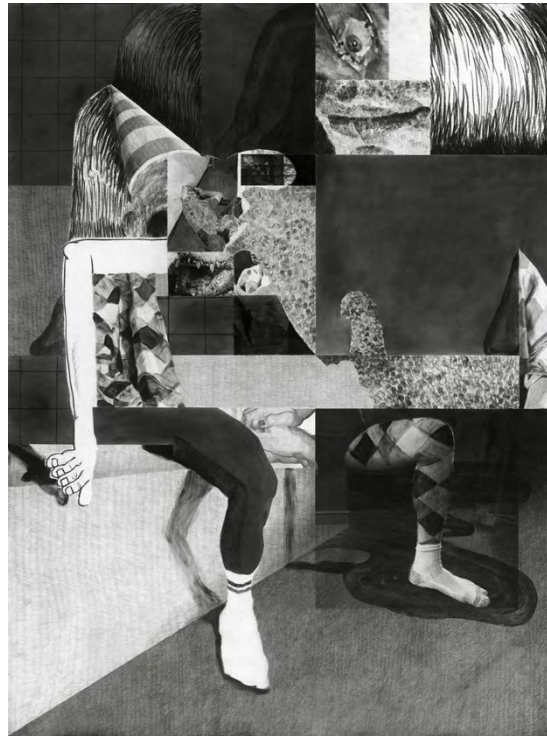


## JÉRÔME ZONDER

*Études pour le portrait de Pierre-François*June 5<sup>th</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020Espace II  
3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri  
75004 Paris

Jérôme Zonder  
*Pierre-François #10*, 2020  
 Charcoal and graphite on paper  
 200 x 150 cm  
 Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present French artist Jérôme Zonder's third exhibition at the gallery, *Études pour le portrait de Pierre-François*.

Born in 1974 in Paris, Jérôme Zonder has spent the last twenty or so years developing an oeuvre centered on the practice of drawing. He works with all its resources and pushes this media to its limits, in a graphic system ranging from hyperrealism to abstraction. Conceived either as a two-dimensional piece or as an immersive environment, this experimental and constantly renewed body of work invites the viewer to a universe in which interrogations on the human condition become the subjects of representation : « *Drawing is for me like creating a symbolic space which works; building a space in which one can bring in the world and its questions.* »

With the exhibition *Études pour le portrait de Pierre-François*, name borrowed to Michel Carné's movie *Les Enfants du Paradis*, Jérôme Zonder pursues his exploration of the notions of identity and figuration through one of the three characters that haunt his universe in a permanent back and forth between reality and fiction, Pierre-François. In the background, a whole network of historical and macrocosmic evocations transcends the portrait and include it in a broader reflection on the future of humanity.

Using the specific means of his favorite media, graphite and charcoal drawing, the artist opens his research to an ontological dimension, looking to represent subjects with the very material they are made of: carbon, one of the main molecular components of the human body. Jérôme Zonder especially focuses on the transition to adulthood, the very age of metamorphose, which works together with the maturation of his graphic creations. While Pierre-François becomes a young adult, the drawing itself mutates into a combination of different writing regimes: realistic treatment, print drawing, clear lines, fragments of comics, reminiscences of art history and abstract zones of charcoal. With these « studies », Zonder opens a space for his drawing where forms of indistinction bring into play the notion of limits. This tumultuous underground which borrows from the aesthetic of collage its visual and narrative complexity evokes thus the whole psychological and mental constitution of his model, marked by as much by the history of the world as the events of his intimacy.

The news emerges thus throughout the work (fires in Australia, protests in Chili, atomic bomb...) in a vast « wall of images » in which one sees the iconic data that compose and decompose the model, at a time where screens and social media also make us data ourselves. The traumatic memory as the uninterrupted visual flux which constitutes our common culture and shapes our relation to the world are thus at the heart of this entangled narrative.

Common to several of these portraits is the figure of Harlequin, which runs through Western painting - one obviously thinks of Picasso or Derain, where he appears as the artist's double - and offers here the opportunity for a particular graphic treatment, that of the pattern, which also evokes Mondrian's grids. Solitude, fragility and melancholy are thus suggested, but the childlike gentleness traditionally associated with the character is nevertheless shattered by the fragmented, almost cubist composition of these drawings, where a dark violence characteristic of the artist's work emerges in places.

In the two large bust portraits of Pierre-François, Jérôme Zonder depicts the primitive and impulsive brain of his character, whose depths he probes. The skin is treated in the smallest details and constitutes a tissue of raw flesh or animal membranes, manifestations of the «reptilian brain» subject to desire: one thus enters the matter as one enters the character's unconscious. To this shamelessness of the glance answers that of Pierre-François in Harlequin whose solitary sexuality appears in all its frontality. Jérôme Zonder has nourished himself with an iconographic repertoire from the seventh art that appeals to our collective culture: he thus claims the influence of Larry Clark's particularly raw photographs of teenagers, of Jean Eustache's film *La Maman et la putain* or of the scene in Stankey Kubrick's *Shining* where the desirable naked young woman is transformed at the moment of the kiss into a rotten corpse. So many references that are repeated in the drawing, in the manner of subliminal images.

Through a virtuoso «*sedimentation process*» in which multiple graphic writings are telescoped, Jérôme Zonder asks the question of the line and thus of the subject. The challenge is to produce a «*system of representation that strives to contain the whole world - the world in all its diversity, complexity and heterogeneity*». Hence the desire underlying the portrait to bring out the great history and to express humanity in suffering. A passage from the singular to the universal that the artist sums up as follows: «*The brain is infinite like the cosmos in a way, and the black and white of my drawings becomes here, literally, grey matter*».

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**Jérôme Zonder is born in 1974 in Paris where he lives and works.**

Since he graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2001, Jérôme Zonder has spent the last twenty or so years developing a consummate body of work centered on the constantly reinvented practice of drawing. The artist's unique mastery of his medium, whose resources he mobilizes, thus establishing a true polygraphy, along with the singularity of his historical and sociological approach, make Jérôme Zonder one of the most interesting French draftsmen of his generation.

Jérôme Zonder's œuvre has been presented in notable personal exhibitions such as *The Dancing Room* at Tinguely Museum (Basel, Switzerland, 2017), *Fatum* at La Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France, 2015), and *Au Village* at the Lieu unique (Nantes, France, 2014).

In 2019, two solo shows were dedicated to Jérôme Zonder at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France) and at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Locle in Switzerland. 2018 was a particularly dense year for Jérôme Zonder. The artist benefited from a solo show at the Château de Chambord, *Devenir traces*. The exhibition presented over 130 works in the historical spaces of the castle, following a one-month *in situ* residency. The following summer, Jérôme Zonder also enjoyed a solo show at the Centre d'Art Le Transpalette in Bourges

The same year, the artiste also took part in several group shows such as *Guernica* at the Musée Picasso in Paris, and *Quel Amour !?* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain of Marseille, at the occasion of the MP 2018 artistic event. Jérôme Zonder was also invited by Laurent Le Bon and Pierre Rosenberg to participate in the show *Le Massacre des Innocents : Poussin, Picasso, Bacon* at the Musée Condé of Chantilly in fall 2017.

Thanks to his past group show *Prière de toucher* at the Tinguely Museum (Basel, Switzerland) in 2016 and his solo show *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* at the Drawing Center of Diepenheim (The Netherlands) the same year, Jérôme Zonder has drawn a growing attention from the international art scene.

His work is present in important international collections such as The Istanbul Modern Museum, the FMAC Paris, the FRAC Picardie, the FRAC Auvergne, the Fondation Emerige, the Collection Antoine de Galbert, the Collection Florence and Daniel Guerlain, the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration in Paris and the Cabinet de Dessins de l'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

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**Paris Bourg-Tibourg**

**Group show**  
*Looking Forward*  
May 22 - July 15, 2020  
Accrochage évolutif

**Benoît Maire**  
*Miss Rankin*  
September 04 - October 31, 2020

**Paris Cloître Saint-Merri**

**Group show**  
*Looking Forward*  
May 22 - July 31, 2020  
Accrochage évolutif

**Jérôme Zonder**  
*Études pour le portait de Pierre-François*  
June 05 - July 31, 2020

**Luc Delahaye**  
September 05 - October 31, 2020

**Bruxelles**

**Hoda Kashiha**  
*Dear St. Agatha I am witness of your tears*  
*In the land of Tulips*  
May 30 - July 11, 2020

**Carole Benzaken**  
September 02 - October 24, 2020

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