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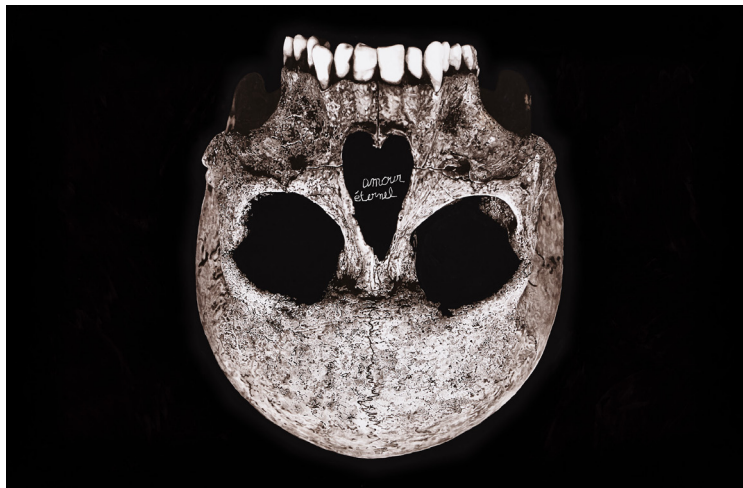
GILLES BARBIER Artist Impression

10 March – 22 April 2017

OPENING Thursday 09 March - from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

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Julien Bismuth ^{FR}
Alain Bublex ^{FR}
Massimo Furlan ^{CH}
Taro Izumi ^{JP}
Richard Jackson ^{US}
Alain Jacquet ^{FR}
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Martin Kersels ^{US}
Paul Kos ^{US}
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Olav Westphalen ^{DE}
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Amour éternel

Gaël Charbau : Almost all your works belong to programmes, ideas, statements that you invent and that result in multiple series. If one day we were able to outline the cartography of this true galaxy, it would allow us to comprehend all the connections gathering your works in one and the same world. You are now presenting a nascent series from within this universe which is entitled « Ce qui est sorti du chapeau aujourd'hui » (What was pulled out of the hat today). Can you detail the underlying principle?

Gilles Barbier : The hat is the head, and today a clock's frequency. As is often the case, the idea is to combine the power of doing with a freedom which can contradict the approach, often accompanied by a heavy, hackneyed and discriminating lexicon. In order to do this, I devise strategies to trigger a bursting within a given frame, where each fragment can subsequently be garnered. I call this principle a *production machine*. Combining machine and subjectivity is something that has troubled me for a long time now, at least since AI has allowed to clarify this interaction. *Ce qui est sorti du chapeau aujourd'hui* acts as a production machine and therefore I don't need to be preoccupied about the objects it produces, only to be attentive and dedicated.



Hawaiian Ghost 3

G.C. : This series features all sorts of forms, characters, objects, ideas – which I call « unexpected » – that have in common to all come out of a hat, each time different but always located at the bottom of the drawing. One of these drawings presents a starry sky where you represented a constellation. This work, like many others in your creative process, engendered another series of medium size formats, depicting planets with strange names. Can you explain what it is about?

G.B. : While doing some research on the Internet to collect artist impressions, I came upon software programmes which generate names for planets, spaceships, etc. After using these programmes, I ended up with a great number of planet names. Some didn't recall anything. Others on the contrary evoked imaginary configurations, textures, lights, stories, etc. The hat, under the form of a constellation this time, allowed me to throw these names onto a starry sky. To get something out of it, these planets became paintings, artist impressions, to use the standard term. They are worlds, powerful potentials, dreams. They are also painting factories, and I love that. What could Bellaqua, Gorgona Prime or Gamma Ecliptis look like?

G.C. : Gorgona Prime, for instance, possesses two very different sides, cadenced by their exposure to a sun which you imagined to be very close. It is a great illustration of your exhibition's title: the artist impression. This term is used in sciences when we entrust the representation of a concept into an image to artists, often illustrators. I detect here a true metaphor for your entire oeuvre!

G.B. : An artist impression (in French, *vue d'artiste*) is the representation of a subject which is impossible to photograph; too far, too old, invisible, not existing yet. These subjects of which no mechanical reproduction is possible, occupy a particular segment within fiction. They are often conceptualised, such as exoplanets, but the only image we have of them is a fiction, an artist impression. One foot in a serious mental construction of reality, another in



Ce qui est sorti du chapeau
aujourd'hui



Ce qui est sorti du chapeau
aujourd'hui

PROJECT ROOM

THEO MICHAEL
Arthropodos

10
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22
April

2017

fantasy. This ambivalence obviously seduced me. Besides, it is still considered as a minor art form, as was for a long time the case with comic books; in short, a virgin territory. Setting foot on it produces a thrill like no other, and forcing these treasures unknown or ignored by the art world out in the open is part of a series of gestures which are very dear to me.

G.C. : A few months ago, while on a plane to Seoul, we talked about a series you had in mind called « Les lettres aux extraterrestres » (letters to extra-terrestrials). Today, I finally discover the first drawings. I feel as if you'd found an anti-austerity remedy to abstraction, but you will probably answer that there is nothing abstract in this series, right?

G.B. : Of course there is! At the moment, the *Lettres aux extraterrestres* are abstract drawings. But we can't be sure whether it will remain so forever. Imagine that a real extra-terrestrial manages to read one of these abstraction like a text! Imagine that in his language and calligraphy, these shapes are actually readable motifs and signifiers! Then it is no more about abstraction, but about a message! These letters are absolutely nonsensical in terms of meaning, so I enclose them in bottles which I throw into the sea, or into space if I may say.

G.C. : You are also presenting a new and recent sculpture in this exhibition, a gigantic megalodon's jaw. Is it, again, the result of a previous series?

G.B. : The mouth is the entrance giving access to the space-tube and transit areas. I have long been obsessed by these spaces as I detect in them an aspect of our contemporary architecture. In particular that of data transfers: servers, transport, transit of big data in the stomach, redistribution, etc. But also the architecture of the bodies' circulation: metal detectors, underground, airlock, control, fuselage, corridors, lifts, escalators, etc. In all these carefully designed architectures, I feel absolutely powerless; unless I dare becoming a virus or a terrorist. It's however not an option for me, wandering is my style! The space-tube prohibits stops, and flux must be permanent, although there are intermediary areas where we macerate while the organs of distribution reach an agreement. But let's get back to this megalodon's jaw. Its dimensions in relation to the body are those of a metal detector found in airports. To go through it is to allow for a *treatment of powerlessness* where everything is written, until we are released. However, a simple jaw is not enough to reveal this feeling of dispossession, submission, or flux. One must add the instructions which characterise the space-tube. Hence the instructions visible everywhere inside the jaw. The body that gives in and enters the space-tube must above all respect the instructions which ensure the flux's serenity: *danger pacemaker wearers, do not enter this area...*



HMS Hawking de classe Neptune, detail

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