

Artist: Antoine Château
Exhibition title: *Chambre Une*
Curated by: Haydée Marin & Camille Besson
Venue: Café des Glaces, Tonnerre, France
Date: March 18th 2023 – June 3rd 2023
Opening hours: Sat. 11am – 18 pm, Sun. 14pm – 18pm
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Exhibition text: Éric Troncy

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Exhibition Text:

One often reduces painting into its two obvious dimensions (the pictorial surface) but it certainly has three: when it is not executed on a sheet of paper but on a canvas stretched on a frame or on a wooden panel, the thickness of this support, which transforms the painting somewhat into an object, plays a determining role in the way we apprehend this object - and its pictorial surface. That the frame is too thin and it is without appeal all the pictorial surface which will have difficulty to stabilize itself in front of us; that it is too thick and it is this incongruity that will postpone the examination of the pictorial surface. In any case, the experience that is familiar to us is that a contemporary painting (because old paintings in museums are often flanked by their frames which, *coup de théâtre!* seems to place the pictorial surface at the bottom of a golden bowl) presents itself to us under the aspects of a parallelepiped which supports a painted surface.

One can always kick over the traces: Gothar Graubner (1930 - 2013), the canvas object becomes a blister and the color is no longer a surface but soaks the cushion like canvas; Julian Schnabel, the "Plate Paintings", which turn the pictorial surface into the disastrous consequence of a domestic scene.

In other instances, it is the pictorial surface itself becomes to undulate:

Eugene Leroy (1910-2000), the myth of painting as an infinite succession of layers; Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) and the touch that characterized him, Karel Appel (1921-2006)

And the COBRA impasto. Even the term that designates this accumulation of matter on the surface of the canvas sounds like a reproach: "Impasto", as one would say of a body weighed down by piles of excess fat.

It is a bit like the family tree of Antoine Chateau's paintings, in any case they have all this in mind and so do we when we look at them and one by one their singularities express themselves. There is no reasonable explanation for their small size, but they are small, as if something had been concentrated (or as if our concentration could not stand it anymore). The painting-object is blurred by the overflow of the pictorial material (splash? blistering? proliferation?) and, sometimes, the pictorial surface displays cracks that make it look like limestone eroded by the winds. At a time when exhibitions are meant to be "immersive" (as if the experience of painting were not always fatally so), one could mentally lodge oneself in the folds of these paintings, and observe the colors around: Château makes them vibrate, sculpts them, grades them, in short, constrains them in the unique direction of his "painting of feelings". Antoine Château's paintings, it seems to me, are always figurative: they depict a place accurately (for example garden), a subject (a fish, a flower) or a moment (a storm), using their physical aspect a little but mainly the emotions which are linked to them. The "realistic" cursor has been seriously lowered to raise that of the emotions, but we must rely on the titles ("canoeside where shadows are dancing" (2019), "Fish" (2020),...)

At each stage of the conception of these paintings, it seems that Château has resolutely taken the side roads and, if necessary, used the machete in the bushes. From the sum of the singularities that each of these stages has produced, he has created an elaborate and sensitive language: he has adjusted its grammar and syntax for some fifteen years and now possesses them perfectly. Far from being totally exotic, this language is somewhat familiar to us - but what we like best is the peculiar sound of all the things we don't understand.

March 2023, Éric Troncy