

OWEN PIPER

PRESS KIT

La Salle de bains

1 rue Louis Vitet

69001 Lyon

LA SALLE DE BAINS **JANVIER - MARS 2022**

OWEN PIPER
SYMBOLOLOGY

1 RUE LOUIS VITET
69001 LYON

Mercredi – Samedi 15-19h
lasalledesbains.net

La Salle de bains reçoit le soutien du Ministère de la Culture - DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, de la Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes et de la Ville de Lyon

JANUARY - MARCH 2022

Press release

Archiving ideas, producing an average of three paintings a day, Owen Piper is inspired by everything from international politics to footballers' shoes, animal habits to luxury cars. Produced with a direct and slightly irreverent approach, the compulsive collection of eclectic references results in a flow of images, abstract and colourful compositions as well as texts and poems.

The exhibition at La Salle de bains will be an opportunity to display many, if not all, of the editions (posters, artist's books and ephemera) that Owen Piper has made in recent years, as well as new paintings that he will make with materials found in the immediate environment of La Salle de bains.

This exhibition is Owen Piper's first solo show in France.

Room 1: 18th January - 12th February 2022

Room 2: 18th February - 12th March 2022

Room 3: 18th March - 9th April 2022

Biography

Owen Piper, (1975, London), studied at Central Saint Martins in London, at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and at the Glasgow School of art. He lives and works at Glasgow.

Recent solo shows (selection):

I'll be your city, Good press, Glasgow, 2019

Mash, with Cheryl Donegan, Downstairs Projects, New York, 2018

How to talk dirty and influence people, with Lili Reynaud Dewar, SALTS, Birsfelden, Switzerland, 2016

Recent group shows (selection):

Elle disait bonjour aux machines, Villa du parc, Annemasse, France, 2019

Deep screen, Parc Saint Leger, Pougues Les Eaux, France, 2015

Build the burn, Gare de Sydhavn, Copenhagen, 2014

Iain Hetherington, Jacob Kerray and Owen Piper, CCA, Glasgow, 2013

Half Square Half Crazy, Villa Arson, Nice, 2007

His recent publications include *Images of the world*, studio visit, Connoisseurs Editions, 2018 and *The game of the image*, with Charlie Hammond, self-publishing, 2019.

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Room 1

Among the ideas, images of works made daily in his studio, and texts sent by Owen Piper during the remote preparation of this exhibition, was an article by the art historian Boris Groys entitled *The weak universalism*. In it, the author revisits the notion of universalism attached to avant-garde art, arguing for a theory of «weak» art, which could be translated as «poor» or «fragile». It would be the prerogative of a democratic art - its realization being accessible to non-artists and even to children - and above all of an art as a practice that resists the incessant historical upheavals and the continual lack of time that overwhelms modern life. Looking at the legacy of avant-garde art in the contemporary world in this light, he concludes:

“Today, everyday life begins to exhibit itself—to communicate itself as such—through design or through contemporary participatory networks of communication, and it becomes impossible to distinguish the presentation of the everyday from the everyday itself. The everyday becomes a work of art—there is no more bare life, or, rather, bare life exhibits itself as artifact. Artistic activity is now something that the artist shares with his or her public on the most common level of everyday experience. (...) To be an artist has already ceased to be an exclusive fate, becoming instead an everyday practice—a weak practice, a weak gesture. But to establish and maintain this weak, everyday level of art, one must permanently repeat the artistic reduction—resisting strong images and escaping the status quo that functions as a permanent means of exchanging these strong images.

At the beginning of his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel asserted that in his time, art was already a thing of the past. Hegel believed that, in the time of modernity, art could no longer manifest anything true about the world as it is. But avant-garde art has shown that art still has something to say about the modern world: it can demonstrate its transitory character, its lack of time; and to transcend this lack of time through a weak, minimal gesture requires very little time—or even no time at all.”

list of works, from left to right:

Blue, 2021
Mixed media and painting on canvas

Pink projector, 2021
Found objects and painting on canvas

A Forgery, 2021
painting on canvas

Pyramid, 2021
painting on canvas

Untitled, 2021
Collage, Found object and painting on canvas

Henry Purcell with death in his hair, 2021
painting on canvas

Cloud study, 2021
Mixed media on paper

Self actualisation portrait, 2021
Collage and painting on canvas

Is there anybody anywhere? or the ghost of Douglas Crimp?, 2021
Found objects and painting on canvas

Untitled research, 2022
Movie, 23'33"

Creepy, cocksure, capitalist, covered in custard, 2021
Found objects and painting on canvas

Untitled, 2021
Collage and painting on canvas

Identifying as Squirrel, 2021
Collage and painting on canvas

Untitled regrets, 2021
Found objects and painting on canvas

Untitled (bag), 2021
Tote bag and painting on canvas

Photorealism, 2012
Collage, Found objects and painting on canvas

Uncompleted exercise in something, 2022
Found objects and collage on canvas

Owen D. Piper (1975, London), lives and works in Glasgow.

Recent solo and group exhibitions include: *I'll be your city*, Good press, Glasgow, 2019; *Elle disait bonjour aux machines*, Villa du parc, Annemasse, 2019; *Mash*, with Cheryl Donegan, Downstairs Projects, New York, 2018; *How to talk dirty and influence people*, with Lili Reynaud Dewar, SALTS, Birsfelden, Switzerland, 2016 or *Deep screen*, Parc Saint Leger, Pougues Les Eaux, 2015.

His recent publications include *Images of the world*, studio visit, Connoisseurs Editions, 2018 and *The game of the image*, with Charlie Hammond, self-publishing, 2019.

La Salle de bains remercie le CAP Saint-Fons.

La Salle de bains reçoit le soutien :
du Ministère de la Culture DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes,

Boring, boring painting

- | woke up and thought about painting.
- | rolled over and thought about painting.
- | went to the bathroom and thought about painting.
- | got back in bed and thought about painting.
- | made sweet, sweet love with my wife and thought about painting.
- | showered and thought about painting.
- | dressed and thought about painting.
- | had breakfast and talked about painting.
- | took the children to school and thought about painting.
- | walked the dog and I thought about painting.
- | had a coffee and thought about painting.
- | drove to the studio and thought about painting.
- | made a painting and thought about painting.
- | drove home and thought about painting.
- | ate some lunch and thought about painting.
- | thought about painting
- | napped and dreamt about painting.
- | picked up the kids and thought about painting.
- | sorted out the washing and thought about painting.
- | cooked dinner and thought about painting.
- | took the boys to football and thought about painting.
- | watched the boys play football and thought about painting.
- | drove home listening to the boys talking about football and thought about painting.
- | got everyone ready for bed and thought about painting.
- | sat in front of the TV and thought about painting.
- | went to bed and thought about painting.
- | prayed and thought about painting.
- | slept.



Owen Piper, *Blue and Pink projector*, 2021



Owen Piper, *Blue*, 2021



Owen Piper, *Pink projector*, 2021



exhibition's view *Symbolology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



Owen Piper, *Untitled*, 2021



exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



Owen Piper, *Henry Purcell with death in his hair*, 2021



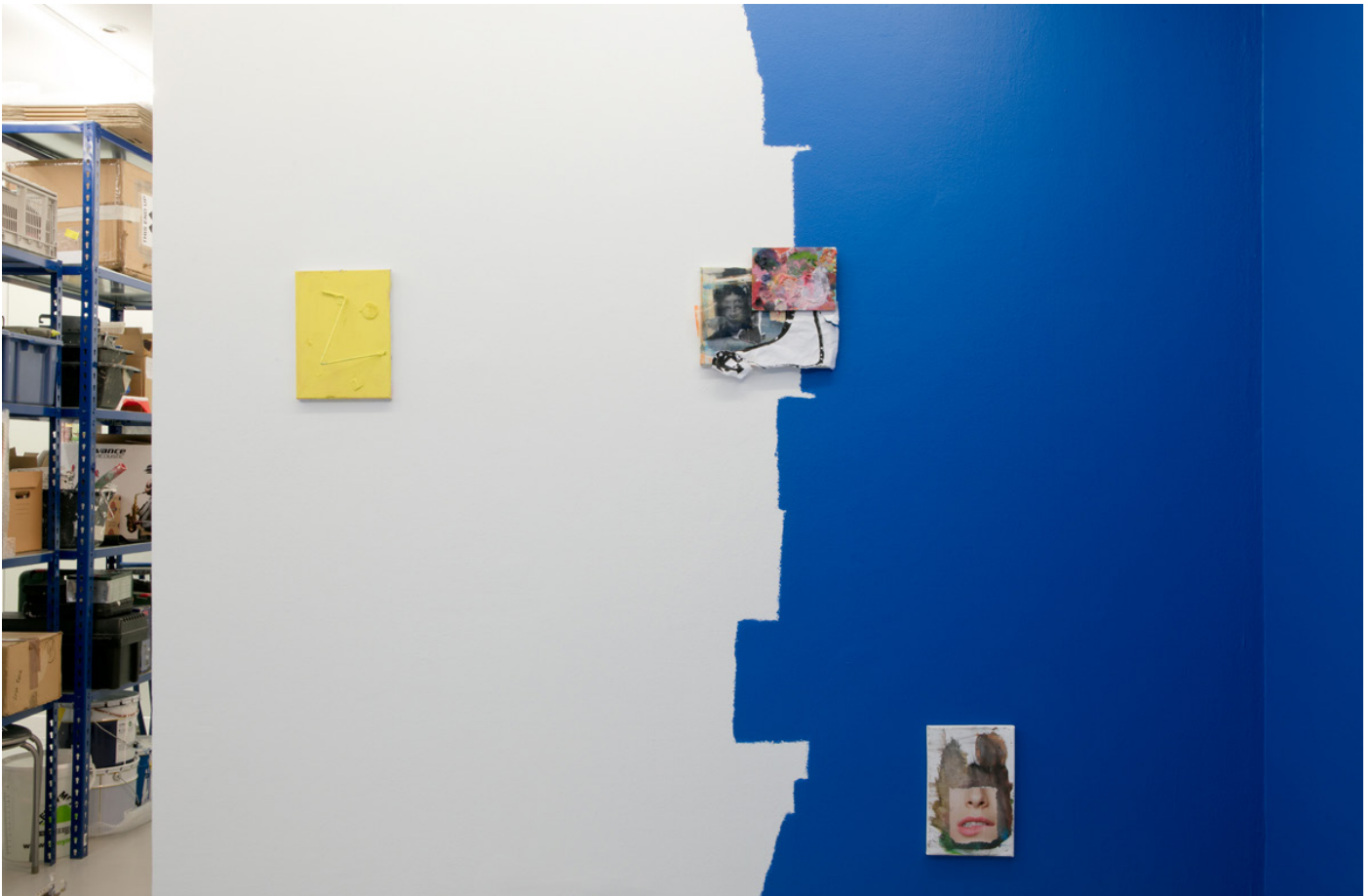
exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



Owen Piper, *Is there anybody anywhere? or the ghost of Douglas Crimp?*, 2021



Owen Piper, *Untitled research*, 2022



exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



Owen Piper, *Uncompleted exercise in something*, 2022

Photographies: Jesús Alberto Benitez / Texts: Julie Portier

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SYMBOLOLOGY

Room 2

The preceding iteration took place in a show featuring Owen Piper's paintings. That exhibition afforded a small preview of an extremely extensive output and pointed up several aspects of the artist's way of working, like the collage of images and humble objects found in normal day-to-day surroundings. It also told us about a few of the recurrent themes running through the work, especially painting's irreparable self-referentiality along with its jealous aspirations for the cinema.

The presentation was fairly conventional, except for the walls displaying the works, painted blue in half the exhibition space. The latter was, moreover, partly blocked by the shelving units removed from the storage room, which had been in turn transformed into a screening room.

While all the equipment required to produce the show literally slipped through the space of the display to its appointed position, in its place a film was screened that went over sequences of house painting that underscored the poetic, political, and tactical character of the act of painting (from Mister Bean to Clint Eastwood in *High Plains Drifter* and the labor union committee in Godard's *Tout va bien*), all of this under the auspices of the Pink Panther in *The Pink Phink* (1964), which celebrates the victory of pink over blue in a veritable turf war.

So much for the summary.

The story of the second gallery of the Owen Piper show at La Salle de bains is centered on the editorial work, no less prolific, just as modest in its means, and no less separate from the artist's day-to-day life. There visitors will run into Piper's family members, artist friends and writers, as well as literary figures (with a preference for the flâneur) and media personalities (with a preference for the stars with tragic lives that the 1960s produced and the 1980s and '90s reproduced en masse). As with the artist's paintings, Owen Piper editions stand out for their hand-made character, right down to their distribution (by the self-publishing houses *Maris Piper Press* and *Jolly Good Books*), exclusively using the photocopying machine or office printer for economic reasons that also have something to do with political ones. These zines have something in common with the paintings, too, i.e., they take shape through assemblage and random, even impulsive parallels, the theater of which is the relationship of the text to the image – but without the gesture of appropriation (of works or text, most often copied out in their entirety) being touted as a subversive act. At present, that would be uncalled for. The gesture is rather given out as innate behavior, child's play.

For all these reasons, the practice of micro-editions in

Piper's art extends a certain tradition of the medium as well, where the legacy of conceptual art and punk culture is made visible. And that practice is a vector, too, of Piper's reflection on what remains of the utopias littering modernity and the liberation movements of the second half of the 20th century in the digital age and at a time when the DIY philosophy is carried on in ready-to-assemble furniture and personal development. Yet what we have here is not a nostalgic temperament. We only need to think about the energy involved in this hyperproduction whose generosity goes so far as to offer several shows in one, making up for an earlier project – canceled because of the pandemic – now on view in a miniature version (*Grow the Revolution*, that ought to have taken place at La Salle de bains at the same time Brexit was going into effect). If we had to characterize the mood of Piper's work throughout, it would be ambivalent, as if it had been brought back from its exhausted means and the belief in the transcendental virtues of art, yet continuing without respite – and with lots of humor – to produce objects that will in turn create spaces for meeting others and sharing, just as a publishing project does. The result of a collaboration with David Bellingham, the poster distributed during the show indicates “work in progress” in Morse code using a potato stamp.

list of works, from left to right:

Bonsaï, 2022

Painting on canvas, collage on poster

Green cancelled painting, 2021

Collage and painting on canvas

Jacket, 2020

Painting on jacket

Oakleaf, 2021

Painting on canvas

The Bosman series, 2015-2020

A5 fanzines

The great toe, 2021

Painting on canvas

Bi-Furious, 2021

Painting on canvas

Untitled work, 2022

Painting on canvas

Tu aimes mon affiche?, 2019

Poster

Set of publications, 2015-2022

Donut lamp, 2019/2022

Light bulb and donut

Grow the revolution, 2021

Poster

12th February to 17th February, 2022

Collage

Hanging Light, 2022

Light bulb and painting on vinyl

Grow the Revolution, 2022

Model, mixed media and poster

Iloveyouall, 2022

Poster

Badge, 2015

Badge

Jolly Good books, 2015-2022

Fanzines

Technologies of the self, 2022

Painting on canvas and time clock

Joni does it with her teeth, 2022

Painting on canvas

Hofner ignition violin bass, Star-club, Hamburg 1962, 2022

Painting on canvas

Set of recent publications, 2021-2022

Owen D. Piper (1975, London), lives and works in Glasgow.

Recent solo and group exhibitions include: *I'll be your city*, Good press, Glasgow, 2019; *Elle disait bonjour aux machines*, Villa du parc, Annemasse, 2019; *Mash*, with Cheryl Donegan, Downstairs Projects, New York, 2018; *How to talk dirty and influence people*, with Lili Reynaud Dewar, SALTS, Birsfelden, Switzerland, 2016 or *Deep screen*, Parc Saint Leger, Pougues Les Eaux, 2015.

His recent publications include *Images of the world*, studio visit, Connoisseurs Editions, 2018 and *The game of the image*, with Charlie Hammond, self-publishing, 2019.

La Salle de bains remercie David Bolito.

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Potatotype

by Owen Piper & Elijah Smith

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exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



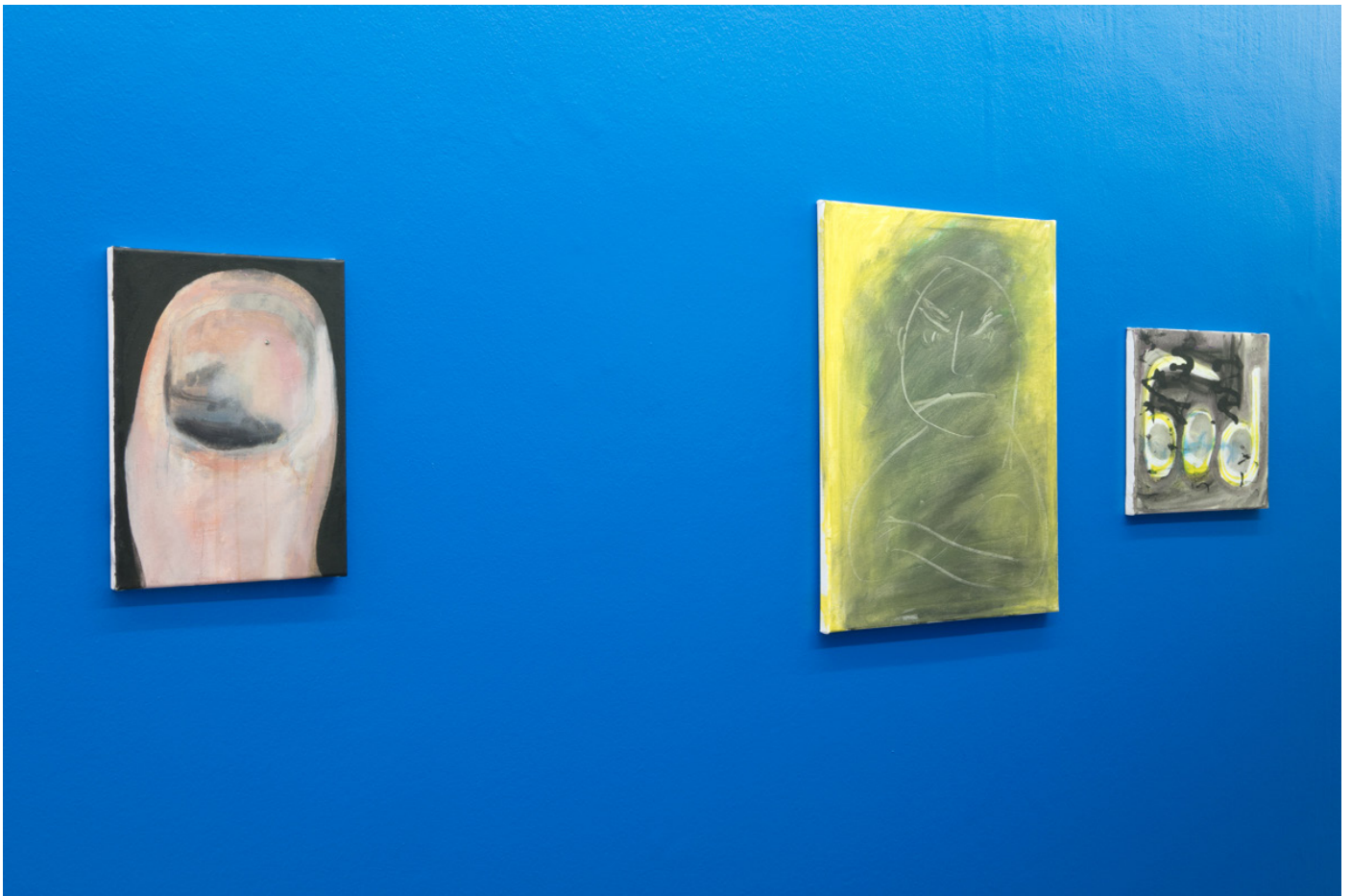
exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022



Owen Piper, *Bonsai*, 2022 ; *Green Cancelled painting*, 2021



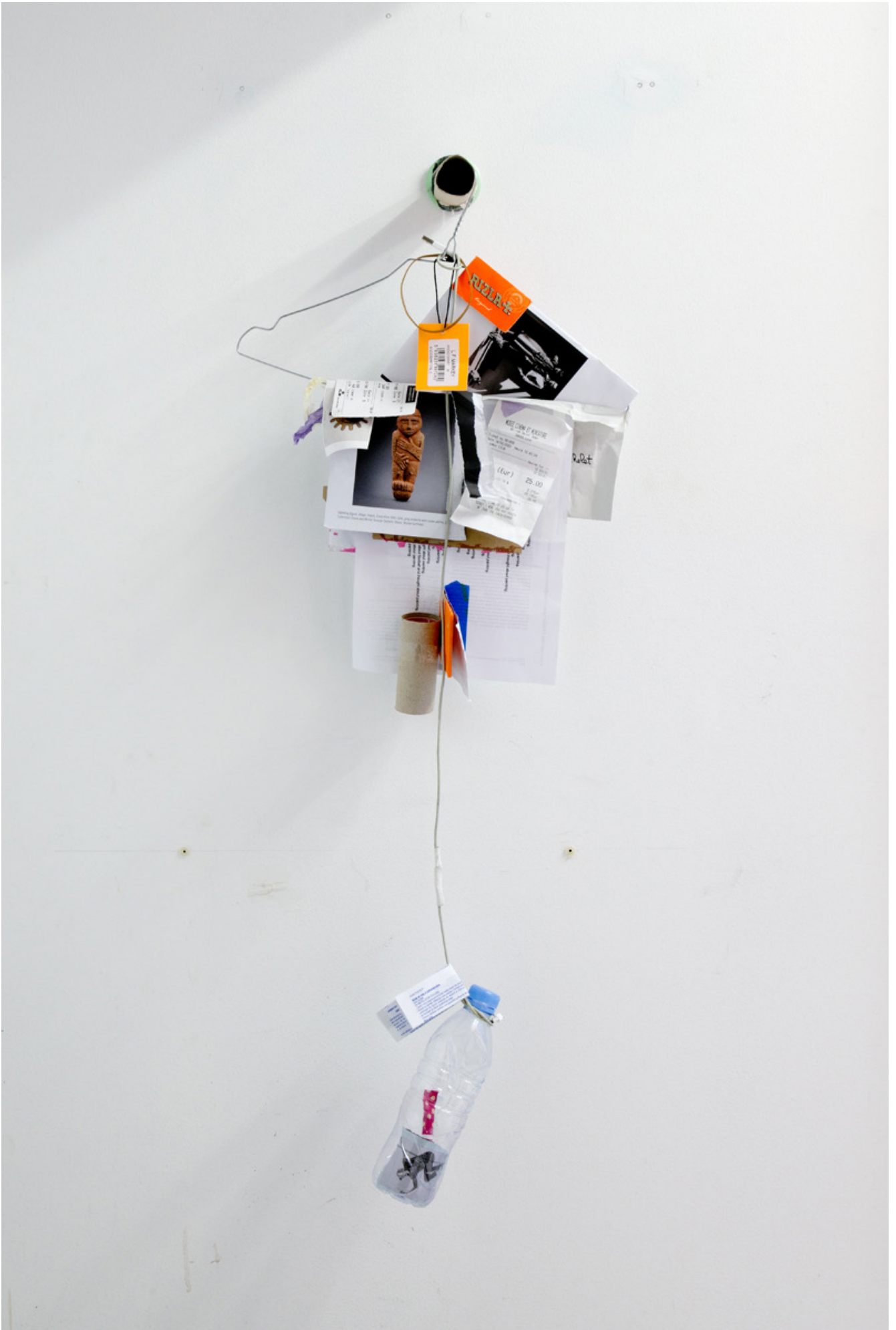
Owen Piper, *The Bosman series*, 2015-2022



Owen Piper, *The great toe*, 2021 ; *Bi-furious*, 2021 ; *Untitled work*, 2022



Owen Piper, set of publications, *Maris Piper Press*, 2014-2022



Owen Piper, *12th February to 17th February, 2022*



Owen Piper, *Grow the Revolution*, 2022



exhibition's view *Symbology*, Owen Piper, La Salle de bains, Lyon, 2022

Photographies: Jesús Alberto Benitez / Texts: Julie Portier / Traduction: John O'Toole

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SYMBOLOLOGY

Room 3

Since La Salle de bains moved to its current address at 1 rue Louis Vitet, there have been times when the three rooms that make up a show have followed one another like the three acts of a storyline written in advance. Anyone who stopped by last January and then again in February will have realized that the elements of the setting have remained the same but have been moved over and over from one end of the stage to the other, be it the shelving of the stockroom, the boxes used to move the artworks, and especially the walls, which have been painted alternately blue and pink, repeating the action in a famous episode of the *Pink Panther* while throwing the whole of Owen Piper's exhibition into perpetual motion.

If viewers look carefully, they will surely stumble on something that they could see as a conclusion. However, if they search more carefully, they are likely to find plenty of such end points, inviting so many interpretations of this epilogue, whether it takes the form of a black hole, a tragic death, a collapse, a blocked road, an instance of sexual intercourse, a blind spot, or an eternal recurrence... And so the (on-going) end of the series of paintings featured here reveals darker aspects of Piper's pictorial output, even though they are in keeping with the humor that has already been pointed out, and melt into the forest of references to pop culture as much as to the history of art, film, and music. This announces yet again what takes shape in the artist's work, tinged with modesty and mockery rather than violence, that is, the dismantling of all the myths surrounding painting and the figure of the artist. And we can easily see how these expressions can combine, just like that painting that is cut *à la* Lucio Fontana, reduced to a sheet of paper with holes hung next to a portrait of Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau (suggesting Clouseau's famous Chinese manservant Cato, who is employed to attack the detective by surprise in his own home in order to keep his senses sharp and ready for anything).

Each new picture by Piper seems to revive our faith in painting while undermining a little bit more its aspirations to be an icon. This is achieved through gestures that are too many or not enough, but also when the canvas indiscreetly shows off the back of the picture, which of course has nothing to disclose or is a bit of a mess. Displaying the artworks side by side generates an effect of padding things out; this carries on the tenor of the project by canceling the show's narrative dimension as well – while also oddly individualizing each painting. Because we

might as well be frank, that is, the storyline is never nicely tied up in advance, witness the compilation of emails exchanged with the artist which is included like a piece of incriminating evidence in the *Symbolology* publication put out in the last iteration of the show. The line of paintings that the eye spontaneously follows as if reading a line of print means nothing; it offers no solution to the investigation. On the contrary, new coincidences slip in which pass for clues in the eyes of those who are keen on interpretation and have an obsessive bent. So it goes for those leather gloves that figure in the publication... No, the set of paintings exhibited here is nothing more than the totality of the paintings sent by the artist from Glasgow that weren't shown in rooms 1 and 2.

But let's come back to the Pink Panther as well as Nabokov. In a text that was available in room 2 titled Quiet Please, among the rare texts written by the artist and not borrowed from others, Piper describes his relationship to reading and begins by quoting Nabokov, who asserts that the physical involvement that reading requires, that is "the very process of laboriously moving our eyes from left to right" and turning the page "stands between us and artistic appreciation." Thus, "one cannot read a book: one can only reread it." Given the two movements, rotary and gyrotory, to which our eyes are invited here, this reflection could just as easily apply to the exhibition. Of course we have forgotten to point out that the title *Symbolology* is also a reference to a critical interpretation of a short story by the Russian-born American author called *Signs and Symbols* (1948). At the heart of the story is a young man who is confined to a psychiatric hospital because he suffers from "referential mania," according to the terminology proposed in "an elaborate paper in a scientific monthly," which makes him believe that all the elements of the landscape around him (clouds, rivers, trees, individual leaves) are emitting signs about him and for him to read. Yet the short story hints at many more intriguing signs and symbols found in the ordinary surroundings of his elderly parents, who are worried about their son's suicidal urges.

Owen Piper is one of those minds that pay attention to the signs teeming in daily life, suspecting or not that they make sense, in a permanent investigation, a never-ending examination, like the one that eventually leads Dale Cooper to accept living in a complex world rather than find the solution to the mystery – Clouseau, on the other hand, always finds the solution but only by accident. This semiotic drive takes shape in the objects that are found in the artist's works but also in the photographic "records" he shoots each day in the street. Hence his special interest in graffiti, like the message that inspired the title of his show that was canceled in 2021, "Grow the revolution," or the strange tag, "leaf," that he trailed around Glasgow and redistributed as a postcard, making the power of the "empty sign" – a way to "turn indeterminacy against the system" which Jean Baudrillard¹ speaks of, to take back public space by inscribing one's anonymous presence there – available to send a message. In the text quoted above, the artist also confides a secret dream of becoming a graffiti artist one day. In the meantime, his potato prints assert writing as a gesture, which modestly takes over here a stack of boxes in a storeroom.

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Kool Killer or the Insurrection of Signs*, 1975

list of works, from left to right:

Leaf, 2022

Postcards

Line, 2022

Mixed media, collages and paintings on canvas

The Pink Phink?, 2022

Video on laptop, 7'10"

Untitled, 2022

Painting on canvas

Clock, 2022

Painting and collage on plate

Untitled, 2021

Collage, mixed media and painting on canvas

Symbology, 2022

Artist book, 50 copies

Line continued, 2022

Mixed media, collages and paintings on canvas

Untitled black dot, 2022

Painting on canvas

Boring, boring, painting, 2022

Poems

Marxism for dummies, 2022

Performance during the opening (nailpolish)

Space was the place, 2022

Collage and painting on canvas

China Ferrari sex orgy death crash, 2022

Collage and painting on canvas, audio tape player

Cravate peinture, 2022

Collage and painting on canvas

Tower, 2022

Potato prints on cardboard boxes

Green reel to reel, 2022

Collage and painting on canvas

Séance avec pluie de sang, 2022

Collage and painting on canvas

You are here, 2022

Collage, mixed media and painting on canvas

The end, 2022

Painting on canvas

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Leaf, Owen Piper, 2022



Line, Owen Piper, 2022



Owen Piper, *Line*, 2022



Owen Piper, *The Pink Phink?*, 2022



Owen Piper, *Untitled*, 2022



Owen Piper, *Clock*, 2022 ; *Line continued*, 2022 ; *Untitled black dot*, 2022



Owen Piper, *Line continued*, 2022



Owen Piper, *Tower and You are here*, 2022



Owen Piper, *Symbology*, 2022

Photographies: Jesús Alberto Benitez / Texts: Julie Portier / Traduction: John O'Toole

LA SALLE DE BAINS

La Salle de bains is an association (law 1901) dedicated to the production and the diffusion of contemporary art. It was created in Lyon in 1998 by a group of artists and designers in the heritage of artist run spaces (such as *The Kitchen* which has existed since 1971 in New York). Therefore, it has been characterised by a sharp, forward-looking and international programming, affirming its commitment to a decentralised cultural requirement. It has thus organised the first exhibitions in France of artists who have become major figures on the art scene.

Since 2016, and after several seasons *hors les murs*, La Salle de bains has relocated to a small space in the centre of the city from where a programme is developed according to modalities induced by the size of its premises and deduced from a certain vision of the sharing of art in public space and time. Each invitation made to the artists gives rise to the production of a project in three stages, three appointments given to the public here or there, in the premises of La Salle de bains or elsewhere in the city, like three chapters of the same story, three rooms of an exhibition in an extended definition. This format is conjunctural and transitory. As long as it is applied as a framework for artistic programming, it invites us to perceive and think about the works as much as the ways in which they appear.

La Salle de bains
1 rue Louis Vitet
69001 Lyon - FR

Open from Wednesday to Saturday, 3pm to 7pm

La Salle de bains enjoys the generous support of the Ministry of Culture DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, and the City of Lyon.

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La Salle de bains, correspondent of DUUU Radio :
<https://www.duuradio.fr/auteur/la-salle-de-bains>

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