

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.

33 & 36, rue de Seine
75006 Paris-FR
T.+33(0)1 46 34 61 07
F.+33(0)1 43 25 18 80
www.galerie-vallois.com
info@galerie-vallois.com

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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, rural and suburban landscapes are recurrent themes. Pierre Seinturier shoots in an old-fashioned way, with an analogue camera, and sorts his black and white and colour prints in chronological order, in numbered folders. His photography practice influences and nourishes his painting. He imagines and develops his artworks with his camera-eye, without giving them a photographic finish, 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 paintings, more luminous than ever. Their subtle shades, ranging from white to blue and to a very pale pink, 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 wide empty spaces, accumulating the layers and playing on the nuances of colours.

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 these paintings. In one of them, in the lower-left corner, we can see the silhouette of a woman 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 the apparent calm, softest palette and minimal action compared to his previous works. Something - but what? Indeterminacy and mystery remain at the heart of Pierre Seinturier's art. They are its main subject. The artist admits that he has a weakness for images taken at twilight, in the evening or in the morning. He likes the fact that his paintings cannot be situated nor dated with reference to time or to 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, continue.



Muddy waters, 2021



Down in the valley, 2021

Pierre Seinturier loves crime and detective novels. He is a reader of, among others, Léo Malet's stories and his Nestor Burma series, the motto of which, he tells us, was "Fiat Lux". What if it is all just a matter 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 that relative darkness.

One day we must shed light on the matter.

Barbara Soyler

March
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