

BENOÎT PLATÉUS

*Algues, tatouages et autres percolateurs*

30 October - 19 December 2020

«There is no polyp and no chameleon that can change colour as often as water.»

J.-A Fabricius, *Theology of Water*, transl. 1741

For his first solo exhibition at the gallery, Benoît Platéus (b. 1972) is exclusively showing his paintings. The title *Algues, tatouages et autres percolateurs* (*Seaweed, tattoos and other filters*) may appear enigmatic but while walking around the exhibition, visitors will perceive the coherence of these heterogeneous associations. The paintings interact and combine fluently. On closer examination, the viewer will understand that the paintings seem to be tattooed with motifs, that seaweed is floating there at various depths and, overall, a constant energy is filtered and diffused through the exhibition rooms.

In a tight hanging, the paintings reveal a world teeming with life, made of shadows and sophisticated hues, shafts of light and shapes with a ghostly whiteness. Platéus's painting is open to personal interpretation: the viewer will see what he/she wants to see in it. As he himself says: «What interests me is the transient states that allow every possibility. I like things that elude categorisation, it gives them more presence, strength, which imparts greater presence and strength, it brings out their singularity».

But there are constants. For example, when looking at the paintings, the eye is always drawn from the background to the foreground and vice-versa, as the eye seeks somewhere to fix its gaze. Platéus's painting is complex without being complicated. It is complex like the ground beneath us; with its different strata, its sediments, its rare minerals, its water tables and its landslides. But nothing convoluted or hermetic. There are broad, full brush strokes as well as dabs and nervous jabs with fine brushes. All of that is there to view in total simplicity.

From the technical viewpoint, the backgrounds are of the utmost importance. They are very elaborate, enabling the superimposed motifs to find a solid anchorage and float in a controlled drift. Like seaweed. There is control, but which seems to be conditional on a great freedom, which depends on fortuitous accidents which gradually define the progress of the painting. If new directions crop up unexpectedly, Platéus will gladly follow them. Even at the risk of going wrong, and having to back out of his painting, erasing everything that he had ventured. A finished painting may evolve at the last minute. Should he accentuate a shape or a colour? Then why not use the technique of collage? Like a tattoo. The shapes that emerge, sometimes timidly and sometimes shouting aloud, come from a fertile vocabulary which is always the artist's loyal companion. In the smaller sized works, Platéus seems to be tackling a subject that appears endless. One might venture a bold comparison with Ensor and his wish to paint skulls and masks until the end of his life. In the case of Platéus, objects are painted without the viewer being able to identify them easily: votive statuettes, vials, geological formations, shells, ex-voto? These shapes float and dissolve into the background like ectoplasm, the mysterious substances that were thought to emanate from the body of certain mediums during their trance.

There is a slow-burning fire in Platéus. Beneath the embers glows a lingering light.

The public was able to obtain an overall view of Benoît Platéus's work over the last twenty years in his exhibition *One Inch Off* at WIELS (Brussels) in 2019 and at the Bonner Kunstverein in Bonn (Germany). Other solo exhibitions have been held at BOZAR (Brussels), at SMAK (Ghent), Espace 251 Nord (Liège), at Albert Baronian (Brussels) and in various galleries on the East and West Coast of the United States. There have also been notable collaborations with J-B Bernadet at Almine Rech (London) and Karma (New York).

His works are also in many public collections, specifically: MAC's Grand-Hornu, Mu.ZEE Ostend, Musée d'Ixelles, FRAC Limousin, Musée d'Art contemporain in Strasbourg, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and in many corporate and private collections.