ALMINE RECH

# George Rouy
# Belly Ache

## Nov 26 — Dec 22, 2022 | Paris

Recent theories suggest that our gut – commonly thought of as merely a collection of unsavoury organs – may function as a regulator of our emotions, alongside the brain. In every language, however, many idioms express conflict or discomfort: “a knot in your stomach”, “gut-wrenching”, and “gnawed from the inside” ... George Rouy has portrayed such images in his paintings for many years.

The belly not only affects our psyche but also is the origin of childbirth, where creation takes place. Rouy is eager to reaffirm this, loud and clear: in his mind, to paint is to give birth. The artwork thus takes on the same eminently intimate character as the body itself. The painting is revealed like an experience told, a state of health and consciousness in a particular moment. The human figure naturally imposed itself as the key subject of the artist’s visual research. Rouy fashions his bodies like golems, both incomplete and undead. His creatures do not fall under the classic category of the portrait: they enter into dissonance and complement each other, both fluid and flayed. His bodies venture into the field of energy and vibration, sometimes verging on the ghostly, and become pretexts to develop mental landscapes, and collections of ideas. Rouy’s paintings never work as a series; they mix different styles, somewhere between Fernand Léger’s schematization, Pablo Picasso’s cubism and Adrian Ghenie’s decomposition. This manner of considering art in a non-linear, non-continuous way defines the artist’s unscripted chaos, forever sidestepping a bleak, rectilinear horizon.

The new paintings in the Belly Ache exhibition perfectly reflect this agile mindset with refreshing off-handedness. Some of the figures are almost ‘glitches’, a scramble of the digital and reality which itself is reaching obsolescence. And for good reason: in life today, we see as many - if not more - digital bodies than real people on our smartphones or the web. Rouy brings us bluntly back into the tangible, although some of his works are left behind in a liminal place. Other figures almost evaporate, creating a primaeval, chaotic mass, an abstraction of flesh and bone. Some humanoid forms in the show seem to borrow from the language of science fiction – barren, disincarnate landscapes and bodies – while others are more reminiscent of the iconography at play in traditional arts, masks and totems. Rouy belongs to that class of magician-artists who are graced with the ability to capture the evolutions of our time, reconnect them to our own story and reveal them with great subtlety.

— Loïc Le Gall, Director of CAC Passerelle