

# VALLOIS

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## PROJECT ROOM

20  
January  
—  
3  
March  
2012

## GALLERY

Joachim Mogarra  
"Magie de l'art  
photographique"

## OPENING

Thursday 19 January  
2012

## UPCOMING

### WINSHLUSS

9 March 2012  
—  
14 April 2012

### ART BRUSSELS

19 - 22 April 2012

### ART BASEL

14 - 17 June 2012

# Gilles Barbier Six Short stories of the Dice Man



"Aaaaaah, the problem of whether the graphic novel art or not! It's too late. Art's an insatiable ogre that's already gobbled up the graphic novel just like, before it, engraving, photography, video, posters, design, architecture, advertising, entertainment and information technology. The artists who've gone in for this great devourment are legion.

"I recall being bored to death with painting and with all that damned 'painterliness'. I slammed that door and set about recharging my batteries with illustration techniques, time-images and the syntactic specificity of the graphic novel, its vocabulary and its potential. This wasn't a challenge to painting, though. Quite the contrary. But it did mean I could move into a field of experimentation whose power I'm still a long way from having used up.

"Personally I have no problem with fluctuating between the two creatures that are art and the graphic novel. I know the French graphic novelist Winshluss and he doesn't make a big thing out of it. He's happy to skip from graphic novel to sculpture, from straight drawing to movies, and everything's just fine..."\*

The first three episodes of Six Short Stories of the Dice Man, shown here after their presentation at the Montreal Biennale,\*\* recount in the form of wordless graphic novels the adventures of the Dice Man, a clone of the artist with a dice-shaped body. Each time he falls, in a series of idiotic, absurdist gags, he provides a number between one and six, depending on which side is up.



Executed in acrylics and white-out on polyester film, these brief stories are directly related to the installation The Game of Life, shown at the Centre Pompidou in Paris last spring and now on long-term loan to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Marseille. This "sculpture" is a giant game/device whose title is the name of the best-known of the cellular automata, an explicit reference which opens up the conceptual field that the functioning of the piece explores. The work could be described as a machine - or even a piece of software - whose primary function consists in providing, theoretically at least, an infinite number of versions of all the works produced by the artist since the beginning of his career in 1992. In other words, the device sets the entire Gilles Barbier oeuvre in motion again via interaction between a chessboard, clone-pawns and a dice man whose throws indicate which pawn is to play. The stories are also, in their treatment and their penchant for big soundless spaces, a homage to graphic novelist Moebius; Barbier admits to being an avid fan, so much so that in 2001-07 he ran a Hermetic Garage - using the name of one of Moebius's most famous books - for the Astérides association in Marseille. These evening events were aimed at setting up an ongoing dialogue between the artist, his work and an interested public.

No question, then, for Gilles Barbier the graphic novel is a serious matter, while remaining a great way of enjoying yourself.

\* Excerpt from an article by the artist for the La Cité blog (December 2011)

\*\* La Tentation du Hasard/The Temptation of Chance, 7th Montreal Biennale, May 2011, curated by Ian Wallace