



COEUR À CUIR
MARCEL DEVILLERS
14/01/17 - 05/03/17

"Can one think in painting as one can dream in color?" asked the critic Yve-Alain Bois¹ in 1990, trying to determine what could be a pictorial thought conceived on the model of the "visual thought" advocated by Paul Klee. Posing such a horizon, certainly desirable beyond its actual conditions of possibility, allows us to move the corpse into the closet that has come to become the consecrated genre of painting. By forcing the line a little, it would indeed seem that defining oneself as an artist cannot ignore a preliminary step: taking a position in relation to the Great Painting - either by commenting on its internal history, or by constructing a path based on the rejection of one's sphere of influence. Faced with this dualism, thinking in painting, without necessarily writing the brushes by hand, offers a third path that is more ambiguous, more problematic, and therefore eminently richer.

Thus Marcel Devillers does not work so much on painting as with it; or rather within it, applying himself to working in the mental space circumscribed by genre. A painter without brushes, seasoned by the daily frequentation of a painter's studio, the question is very present, but it is present like a tight flirtation spurred on by the intoxication of the forbidden. From this, a fantasy relationship with the modernist heritage is born, coupled with the desire to "cut out the word painting to see what is around it" in order to make not a hole in life,² but rather an incision in the flesh of the canvas - an "aggression of the surface", to use the artist's formulation. Tired, deflated, the canvas then opens up to contamination by everyday life: he sticks to the skin reminiscences of childhood readings, the nocturnal emotions of nightclubs, the cheap and dirty images of brightly colored posters; leather pants, stage tape, cables per kilometer or even light bulbs.

Born in 1991, Marcel Devillers studied at the Ateliers de Sèvres and the Ecole du Louvre before entering the Beaux-Arts de Paris, from which he will graduate in 2015. Marcel Devillers lives and works in the post-medium era. The de-hierarchization of sources and materials, which has been so much talked about to designate the practice of artists born in the 1980s and grown up with the Internet, does not occur in him solely on a generational basis. Certainly, the fact that the beam of references running through the works is more a product of his personal history than of the formal critical apparatus is linked to the air of the times, which is that in the era of the staging of the self, the artist is more an embodied subjectivity making sense of a network of scattered signs rather than the author of a production that is forgotten in the body of painting - or of art. But in Marcel Devillers' work, one must still see the parasitic influence of writing, through which the memory of scansion, breath and rhythm arrives.

Neither preliminary nor preparatory to plastic works, writing allows him a greater frontality: this does not mean, as one might think, the arrival of rationality, but keeps the spontaneity of onomatopoeia and musicality. During *General Donor*, his monographic exhibition at the Triple V gallery (2016), the artist presented a series of tondi, pieces of monochrome patent leather cut



out according to the cutting of the hides and then stretched out on a frame, sprinkled with a few words or snippets of sentences applied with a stencil - "the image", "zoning", "the circumstances of painting", "agglutinate" or "cut the corpse". For his second solo exhibition at the Bains Douches in Alençon will not only be published the poetry collection *La Note salée du désir*, but within the proposal itself, the text will continue to make image.

Only the link to representation has become even more distorted and *Coeur à cuir*, the title of the exhibition, shifts the perspective - literally. From an entirely wall-mounted hanging, we move here to a presentation of the works on the floor: at our feet are a series of teak wood cut-outs serving as a display of various objects placed in their center. Among these compositions, the viewer distinguishes here books from the *Goose Flesh* collection arranged on pillows, there clothes as if nonchalantly thrown on the floor; so many cores taking a portion of domesticity while orchestrating a reception that borrows from still life and religious altar. Each of these targets, a little more than a meter in diameter, invites one to consult the books as well as to contemplate them in a scenic atmosphere. This reminder of the staging and of the world of the show, a constant in his work, is amplified at the Bains Douches by the blue bulbs that surround each target, giving rise to the backlit and softly unreal tonality to which we have become accustomed, in a state of semi-consciousness, to our screensavers.

The reversal of a quarter operated by the artist is not without recalling another, Duchampian that one. Is the history of art nothing more than a long string of perversions? Perversion, whose primary etymology first designates the action of turning things upside down, before it comes to signify the all-out detour of norms and customs, Freudian or not. Thus, one of the keys to reading Marcel Devillers' approach, and the thinking in painting that he develops, would be that of his perversion, drawing him into a desiring, subversive and staged game - in order to better put it in danger and take it, willingly or unwillingly, on stage in full view of everyone, where it would certainly never have dared to go on its own.

Ingrid Luquet-Gad, 2016