ALMINE RECH

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet
Signs

Jan 9 — Feb 1, 2020 | Brussels

Lava – Jovian downpours

If we bestow properties and perceptions on a world, like gravity in referenced atmospheric, standard conditions such as those on Earth as far as we are concerned, it is possible to fantasize certain maelstroms as soon as our senses are catapulted to a faraway universe where they are sharpened, excited, if not destroyed by the new, intense agitation inevitably triggered by the explorer on the apparent surface of this newly-discovered celestial body.

From the microscope to the stellar telescope––as narrated by Proust in unfolding his sense of detail in *In Search of Lost Time*––there is something eminently fascinating in analytically observing these flat standing stones, these circles of glazed lava that Jean-Baptiste Bernadet paints and fires. *Untitled (Sign)* distributes powerful colored currents in series, polychrome cracks and turbulences, raw, as far as his moves with matter uncover on the underside some traces of a foundational sign, a titanic event, a past refracted fireclay, a primal lava or a hard clay.

In essence, outcropping the stone, the improbably liquid matter and its hue are fully expressed, forming a collection of space pucks like so many frozen instants of an astral geology, inert fluxes once they have been fired, like cooled down magma: an archipelago of excesses. The glazing on the surface describes its self-portrait, the whole metamorphosis of a subject into another, similar to the image of these playful figures, all the Jovian, ancient divinities with their impetuous and nimble personalities.

A round, solid picture. Glazed as well as painted, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet's work, made of pictorial and ceramic vibrations, delivers a whole deafening imagination where composition gets dislocated as a boon for a nascent swarm of clouds. A morphing form drawn inside thick layers and transparencies, rather than with a line. A flat world? An easel stone, vertical, superstitious, whose edge delineates a boundary paradoxically attached to a fatal spill, as if hanging from an intangible mechanism. A levitating colored fragment from a meteorite, a reflection onto itself, such as those unearthed by recent medical imaging revealing black holes through a digital re-composition of their indescribable, invisible nature.

The intense décor of a point of origin, as in *"In the beginning was,"* the evolving overflows of the applied paste thwart a policed beauty, opening a pictorial space in motion, a summation of oxymora orchestrating a variation of precipitates into a rondo.

Untitled (Sign), made of oracles and clouds as dense as they are malleable, a foretelling rain, beautiful because of its pictorial revelations and its gray puddles where the polychromic spectrum unfolds, the necessary opacity of a dry volcanic oculus without which color, up front, would burrow its omen.

- Mathieu Buard, Paris, October 2019