

1916: Le Corbusier builds a « Villa Turque » (Turkish Villa), the Villa Schwob, flanked by a pergola, in La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland). Some years later, he publishes photos of it in L'Esprit Nouveau. On the ground, in front of the villa, a white smear betrays retouching: the pergola has disappeared. Less than a century later, the Iraqi journalist Muntazer Al-Zaïdi throws his shoes at George W. Bush's head.

Poltergeists are on the agenda at PERGOLA. Against the background of a haunted modernity, silhouettes of erased lives demand restitution: Swiss tavern lanterns cast a gloom over the museum space, the ventilation shafts bring back good memories of monumental architecture, the melancholy of the Renaissance seeps into this no man's land, pneumatic dispatch breaches communication.... In the public spaces, the forsaken demand equal treatment in the art works by Charlotte Posenenske. This is the opportunity to discover for the first time the works of this important German artist, alongside the art objects of Valentin Carron, Raphael Zarka, Serge Spitzer, and the large shoe of the Iraqi Laith Al-Amiri.

On his way from vernacular iconography to religious symbols, passing through pastiches of public spaces, Valentin Carron interrogates identities through the forms that they celebrate. By invoking these archetypes, the artist doesn't give in to forgeries, imitation, or even simple reproductions. Seemingly displaced, fragmented and multiplied, his works are either synthetic, serial, or monumental; since they have cashed in on minimalist abstraction, they are freed from a single and unchanging viewpoint.

Here, he uses humour to hijack objects, images, symbols, and their popular usages. Imagery from modern art as well as traditional and contemporary folklore redeploy under a regime of falsehoods, with the candour of a roundabout sculpture. The lanterns evoke either a fanciful Switzerland with mountains and chalets or a heavenly Midwest with wooden sculptures, natural parks, and amusement parks. All these works oscillate between the celebration and the criticism of a romantic and wild country—an elaborate myth that moulds a nation. But even though he plays with notions of authenticity, the handmade, the readymade, and the kitsch aesthetic, Valentin Carron holds out against all ideologies. Or rather, he gives in to all of them: he “poaches” in the matrix of popular consumer culture. Through his works, collective memory becomes a monument that glorifies each of our lives.

[1977] Born in Fully (Switzerland). Lives and works in Martigny (Switzerland).

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