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Meessen De Clercq

BENOÎT MAIRE
Castling the Queen

MEESSEN DE CLERCQ
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For his first personal exhibition in Belgium, **Benoît MAIRE** (b. 1978) is occupying the rear room on the ground floor. His exhibition gives the impression from the outset of pronounced classicism and contemporary reflection. On one side, paintings on canvas are hung on the wall, while on the other, a few sculptures on plinths challenge the overall concept of an exhibition. The paintings are what they seem: paintings of clouds. The sculptures contain more elements which retrace the artist's work over a period of time: simple objects indexed with a word (for example an apple on which one can read "or" or an ancient portrait revisited (cf. the altered portrait of Socrates re-sculpted from memory).

By a process of deduction, the visitor can work out that Benoît Maire's work is permeated by the concept of waste, loose or abandoned objects. How does an object change from being an object to being waste? What power of expression remains in the waste? In Benoît Maire's work, the fact of indexing enables items of waste to be named, isolated and given a status. By naming, they are given an existence. Indexing also means pointing with the index finger. The presence of this index finger protruding from a petrified tree trunk shows all the human power contained in the hand. This upward pointing finger is rather reminiscent of that of St. John the Baptist painted by Leonardo da Vinci which seems to question the mystery of the Creation, but also refers clearly to the technique and the machine which created it. This raised finger is also a gesture of warning or even accusation. Is Man the slave of technology?

As to the paintings. How to designate them? Should we refer to this as pictorial technique? What about the subject of these oils on canvas? They are definitely paintings of fragments, of erasure, but are they not also paintings of the *unspeakable*? Paintings that are difficult to name; landscapes of mists and clouds, paintings in the process of creation, disappearing and appearing in a continuous movement. One could see parallels with Chinese traditional painting: "*if painting consists of the representation of forms, what has form must nevertheless rely on the formless (...) The formless not only precedes whatever has form, as its starting point and origin, but it is the effective, generating foundation, and it continuously emanates from there*". (F. Jullien)

Benoît Maire is born in Pessac in 1978. A former student at the Palais de Tokyo and at the Villa Arson, Benoît Maire studied art and philosophy. Joint winner of the Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard in 2010 with Isabelle Cornaro, his recent personal exhibitions include the David Roberts Foundation (London 2013), Fondazione Giuliani (Rome, 2013), la Verrière – Fondation Hermès (Brussels, 2014). His films have been projected at locations including the Pompidou Centre (Paris, 2014), the Vancouver Cinematheque (2013) and the Tate Modern (London, 2010). He lives and works in Paris.