

Ten paintings by Alain Se?chas. Ten vertical formats. Nothing else. No sculpture, no technology, no sound. And no cats either, no Martians. No Coue?ism.

Acrylic paint on paper meticulously mounted on canvas. The white edge of the paper is visible. So is the canvas.

So, painting. Very colourful paintings. Interlacings in which the form chases its tail until it's out of breath. Detailed painting, dense and devious. Images in which, at first glance, nothing seems preconceived or pre-meditated. Rather, a loss of control with gesture oscillating between virtuosity and awkwardness, between tension and release: a vertical journey not lacking in gravity.

So, ten paintings, and ten unlikely titles. Ten titles that will no doubt keep changing until the last minute. Ten titles rather than "untitleds," but titles taken after the event. After the event of painting, it goes without saying. Ten titles however, that, as I write, help me find my way. I can refer to them in order to understand some-thing. Se?chas didn't get us used to abstraction. Ten titles that go walkabout: Porte d'Italie, Mexico, Cardinaux and Hurons. And others I won't mention. See for yourself. Ten titles that induce you to seek analogies between what they evoke and what you can see. That's not easy when this really isn't figurative and, on top of it all, if they change the moment you're on to something. If our thoughts are vague and we make mistakes and get confused, I guess that must be just fine with Se?chas.

Ten paintings executed on paper taped to the studio wall. Painted fairly fast, "depending on the degree of success," says Se?chas. But then what is the "success" of a work of art nowadays? When does the thing start to hold together? When do you move on to the next one? Ten paintings whose speed of execution was no doubt variable, perhaps inconsistent. Different, at any rate, from that of the artist's sculptures; closer, no doubt, to that of some of his drawings.

I look at these works. If I didn't know who the author was I would find them jaunty and lively, almost joyous and light-hearted. Big colourful masses, strapwork, consummate skill: the man has technique. He has a deft hand. So it was Se?chas who did that? What's going on? I wonder. What is he getting at?

Here and there vaguely narrative elements emerge, close to things I know: eyes, ovoid forms, unlikely mandibles. But gone is the grammar of the earlier works, which are always somewhat restrained and subtle. Is Se?chas letting go? Is he losing that caustic, deadpan humour of his? All that is effaced, erased, liquefied, so much so that I just don't know what these paintings are saying

to me? No witticisms, no caricatures.

Ridding oneself of one's accomplishments. Unlearning, both for oneself and for whoever is looking. Not reassuring him with what, over the years and at the shows, he had learned to recognise, but instead placing him before what Roland Barthes called "the terror of uncertain signs."

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