

VALLOIS

GALERIE
Georges-Philippe
& Nathalie
Vallois

JOHN DEANDREA

Grace

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

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Let's be honest: we are all *still* captivated once, the first time that we chance upon a hyperrealist sculpture in an exhibition. Even a frequent visitor to contemporary art galleries and museums may have experienced this mental jolt when spotting from a distance a tourist in a gaudy shirt by Duane Hanson or a stark-naked young woman by John DeAndrea; the lifelike appearance of these characters, and their incongruity, have ruptured the peaceful atmosphere of the exhibition space. Thus, in 1972, visitors to Documenta were shocked by Arden Anderson and Nora Murphy (*Nora and Arden*) (1972), viewing them as two intertwined lovers in bed, surprised just after, or just before, making love. Of course, today's art enthusiasts are no longer shocked, but they nonetheless still feel a little uncomfortable. Does the warm presence of the model not insinuate itself into their imaginations, as if being exuded by his or her bronze effigy? The artist, who should be described as being as much a painter as a sculptor, has devoted hours and hours of work to the incredibly precise rendering of the skin's tone and transparency, down to the appearance of the most delicate vein or the tiniest mole, pimple or freckle.



Just centimetres from a life-size nude body, of which the grain of the skin is so apparent that we seem to see it shivering, we keep our hands in our pockets. At that moment, deep within us, we sense the return of what Klossowski calls the "schoolboy's point of view". I will add this incidental comment: I am certain that the art lover experiences this nudity more vividly than a "militant" of the currently fashionable neo-puritanism, who would denounce such indecency or exploitation of the female body, their gaze being directed less by sensibility than by their ideology. [...] almost all the bronze sculptures gathered together in this exhibition – all from 2022 – show women in poses that are not particularly expressive. They are pensive, resting. Even Adam and Eve seem more resigned than moved by being banished from Paradise. It seems that these sculptures bring to the exhibition space all the reticence, concentration and libidinal indifference that prevails in an academic workshop, precisely where DeAndrea says he discovered his true vocation.



09.06

22.07.2023

OPENING

Thursday,
June 8th

6 pm - 9 pm

36

rue de Seine

JOHN DEANDREA

33

rue de Seine

BEN

SAKOGUCHI

Catherine Millet, *Les belles indifférentes de John DeAndrea* (excerpts), published in *Grace*, monography about John DeAndrea, co-edited by Galerie GP & N Vallois & Les Presses du réel, 2023

BEN SAKOGUCHI

•Oranges•pancartes•cartes postales



Ben Sakoguchi was born in San Bernardino, in California in 1938.

In December 1941, when he was just three years old, Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor. The United States entered the war and from then on harboured strong resentment towards citizens of Japanese origin. Suspected of espionage and sabotage, 120,000 civilians were interned in detention camps. Ben Sakoguchi spent his childhood in one of these camps in Poston (Arizona).

At the end of the war, his family returned to San Bernardino and reopened, not without difficulty, the small grocery shop they had been forced to leave.

One of Sakoguchi's earliest influences was the orange crate labels stacked behind his parents' shop.

Between 1974 and 1981, he produced a great series of paintings based on these labels, which enabled him to paint a gritty portrait of America. Combining images from advertisements, films and newspapers, he revealed the underside of the great American dream: discrimination, prejudice and violence, particularly towards minorities. In 1997, the artist was invited by the Claude Monet Foundation to come to France. He stayed in Giverny and took advantage of its proximity to Paris and northern France to take a series of photographs. He also collected old photographs and drew inspiration from the work of the great masters, whose masterpieces he sometimes imitated. This was the beginning of a new series, *Postcards from France*, in which art confronts war and the present confronts the past.

Sakoguchi is a graduate of UCLA in Los Angeles. He taught at Pasadena City College until his retirement. He has taken part in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and his work can be found in major American collections: MoMA, Chicago Art Institute, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington), etc.

"Was it to have been one of those Americans of Japanese descent interned during the Second World War, was it to have had, among the first landscapes of a young consciousness, the elevations of water towers and watchtowers, and the alley ways of the camps? It is still Ben Sakoguchi who not only dispenses the nervous, corrosive joy of the observer in love with truth and justice; he embodies a never mawkish emollient of loving sweetness – of a charity, we could say, if the term did not carry a whiff the stoup and the good conscience that is baptised in it. Because Ben Sakoguchi does not invent good conscience; he works, once again like Goya, in this land of crimes where monsters hatch, prosper and run rampant; this, then, is the image that can elastically enclose the data, processes and scope of this art. The image which is image par excellence say "monster", and also, horrors for the eye awoken in the imagination), which is the image – the protean, bifurcating, multiplied image – par excellence of Ben Sakoguchi. Not only by virtue of the tribe of monstrous beings of which his works are the tapestry: Trump, Putin, Stalin, or those sacred monsters that are the great movers of art, Monet, Yves Klein; not only because of the dismal theory of the ignominy that man inflicts on man: racism, war. [...] Advertising, cars, oranges - in this case the more anodyne everyday characters, those to whom we are blinded by custom (just like the characters of the letters which abound in many of Sakoguchi's images, to the point that, in all this verbal congestion, one ends up no longer seeing the words they form). It is there, in the run-of-the-mill minutes of the so twisted "American Way of Life" that the monstrous germination recorded by Ben Sakoguchi, a watchman whose eye is as eternally open as the supernatural eye of the US dollar, is revealed."



Excerpt from the text by Damien Aubeil in the exhibition catalogue

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