

33

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

\

Pilar Albarracín **ES**
Gilles Barbier **FR**
Julien Berthier **FR**
Julien Bismuth **FR**
Alain Bublex **FR**
Massimo Furlan **CH**
Taro Izumi **JP**
Richard Jackson **US**
Adam Janes **US**
Jean-Yves Jouannais **FR**
Martin Kersels **US**
Paul Kos **US**
Paul McCarthy **US**
Jeff Mills **US**
Arnold Odermatt **CH**
Henrique Oliveira **BR**
Peybak **IR**
Lucie Picandet **FR**
Lázaro Saavedra **CU**
Niki de Saint Phalle **FR**
Pierre Seinturier **FR**
Peter Stämpfli **CH**
Jean Tinguely **CH**
Keith Tyson **GB**
Jacques Villeglé **FR**
Olav Westphalen **DE**
Winshluss **FR**
Virginie Yassef **FR**

Realism, we're told, holds a mirror to the world. If so, the art of Julien Berthier - scrupulously "realistic" in form - shows us, firstly, that the mirror is itself a material object existing in the world, and secondly, that our reflections can often look, let's be honest, a little silly.

For the artist's ninth solo show at Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois since his first in 2001, Berthier extends his career-long exploration of the ways in which art engages

with the world (society, the urban landscape, public space, capitalism, "nature"...) and, indeed, the ways in which that world engages with art. The exhibition weaves together complex ideas around time, causality, the status and functions of contemporary art, and the sheer, mind-numbing absurdity of the world we live in. And it does so with characteristic humour, perception, and a rare lightness of touch.

The exhibition's starting point is *Les Monographies* (2018), a book made up of five existing monographs, by very different artists: Julia Wachtel, Doug Aitken, Robert Smithson, Sophie Calle, and Roman Signer. Each book has been cut horizontally and assembled together so that the spine reads 'Juli-en Bert-hie-r'. The work suggests that originality is never pure. It affirms that all artists are - at least in part - products of their predecessors, whether consciously or not. But it does so with finesse and with a sense of playfulness.

Berthier describes the piece as "a very strange cadaver exquis" whose form offers a myriad of collage-esque possibilities. Berthier seems to be taking ownership and relinquishing it at the same time.

Les Monographies may involve the appropriation of other artists, but much of the rest of the exhibition revisits or resituates Berthier's own work from new vantage points. A selection of photographs taken in Europe, America, and Africa throughout Berthier's career includes both wry observations of mundane oddities and documentation of previous projects. In Berthier's hands overlooked details can point to big ideas (or to the failures of big ideas). Some images show us parts of the world as Berthier observes them; others as Berthier has created them. It can be hard to know which is which. Likewise, a pair of drawings - titled, with a shrug of the shoulders, *Rien de Special* (2017) - shows an artwork atop a building, viewed from slightly different angles, nine months apart. But the artwork - large letters spelling out 'Rien de Special' (what else?) - is almost incidental. Even the style of the drawing is blandly anonymous.



Les Monographies, 2018

OPENING

Thursday
15 March
from 6pm

/

16
March
-
21
April
2018

36

MARTIN KERSELS
Disc-O-Graphs
(Disques-O-graphiques)

FRANCOIS DUFRÊNE
Mot Nu Mental



Les Chutes, 2018

In a quite different way, *Les Chutes* (2018), a new series of wall-mounted sculptures, also sees Berthier revisit his own earlier projects. These sculptures may seem abstract but each in fact takes its form from a by-product of one of Berthier's earlier works, produced over the past decade or so. Some started life in order to test ideas; some were model pedestals for realised sculptures; others were simply off-cuts from the process of production - a cross-section here, a sliced-off corner there. Something drew Berthier to each form and they remained in his studio awaiting rediscovery. Now, he has scaled them up to a human scale - like masks, he points out - making use of the same original material: aluminium, rubber, bronze, plyboard or exotic hardwoods. There is perhaps an ethical imperative behind this reuse, but it is not one reducible to anything as simplistic as recycling. This is no closed ecosystem: one thing leads to another, as the English like to say.



5 secondes plus tard (après Achille), 2017

A similar consequential logic informs *Cinq seconds plus tard* (2017-ongoing). For this series of paintings, Berthier has worked with professional art restorers to adapt solid but not noteworthy nineteenth-century paintings so that the scenes depicted now become, as the title tells us, just five seconds later than the original. That quantity of time is crucial. It is of course absurd in its precision (imagine the conversation between artist and restorer!) and might seem to poke fun at certain modes of art-historical analysis. Moreover, Berthier has not relocated the painting into the far future, a thousand years hence, when all is ruin. Just a few moments have passed. What's changed? Not much maybe, but enough: a shadow shifts (im)perceptibly: a horse and rider exit the frame, removing any trace of narrative (rendering the work "more contemporary", feels Berthier - if only by five seconds...)

FAIRS

Drawing Now Paris
22-25 March

•

TEFAF
New York
4-8 May



5 secondes plus tard (Pierre de Baucé), 2017

Berthier's gestures here are wryly modest ones. This is not the iconoclasm of certain British artists defacing the great names of art history; rather Berthier's is a knowingly humble intervention, one that pays respect to the professionalism both of the original painters and of today's restorers, whose own professional ethics, ever since the gaudy renovations of the nineteenth-century, have privileged reversibility. Here too, all changes can be undone. Berthier's art can always fade away. Throughout this project, and indeed this exhibition as a whole, Berthier remains respectful towards the art of others and rather charmingly modest towards the status of his own.