

Philippe Pastor

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Lately, Pastor's register of activity has been modified and reorganised, suddenly taking on a whole new direction, and quite unexpected in its conflagration. For a long time this artist has been looking for his pathway; exploring for a while the different possibilities of drawing, hunting down the trace in the subject-matter itself of its multiple emotions. Following this, the question of colour, a question which is of utmost importance as it will allow him to open up to the world, allow him to at last find a pathway towards the light of redemption. At the end of this long process, his work lies in the balance between a series of figures close to abstraction and the impalpable depths of a background often blank. With his experimentations sometimes extreme, he has brought together in the same inextricable vital impulse, the force of energy and a continual return to the possibilities of the material itself. This material, he perceives as simultaneously a surface and also as something thicker that he sculpts chromatically, so as to make strange looming figures, which, one after the other reveal a man, a bunch of flowers, an alcoholic, a couple taken in an instance of happiness...

All of these designs, time declined in a more or less open series, came from a dive into deepest reality, in this sort of everyday life which reveals itself to a few human beings in all of its miserable splendour ; horror and the sublime always intimately linked in the art of human activities. To convince oneself we only need to flick through his sketch pads, his dozens of drawings making up the thousands of gestures and attitudes observed at a distance by an attentive witness. Here, the preciously exquisite head of a woman taken in the moment of her amorous abandon, further on, the disfigured drunk claiming with a lewd gesture God's forgiveness. It wasn't for nothing that at this time, Pastor liked to create to the music of Léo Ferré, this brother of soul and of stone who always indicated to him way forward. With time Pastor started to feel how much this battle that he was fighting against the elements and the world could prove to be a dead end. The material always gives the artist the same degree of intensity as that of which it had initially given, opposing violence to violence, suggesting from time to time the calm remoteness of a worn out gesture.

Finally, the unlimited energy which bursts from his whole being to take possession of his works risked to become a pure habit, simple posture reproduced indefinitely. Suspicious of everything that seemed to be easy, Pastor started right from the beginning of the summer of 2003 with a new series. But it was a trip and a getting away from the studio, which kept him implicitly a prisoner, which would lead to an important rupture. At Saint Dominica, he suddenly watched the fishermen who with their spears harpooned the fish. As much of a spectacle as captivating, that he identified immediately with these seamen working hard, as a symbolic equivalent or the other side of the coin to all those businessmen who leave for work each morning in their precious and ridiculous armour, to earn what will insure them the comfort of a life which is aimed at the futile accomplishments of the consumers few needs. This transition from an exotic solar image to its miserable occidental equivalent needed nothing less than a radical change of method and scale.

These last few months, Pastor has integrated new material suddenly in concurrence with the power itself of the pictorial material. Other material, other methods. From these cardboard and torn paper, slashed or cut with more or less violence would surge a group of primary forms, of forms without any real attachment to reality. Only the rays of light from the pigments and the will and control of the artist could give back to these scattered pieces, this diffused thickness which allows the onlooker to perceive there the expression itself of our era and to recognise some of the figures and identifiable people. Because this is what his work is all about; to give from our world a more open and cruder representation and above all to attest to the violence which doesn't stop shaping it. For all these reasons, Pastor puts iron in his works, he uses a few pieces of iron and then attacks the material directly with strokes of incredible precision despite the urgency which animates him. Henceforth, a master alchemist of a conduct which seems sometimes to elude him, Pastor likes to be surpassed by the material, to leave himself more freedom, widen his experience, to go beyond the framework of the figuration and get carried away with the pleasure of this dialogue which suddenly finds its rhythm of inscription.

To the corroding bits, ruffled from having bits added and taken away, to these parts which appear like sudden bursts in front of the calm beauty of the fields of colour, Pastor is opposed to sensation, sensation as an organiser of the different parts. While the observer is captivated by a method and the mysteries of the condition of the materials (papers and ripped up cardboards, glue, juxtaposed, then, the arrival on the scene of the paint, of the pigments one after the other held and then freed to play with the chaotic groundwork of the masterpiece), The work opposes its own theme and a not so innocent figure emerges. This double movement (a technical and topical movement), this circular movement (because each realisation immediately feeds the one that follows) shows above all how much each work is always a symbolic and figured moment in the world. Attests to the amount of reality drawing from his feelings, the power and energy necessary for this continual game with the materials and methods, such is the condition in which Pastor works at the moment. It's up to the observer to grasp all the aesthetic dimensions but also and especially the philosophical ones. But that's already another story.

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