

Gilles BARBIER

«There is no Moon without a Rocket»

exhibition 28 May – 31 July 2010
 opening Thursday 27 May

The exhibition «There is no Moon without a Rocket» is an open window on plurality. Each of this set of new pieces stem from «possible worlds» imagined by Gilles Barbier (*the World as Thong, the World as a House in a Tree, the World of braided stories, the «Peanut»World...*).

As for all the founding myths (Judaeo-Christian, Big Bang, Quantum, Native American legends, etc.), each of the stories invented by the artist gives form and coherence to a potential world. They all hinge on similar principles, according to a logical process.

1 – a postulate, always arbitrary, indefensible and totally subjective (for ex: *the Earth is a disk / the world has been created in seven days / the world has the shape of a thong*). This postulate gives its shape to the world.

2 – a battery of axioms, theorems or apparent obviousness which drive and order the world within the boundaries of form, giving it a skeleton, an architecture. Those tools are logical when the world has decided to be logical (*for any two distinct points, there is a unique line containing them*) but otherwise magical, senseless, lunatic, neurotic (for ex: *Eve was created from Adam's rib, the Moon is the sister of the Sun, the Creator's leg was devoured by the Great Shark*).

3 – Once a world is created, it is important to be sure of its «good functioning», to verify the stability, coherence and structure of the complex obtained. Each detail of this world can be linked back to the generative postulate. When a «hole» appears, something unexplained and unexplainable, a new axiom is invented to fill it; on this principle was built Geometry.

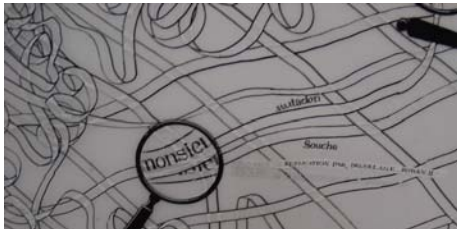
It appears that sometimes, the number of «holes» or «bugs» goes critical and there aren't enough axioms to fill them; therefore, the founding myth has to be abandoned and a new system has to be created... Which can be a dangerous decision to take: Galileo when he places the Sun at the centre of the universe instead of the Earth, Darwin when he suggests that Mankind comes from Evolution and not from Adam, Einstein when he reveals the Theory of Relativity, can all testify of that!

Even so, thanks to science fiction, virtual worlds, information theory, modelling techniques and philosophical work on the plurality of worlds, we therefore have the conceptual and theoretical tools, but also the time, for turning the shape of the world into a poetic and perfectly free space, because it has been emptied of all truth...

Thanks to those tools, Gilles Barbier is describing a series of Worlds built around his vocabulary (holes, worms, soups, clones, bubble speeches, etc.). Each of them - a sardonic smile to the «Artist's Universe»- finds its space in a generic structure: the Foam, and therefore reveals its fragile, ephemeral and expansive character.

Those Worlds we will discover through original large drawings and sculptures in the artist's new exhibition at the Gallery are at least a statement of his own artistic practices: a series of links within his prolific work, a wink to his so-called «producing machines», but also a new and joyful way to take stock of his sprawling Work -just before the next step that the artist already planned...*

*This text is based upon a conversation between the artist and Boris Achour published in the issue n°5 of «trouble», 2005, ed. Presses du Réel.



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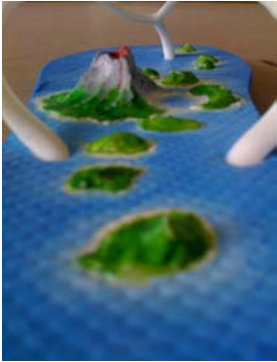
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He slept in the great immensity, floating with the celestial coconuts in the infinite ocean. When he awoke he saw space stretching out in all directions and time ahead of him flowing like a river. So he decided to follow its course, to make his way along its rim. But his feet were still the feet of a newborn infant, feet whose delicate, fragile undersides were not made for walking. And so, without delay, he cut two soles out of the infinite depth of the great immensity: one to fit his right foot, the other the left. Slipping them on, he drew four strands out of his hair, which was made up of rainbows, and used them as straps for holding the soles on tight. Then he set off on his walk along time, with each step ringing out, «Thong! Thong! Thong! Thong!

Thong! Thong!»

The Great Shark that haunts the depths of the abyss – where everything comes to an end – heard the «Thong! Thong!» of he who was walking through time, he whose soles, cut from the depths of the abyss, struck its base. The Great Shark was furious, for the deep is his domain and he did not want the rhythm of the walk of he who moves along time resounding here. So up he came from the lowest point of things. With one snap of his powerful jaws he cut through the left leg of he who was following the river time, gulping down what was bone and meat, but spitting out what went «Thong!». And one of his razor-sharp teeth remained embedded in what went «Thong!». Hopping along on his right leg, the walker saw his blood dripping all over the Thong and saw each drop give birth to a living creature. Immediately the fish and the dolphins plunged down into the ocean of the sole, but the other creatures, the birds and animals and men, said they wanted to stay on the surface. They said the ocean was cold and they preferred walking or flying. But he who was limping along time failed to hear their pleas, for his wound was hurting, and to ease the pain he grabbed a celestial coconut and washed his stump with its liquid. Then he broke the nut open to get at the pulp, squeezing it between his hands to extract its milk, and once rubbed with the milk the wound healed. Meanwhile the creatures who didn't want to stay in the ocean had hauled themselves up onto the bits of broken coconut which the celestial one-legged man had heedlessly tossed aside. And so the islands of the archipelago were born. But the creatures were cold, they said. So time's magnanimous cripple got up on his single surviving leg, took a second celestial coconut and set fire to it with his gaze. Then he placed the burning sphere on a golden wave and ordered the wave to roll through the sky every day so that the creatures would be drenched in warmth and light. And so the sun was born. But the creatures were thirsty. So the noble lame one took down a third celestial coconut and placed it on a wave of ice and ordered the wave to roll through the sky and pour down its water. And so the moon, the clouds and the rain were born. But the creatures were hungry, and he who had only one remaining leg became angry and said, «Are you going to make me pull down all the celestial coconuts to satisfy your every wish?» The creatures looked down in shame. «Now it's up to you, you who have all your limbs, to go looking for the coconuts, and you'll have to haul yourselves skywards to pull down the fruit.» Saying this, he made trunks and put coconuts and berries at the very top. And so trees were born.

And then he who was following time's course set off down his path again, hopping along on his right leg, and he was pleased to have been able to create a world with his thong, but he no longer had his left leg and progress was slow. He cursed the Great Shark, and then had an idea for taking his revenge. Noticing that one of the razor-edged teeth was still embedded in the Thong, he summoned the terrible beast and offered him a deal in these words: «Go into the Thong and take back your tooth, for you are cursed. That tooth taints my creation; take it back, go away, and we'll be even.» The Great Shark entered the Thong, but at once the celestial one-legged man shut him away for ever in the dark, freezing depths of the sole. Furious at having been tricked like this, the imprisoned Great Shark awoke the tooth that was still on the surface of the world and made it spit fire and ash to show his anger. And so volcanoes were born. Then he sent his sons to the surface to parade his hatred and strike fear into men. And so sharks were born.

Contemplating his handiwork and finding it more stable now, the creator said to himself that he must also shut away men's nightmares in the depths of the abyss. And there they make their way back and forth in the form of terrifying monsters which the Great Shark feeds off. Only after a long time was the one-legged creator of the world as Thong able to set off again down time's course. It is said that he advances by jumping on his right leg which, as a result, has become amazingly powerful. But every time he falls over the earth rumbles and trembles. And sometimes the sea rises up in a tsunami.

