ALMINE RECH

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet
Hors Saison

Jan 11 — Feb 24, 2018 | Paris

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present the third solo exhibition by Jean-Baptiste Bernadet, including new paintings of the artist.

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet has often spoken about his relationship with painting: “My approach isn’t radical. Painting is simply the most practical discipline for me, the medium which suits me best and that I’m most comfortable with. It allows me to do something and see an immediate result.” That being said, while Jean-Baptiste Bernadet remains aloof from painting, he is no less of a true painter: a “landscape painter” nonetheless, as he says himself. He goes so far as to add “I am an impressionist painter, in the etymological sense of the term.” In other words – and to the letter – Bernadet paints fleeting and subjective impressions, shades of light and feelings; he savours the moment during which the painting comes into being and the immediacy of what is revealed.

“To the letter” – an expression which sits well with Bernadet, passionate as he is for literature and more particularly for Proust. He shares a certain kinship with the latter: in their consideration for memory, time suspended by sensations, the idea of the fragment, of kaleidoscopic effects and the pursuit of refraction. In the same vein, Bernadet claims an affinity with Strindberg and his Celestrographs: placing photographic plates on a window sill at night, he thought himself able to photograph the stars when in fact dust and dirt in the developer had created the images.

Sensitive surfaces, accidents, chance. Bernadet is also a painter of uncertainty, of suspense, and of adventure. “Often, in my paintings, things happen all by themselves. When I apply a touch of paint, it is not staged or directed. It doesn’t express the certainty of something I want to depict. No, it’s a more uncertain and more unexpected stroke. I never know where I’m going.” It’s a permanent concatenation, like a series of notes akin to a jazz musician’s improvisation using scales.

He starts painting, building up from a background layer upon which he places daubs of colour. He then spreads them, continuing thus until balance, rhythm, and harmony between light and colour ring true. If he goes too far, he starts over, correcting, wiping away, backtracking, subtracting or covering. What constitutes both a challenge for Bernadet and a certain magic for the viewer lies therein: in precision and tuning – as for a series of musical notes or sounds. A painting comes into existence as something provisional, constantly wavering from appearance to disappearance until a suspended state is reached. This in-between state includes all possible outcomes, simultaneously bearing witness to a solid foundation and a structured grid while remaining as open-ended as possible.

Bernadet resists resorting to automatic methods, absolute certainty and rules for each painting, and the same can be said for his series. They aren’t premeditated but rather build themselves up gradually and never really reach an endpoint. *Vetiver* and *Fugues* are two series on which the artist has been working for five years and has shown in previous exhibitions. The former reveals evanescence and transparency while the latter conveys a more sustained rhythm of strokes and lines of colour. Bernadet also works outside the confines of such series producing solitary, independent paintings which seem to diverge from one another and require an exhibition (such as this one) to bring them into conversation. However, what seems paramount for Bernadet is forever starting anew and reshuffling the deck of cards in the hope of dealing a hand of fresh, fugacious sensations.

Born in Paris in 1978, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet lives and works in Brussels and in New York. Graduated in 2003 from ENSAV La Cambre in Brussels, he was an artist-in-residence at Triangle Studios, Brooklyn in 2012, APT Studios, Brooklyn in 2011 and Chianti Foundation, Marfa, Texas, in 2010. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions in Europe and in the United States, including among others, two recents solo shows at Almine Rech Gallery London and Brussels in 2016. Since 2001, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet has participated in many group exhibitions in institutions such as the WIELS, Brussels (2015, 2010 and 2009) and Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tourcoing (2006).

Henri-François Debailleux

Translated from French by Ailsa Cavers

———

For more information please contact Eva Moudar: eva@alminerech.com