house in the middle of a field, "the little house they used to live in", which gives the exhibition its title. A vast, milky-clear open sky takes up two-thirds of the canvases. In one of the two paintings we can see the silhouette of a woman in the lower left corner, who is gesturing in our direction. What is she trying to say? What does she want to attract our attention to? Maybe to the fact that there is always something going on in the artist's paintings despite their apparent calm, softest palette and minimal action compared to his previous paintings. Something - but what? Indeterminacy and mystery remain at the heart of Pierre Seinturier's work: indeed, they are its main subject. The artist admits that he has a weakness for images taken at twilight and sunrise, in the evening or the early morning. He likes the fact that his paintings cannot be situated nor dated with reference to time or the hour of the day. What day is it, and where are we? What is that man doing in the middle of the forest? Who is that woman coming out of the water? What has happened? What is going to happen? Is that really what matters? The search and quest for truth, so dear to the artist, continues.



Down in the valley, 2021

Pierre Seinturier appreciates romans noirs, detective novels by Léo Malet, and the Nestor Burma series, the motto of which, he tells us, was "Fiat Lux". What if, after all, it is all just a question of light? Astonishingly, light itself is not very present in the artist's studio. Pierre Seinturier likes to work in natural light, with the curtains half-drawn. One wonders how he manages to paint such clear and accurate skies in such relative darkness.

One day we must shed light on the matter.