ALMINE RECH

Dialogues

Nov 18 — Dec 22, 2022 | Paris, Matignon

Almine Rech is pleased to present *Dialogues*, a group exhibition of works by Karel Appel, Don Brown, Agustín Cárdenas, César, Günther Förg, Sylvie Fleury, Carlos Jacanamijoy, Annie Morris, and Mimmo Rotella.

Some of the works in this show of major artists express a pure harmony. This is true of Don Brown's bronze *Eriko* (2021), presented for the first time at Almine Rech, which represents a girl huddled on the floor, perched on a base of the same deep black. At first glance, she could seem to be a continuation of ancient sculpture or the Roman neoclassicism of Canova's *Cupid and Psyche*. However, her clothing – a leotard – clearly anchors her in the current era. Her fragility and delicacy, emphasized by the oversized height of the base, make her a perfect allegory. In his quest for grace and the sublime, Don Brown is driven by a sense of detail and extreme refinement, where any idealization has disappeared.

Tangible harmony is also conveyed by the new work of British artist Annie Morris, whose artistic practice also includes painting, drawing, and tapestry. She studied under Giuseppe Penone at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and shows a piece from *Stacks*, her symbolic series of towers made of colored spheres. In a fragile equilibrium, sculpted of plaster and sand, these mineral balls covered with pure pigments – particularly cadmium red, ultramarine blue, and emerald green – are stacked on a concrete base of similar verticality. The piece blends figuration and abstraction, collective and personal experience.

Quite different from this harmony but with a similar desire to grasp fragility, the oil painting *Personnage* (1969) and the multicolored painted sculpture *Head* (1975) by Karel Appel, cofounder of the CoBrA movement in 1948, fluctuate between the expressionistic grotesque and popular humor, between animality and a children's drawing. Their resemblance to unbridled but meticulous *art brut* brings them into the territory of the unconscious.

Cheek Fabric (Peach), a new piece from Sylvie Fleury's painting series *Eye Shadows*, shows the fascination that cosmetics and their palette of colors exert over the Swiss artist and is also related to monochrome painting and the *tondo*. With the gentle yet sharp irony that characterizes her polymorphic work, which also expresses an exceptional feminist intelligence, this UFO-style painting with its sparkly pigments goes beyond post-Duchampian practice. The piece questions the masculine/feminine paradigm as well as the vanity of the world and the way that the art world is manufactured. Sylvie Fleury has created a figurative work representing a make-up item that is also a monochrome painting.

Many of the artworks in *Dialogues* radiate sensuality. It is evident in the works of Sylvie Fleury and Don Brown, and is influenced by primitivism in the work of Cuban artist Agustín Cárdenas, producing a disturbing strangeness. His two black bronzes, *La Fiancée du cheval* (1984), with its totem-like appearance, and the anthropomorphic *Bouba* (1974), are also connected to modernist sculpture bordering on abstraction, recalling Arp or Moore. Agustín Cárdenas is also known for having produced many direct carvings of Carrara marble in a more classical tradition.

An important figure of postmodernism and new German painting, Günther Förg created abstract art that never reproduced the same style twice or repeated the same decisions. He was fascinated by the ability of painting to manifest itself in its physicality, materiality, and chromatic tones, to construct its own architectural space. His work gives rise to questions of utopia, our relationship to nature, the passing or suspension of time. These are clear signs of modernity, from Mondrian to de Kooning, from the façades of Bauhaus buildings to Cy Twombly or the grid motif. In this *Gitterbilder* from 2002, Förg's unique gesture, the covering in strata of blues and yellows and the particular texture that the wood medium provides, summon sensuality and restraint.

The pop geographies of César and Mimmo Rotella (both part of the Nouveau Réalisme movement) are in immediate dialogue with each other. The gallery presents works from the Italian artist's final years, the 2000s. Much earlier, in 1953, Mimmo Rotella discovered that advertising posters could serve as material for his artworks. Famous for his "doubles décollages," which were first produced in the streets of Rome and then in his studio, where he mounted them on canvas, he worked using movie posters, such as the famous image of Marilyn Monroe from *The Seven-Year Itch*, an Elvis Presley movie, or Martin Scorsese[KA1] 's *Gangs of New York*, adding paint and pieces of monochromatic paper. He established a new language of the street that was poetic with abstract elements, and renewed the possibilities of what a painting could be.

We see the same movement from urban daily life into the studio in one of César's final compressions, *Compression Monaco (bleue)*, a masterful series in his oeuvre. The French artist compressed many different objects, including race cars, sheet metal from advertising signs, papers, and jewelry. The prince of the scrapyard took on the challenge of pitchers with enamel in 1994, in a rare artwork that approaches bas-relief.

Carlos Jacanamijoy's abstract, atmospheric, colorful, lush landscapes are inspired by nature – specifically by the jungles of Colombia. Borrowing from American color field painting, the Colombian artist's two new large-scale paintings, *Caminos de agua* and *Caminos de luz*, are his first to be shown at Almine Rech. Not completely abstract but almost landscapes, these paintings create a space of hypnotic depth that is spiritual and intense, hinting at the memory of nature as a perceptive experience and an imaginary world of tales with a fascinating universality.

— Charles Barachon