

Châtelet Les Halles

Léopold Gaillard

10.09 - 11.10.26

In the halls of 19th-century grocery commerce, produce circulates in the confines of iron and glass. We are in times of the *Nouveauté* amid commodification in industrialising France. Les Halles is where the *laws of the new* confront us with a sense of abstraction that has to do with magic. At once, cucumbers, vodka, bread, potatoes, you may add vases, puppets, marble, trees; in fact, nails, snails, ales, and pails come to form a seamlessly conceivable chain of enumeration. What puts these differing things onto one singular plane? It is important that we stress the linkage of language and commodification here: the naturality of the enumeration is what hints at concealment, and so does the transparency of these halls that bear the same secret.

Coinciding with the construction of Les Halles, commodities come to be exposed as such, as veils, breaking and splitting more or less everything into a coin with a flip side. There is still linen, call it the obverse, but in the wake of abstraction – brought about through the homogenising clock of labour time, the value form, and money as the general equivalent – it comes to be implicated in a circulation that it doesn't foreground, and neither do puppets nor shoes. "Value, therefore", as Marx tells us, "does not stalk about with a label describing what it is"¹; rather, it "converts every product into a social hieroglyphic"², stocking it with a reverse, a flip side, a secret thereof. This is the hidden cost of enumerating things that are "just as much a social product as language"³ yet bound to an all-encompassing outside that looks back at us.

Meanwhile, the unsettling insight of these works concerns the relationship between artistic abstraction and its economic counterpart, which, far from being in 'post-or-end-status,' loops in the present, intensified in its globalised form.

But this is only to sketch the baseline. What's really at stake here is today's position of the cover, the status of the secret. As these parallel lines encounter further disclosures, politics of open secrets emerge. The applied technique of adding, the fact that even the backside of the canvas is an exposable surface, would then be an expression of the lifted veil, implicating us further in the process of endless addition, now decoupled from the space that we stood in for action. Contained in the work is this descriptive point: yes, abstraction and its forms changed their masking, but you'd fall for a trick if you thought this were its aim. What circulates here, rather, is what this world of open secrets fails to conceal.

– Béla Andor Mohné

¹Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I*. Translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, edited by Friedrich Engels, Progress Publishers, p. 48.

²Ibid., 49.

³Ibid.

Profil

1. Léopold Gaillard
Pirate (P), Dripping (D)
2026
Oil on Linen
168 × 168 cm
2. Léopold Gaillard
Dripping (D), Palmier (T)
2026
Oil on Linen
140 × 140 cm
3. Léopold Gaillard
Réalisme (R), Pirate (P)
2026
Oil on Linen
156 × 156 cm
4. Léopold Gaillard
Nourriture (N), Palmier (T)
2026
Oil on Linen
168 × 168 cm

