

Exhibition text : “My Onion Canvases are Ballet_____The other canvases are also Ballet”

DS Galerie is proud to present for the very first time the work of American painter Peter Marcasiano (1921–1984), who spent the last fifteen years of his life in Paris, and to place it in dialogue with a group of contemporary artists. This collective exhibition also marks the publication of the first book dedicated to his work.

“It was in his apartment in the 18th arrondissement, where he moved at the end of the 1970s, that Peter Marcasiano unfolded, day after day — often at night — a stripped-down and luminous painting, attentive to the most modest of forms. On unstretched canvases, small panels, or sheets of paper, his compositions, with their muted palette, laid in thin, almost translucent layers, return obsessively to the same motifs — onions, fish, flowers, pomegranates... In 1960, a few years before settling in Paris, a gallery in Salzburg devoted a solo exhibition to his work. It would remain the only one during his lifetime. The paintings he created afterwards in Paris never left his apartment until his death.

To present this work today in a gallery devoted to the emerging scene is to widen the field of vision. Not to look backwards, but to receive what his painting has to tell us now — without nostalgia, without filter. Remaining on the margins of established narratives, Marcasiano's work reveals itself as contemporary in the truest sense: a presence that can only be experienced in the present.

Placing his canvases in relation with those of Victor Gogly, Maude Maris, Hamish Pearch, Victor Pueyo, Maxime Testu, Milène Sanchez, Nils Vandevenne, and Zohreh Zavareh inscribes his gesture into a living community. These artists are not mere guests: they become his accomplices. Gathered in a single space, they compose a sensitive fabric where the works nourish one another. The Belgian duo Noir Métal contributes to this interplay through the furniture they designed — tables, stools, easels, consoles, lamps — which furnish the exhibition and create a domestic atmosphere, an environment of encounters.

The exhibition's title comes from a handwritten note by Marcasiano, one of the phrases he scribbled on small index cards: “My Onion Canvases are Ballet_____The other canvases are also Ballet”. These words can be read as an invitation to movement, to harmony, to a plurality of voices that intertwine. A painting never exists alone: it comes alive in the bond it forges with otherness.

There is something moving in imagining Marcasiano walking through this exhibition. His canvases, long confined to the intimacy of his apartment, discover for the first time the company of others. Inspired by Masaccio, he painted in fidelity to ancient forms, apart from the avant-gardes and fashions of his time. Withdrawn, his work found no immediate place in its own era. But it is precisely in this distance that its strength lies: it has crossed the years without ever becoming fixed. Today it reveals itself with renewed intensity. Perhaps he would have smiled, seeing his work welcomed into such company, moved to witness how deeply it resonates with a new generation of artists, delighted to find in it the beginnings of long conversations.”

Text by | Thomas Havet