ALMINE RECH

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet
Fugue

Jul 11 — Nov 15, 2020 | Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, Rouen, France

The *Fugues* series is central to Jean-Baptiste Bernadet's work as it sits at the intersection of several themes that have always inhabited his painting practice: the appearing and the dissolution of the image and the subject, the loss of any spatial references, and most particularly a careful consideration of color and its major role in painting.

The artist envisions these paintings as a new space to be built; by creating myriad focal points he blurs all references and seeks to reach a state where it is impossible for the eye to detect what has been painted first and last. The juxtaposed layers are fused, colors are blended, and all hierarchies disappear to give way to this new purely pictorial, chromatic and sensible space composed with an infinity of shifting hues.

As a consequence the artwork becomes a carrier for any viewer to project what they wish. "My artworks are by definition open and accessible. In this process the work is not uniquely mine but becomes what the viewer wishes to make of it," states the artist. In his studio Jean-Baptiste Bernadet explores this link between what is seen and the feelings triggered by this vision, by the memories that may crop up, which he suggests spectators should make their own.

Two artworks from the museum collection selected by Jean-Baptiste Bernadet as they echo his work through their theme or pictorial treatment are presented across from the wall where his own paintings are installed.

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet is a French artist who lives and works in Brussels and New York, where his two studios are located.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with Almine Rech gallery in conjunction with the Festival Normandie Impressionniste.

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Jacques-Émile Blanche (Paris, 1861 – 1942, Offranville)

Venise, San Marco, 1912
Oil on wood
Gift of Jacques-Émile Blanche, 1924

Among the numerous artworks in the museum collection, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet was immediately attracted to Jacques-Émile Blanche's painting of St. Mark's basilica in Venice. This choice is a nod to Venetian painting which is more focused on color than on drawing, as Impressionists painting would later be, but also a reference to Marcel Proust whom the artist regularly summons in his exploration of the relationship between sensory emotions and the memories they set off. The composition is built with small successive, additive brushstrokes, where the warm light of a sunset also echoes Bernadet's work, as each of his pictures may be perceived as the evocation of the memory of a sunset.

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Jean-Francis Auburtin (Paris, 1866 – 1930, Dieppe)

Paysage Symboliste, 1895-1900
Oil on canvas
Gift of Monsieur and Madame Quentin, 2016

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet was drawn to this symbolist painting by Auburtin because of its closeness to his own conception of landscape. The limited color palette of the nocturnal composition, the indecisiveness of the various elements of the landscape, which can only be faintly made out, contribute to create a landscape whose dreamlike power incites projections. The artist thus sees it as a "possible space" where fiction and reality are blended, a potentiality to be developed by the viewer and whose reading is open a priori.