

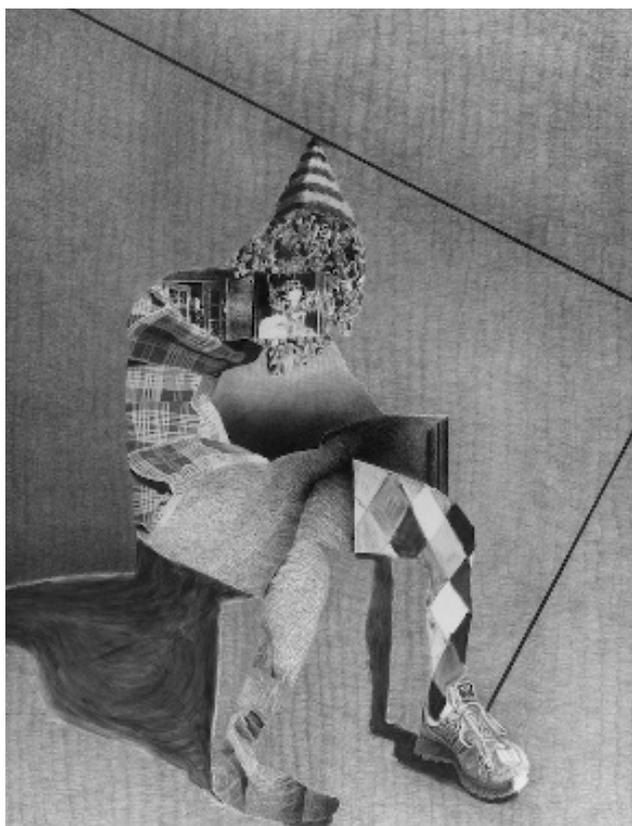
GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

JEROME ZONDER

Jusqu'ici tout va bien
(Studies for the portrait of Pierre-François)

Tuesday September 7 - Saturday October 23, 2021



Jérôme Zonder
Pierre-François #29, 2021
Graphite and charcoal on paper, 200 x 150 cm
© Jérôme Zonder
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to dedicate a fourth exhibition to the artist Jérôme Zonder, his second in Brussels since 2016. On this occasion, the artist –regarded as one of the greatest representatives of contemporary drawing– presents a series of portraits: spaces of graphical collision in which a variety of stylistic regimes unfold a psychic world in full transformation. These 'studies' are a continuation of his research into the adolescence of Pierre-François, a fictional character borrowed from Marcel Carné's film *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1945) and a recurring figure in his work. From the small formats that function as 'source images' to the large compositions that together make up this multitude of expressions, it is possible to glimpse, beyond the scope of the personal, a view of humanity in the Anthropocene era.

Over the past twenty years, Jérôme Zonder has developed a polygraphic system that takes as its subject the portrait, bringing into coincidence the question of representation and that relating to identity. The challenge, here, is to find a form that not only represents the subject but that also embodies it. This quest for the perfect line is achieved through graphic approaches whose diversity reflects the complexity of the relationship with both oneself and the world: hyperrealist or comic book style line drawing, almost printlike use of patterns, flat areas in charcoal powder, geometrical clarity, monochrome or abysmal emptiness... This diversity in drawing is linked to various types of images drawn from a common visual culture: historical archives, iconic paintings, film fragments, symbols and metonymic details that form a narrative entanglement, testifying to a compulsive but nonetheless healthy relationship with the images of our time.

Paradoxically, the choice of a limited number of means also contributes to the deepening of the subject, to the enhancement of its expression: the typical black and white embodies both the historical memory and the grey matter of the character, while the graphite leaves on the paper surface traces of one of the main molecular components of the human body: carbon.

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

In this way, Jérôme Zonder's portraits unveil all the external forces that permeate and determine the human being and make tangible his physical constitution, at times atom by atom. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the carrier to assume the appearance of flesh, like a skin that has not healed properly, as in the *Portraits of Adolescents*.

As such, the adolescence of Pierre-François becomes *de facto* the terrain of a mutation, of an assertion of the drawing and particularly that of a clash between all these contradictory intensities. From a graphical point of view, the artist's intention is to 'to abandon the comfort of the image', to bring about an imbalance in the drawing. Indeed, the exhibition presents three portraits of Pierre-François as a harlequin, all of them based on a visual tension, resulting from a friction between different fractures and tonal ruptures. In the first, it is evidenced in the rigour of the grid and the sharp diagonals that contrast with a hunched over, irresolute body, buckling under the accumulation of elements; in the second, it is the very basis of the drawing that becomes acrobatic, as Pierre-François is seen resting on the point of a triangle, while in the third, he is found standing head to tail. This sense of vertigo culminates in a work that is literally turned upside down, stripped of all structural components and saturated with imported elements: it is the most explicit and assertive entry into Pierre-François's 'grey matter' and all the struggles it is subjected to.

This 'hysterical dichotomy' is further enhanced by an underlying violence, which finds its source in the memorial dimension of the works. A complex play of reminiscences, echoes and visual quotations emerges in an aesthetic that is reminiscent of collage and Cubism. While several of these elements function as allusions to traumatic events in our history (anxiogenic crowds, threatening shadows), Jérôme Zonder further expands this materialisation of a collective unconscious through cut-outs in which only the form of a theme touched upon elsewhere is preserved. A retinal significance emphasised by the many eyes that punctuate the exhibition.

In keeping with the dark humour of the title, 'Jusqu'ici tout va bien', the cynical distortion of sources of inspiration arises from the same clash of contrasts. Here, however, the world of childhood appears in all its ambiguous gloom: Harlequin takes on the appearance of a hooded hostage, while children's books are brought to life in the form of a nightmarish rabbit.

As a true artisan of the image, Jérôme Zonder affirms yet again that drawing is above all 'thought that is practised with the hand', prone to perpetual expansion.

Jérôme Zonder was born in 1974 in Paris. He lives and works in Paris.

A graduate of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-arts de Paris in 2001, Jérôme Zonder is one of the most recognised artists of the young French contemporary art scene, and considered to be one of the most important graphic artists of his generation.

The works of Jérôme Zonder have been the subject of solo exhibitions such as *The Dancing Room* at the Museum Tinguely (Basel, Switzerland, 2017), *Fatum* at the Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France, 2015), as well as *Au Village* at the Lieu unique (Nantes, France, 2014).

In 2019, two solo exhibitions were dedicated to Jérôme Zonder, one at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the other at the Musée de Beaux-Arts Le Locle in Switzerland. 2018, also, was a particularly successful year for Jérôme Zonder. The Domaine de Chambord honoured the artist with the exhibition *Devenir traces* (Becoming Traces), bringing together more than 130 works in the historic spaces of the Château, following a month-long residency in situ. The following summer, his solo show at the Centre d'art *Le Transpalette* in Bourges also drew considerable attention.

In 2018, the artist also participated in several group exhibitions such as *Guernica* at the Musée Picasso in Paris and *Quel amour !?* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Marseille. Jérôme Zonder was also one of the contemporary artists invited by Laurent Le Bon and Pierre Rosenberg to participate in the exhibition *Le Massacre des Innocents: Poussin, Picasso, Bacon* at the Musée Condé in Chantilly in autumn 2017.

Jérôme Zonder has received growing attention on the international scene, as demonstrated by his participation in the exhibition *Prière de toucher* at the Museum Tinguely in Basel in 2016, and his exhibition *La jeune fille et la mort* at the Drawing Centre in Diepenheim (Netherlands) in the same year.

Jérôme Zonder's work can be found in important collections both in France and abroad, such as the Istanbul Modern Museum in Turkey, the Musée des Beaux arts Le Locle and the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Neuchâtel in Switzerland, the Musée des Abattoirs in Toulouse, the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration in Paris, the Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain de Paris, the Cabinet des Dessins Jean Bonna of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux arts, the Conseil départemental de Seine Saint-Denis, the FRAC Auvergne and Picardie, the Fondation Emerige, the Collection Antoine de Galbert, the Collection Florence et Daniel Guerlain, and the Maison Particulière - Collection Myriam et Amaury de Solages.

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

For any further information, please contact Valérie Wille
valerie@nathalieobadia.com / + 32 (0)2 648 14 05

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Brussels

Charles Decoster

Jérôme Zonder

Jusqu'ici tout va bien

September 7 - October 23, 2021

Shahpour Pouyan

November 6 - December 18, 2021

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Cloître Saint-Merri

Robert Kushner

September 4 - Octobre 23, 2021

Cloître Saint-Merri II

Benoît Maire

Benoît Maire - Ker Xavier

September 4 - Octobre 23, 2021

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Saint-Honoré

Group Show

From September 9, 2021

Mickalene Thomas

October 7 - December 18, 2021