

Bastien Cosson  
*Autopromo*  
08 July - 21 October 2023  
At Café des Glaces, Tonnerre

Text by Olga Rozenblum

Bastien Cosson is an artist and painter. That's how he defines himself. For him, being an artist and being a painter are interlocking but distinct activities: being an artist is a relationship to the world; being a painter is painting.

Bastien Cosson's paintings are images that he projects according to what happens to him in life, and what he wants to do with his own. To achieve this goal, he uses canvas, most often covered with paint, but also with prints, collages, and more recently fabrics. He could have used another medium just as well: he has made a clear, performative choice in deciding to restrict his production to paintings alone.

Hence why his work is so heterogeneous. There is no "Cosson" style, but rather a series of attempts by Bastien to produce frames: to make himself feel good, to give meaning where there is none, to make those he loves exist in exhibition spaces that too often strike him as disembodied.

In a recent interview with the theorists and curators Clara Schulmann and Thomas Boutoux (*En déplacement #12* podcast, available on Spotify), Elsa Oliarj-Inès and Bastien Cosson talked about how and why they created Palette Terre, an exhibition space in their Paris flat from 2014 to 2021: "Bastien: I often wonder why art spaces are cold, dry, etc... [...] When we moved into a flat with an extra room, we thought: what can we do, put in a sofa and make it a living room? No, it was much more logical to make it an exhibition space. Elsa: It was a way of bypassing the validation of the art world, of convincing ourselves that we didn't need anyone to show the things that we wanted to see and that Bastien was making. And I thought it was the best solution to create this exhibition space. Anyway, we didn't really have an alternative... [to show his work]."

Like other artists before him, who considered their practice beyond the studio, Bastien Cosson wanted to open a venue as a mental space that would enable him to broaden his creative scope. He says of these artists that "to justify their pieces, to give them consistency, they needed to create a new territory. Once they had created the contours of it, they were able to produce within that space, evolve within it, and then emancipate themselves from it."

Bastien Cosson studied at the Beaux-Arts de Paris in the studio of Sylvie Fanchon, an artist whose work too little known, like that of so many women artists—might be said to constitute one of the genealogies of his own practice. Sylvie Fanchon, who died this year and is much mourned by Bastien Cosson and many other young artists, said that painting "is not just another technique for reproducing visible things, but a practice that questions reality's different modes of visibility." She explained that she took the painting "as it is, a convention, a surface." She had an expression to talk about the forms she produced: "They are verifications."

Verifying, checking. Representing in order to make sure that something is true. Producing images to recount in the present, despite the retinas that forget what they have seen, despite time that leaves no imprint on sensations, despite the Instagram feeds that make everything as visible as it is anecdotal: in a sense, this is the project that Bastien Cosson is developing for the Café des Glaces. It was in order to verify that you can become attached to images that he decided to print 900 of them in an edition that forms the basis of this exhibition. These images are also heterogeneous. They bear witness to a journey, rather than an overly structured project. On the walls as in the book, Bastien

Cosson's attempts have to do with escape, with resistance to any normalisation that would reduce him to being a painter alone. To "justify" his pieces, and to emancipate himself from his duties as an artist.

Translation: Juliet Powys

*Olga Rozenblum is a curator, a teacher, and currently an associate researcher at the École des Beaux-Arts in Marseille. She is the co-founder of Treize in Paris.*