

## Probe the Real



FACE À SOI-MÊME  
Huile sur toile, 2015  
37x46 cm



WE ARE THE 99% - AFRIQUE  
Huile sur toile, 2013  
195x160 cm



## Probe the real

Bernard Gaube explores the life of images through a practice related to painting. In the manner of a Georges Perec analyzing in a poetic way the spaces that he meets one by one, his practice focused on a daily exercise evolves from one universe to another <sup>1</sup>. He addresses a viewpoint on what surrounds him or keep his attention, ranging from the nearest (The relation to oneself, then to the other, or to others, to society) to the most distant (up to abstraction) where reality unfolds or reconstructs itself differently ...A route that takes various ways to go back which causes reconciliations and deviations, because "to live is to pass from one space to another, trying as much as possible not to bump"<sup>2</sup>.

A work that does not immediately reveal its content but opens it to the unknown, the indefinable, the questioning. A collection of paintings to be seen and reviewed, to be scrutinized and analyzed in order to be lost in the meanders of this creation and to perceive it from within.

## View on both sides

Everything begins with a look, declined in various forms: the portrait as a look at the other, the self-portrait center on oneself. With his self-portraits, Bernard Gaube confronts us with his point of view. Velasquez and his Meninas are not far away! The look tilts by a simple mirror effect. The visitor is invited to confront himself to the other by a game of mise en abyme.

This work responds in an objectal way to the proposal made by the historian of art and philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman in *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*<sup>3</sup> a book in which he postulates that "what we see is worthwhile only by what concerns us."<sup>4</sup> We make the works exist by our simple presence in front of them.

<sup>1</sup> Georges Perec, *Espace d'espaces*, Galilée, Paris, 1974/2000 (new edition review and expanded).

<sup>2</sup> id., p.16. Our translation

<sup>3</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* (coll. "Critique"), Les éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> id., p.9.



The image in return changes our way of looking at things because "what we see before us always looks in"<sup>5</sup> This dual relationship serves as a basis for all the works in which the artist presents himself to our gaze. The spectator becomes an actor because he perceives then the scopic mechanism proper to any painting in connection with the real. Like Benoît Felix, an artist and model for a while, which entrusts us: "Bernard Gaube retreated in front of his painting. So, when he gives us to watch, it is the relay of his gaze that we take. We are never the first viewer of a painting. The painter, while he gave us his place in front of it, came instead of this first spectator, and with Bernard Gaube, the painting is still fresh."<sup>6</sup>

## Under the mask, bare skin

In addition, the artist fixes with paintbrush the "Portrait of Benoit Felix", the "Portrait of R.P." or the "Portrait of PM", a model or an acquaintance. He invites the public's eyes to lay on lines skillfully traces of a stroke with contours appearing insufficient, removed or even erased, which leave a deep sensitivity, a more intimate relationship with touches and colors. A crack hidden under different attractions such as a mask placed on the skin of appearances.

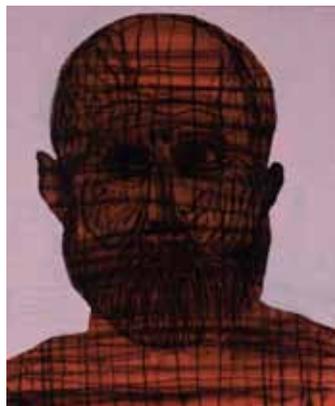
" It takes a mask so that there is a face behind. The face stands behind the mask, and if you remove the mask, there is no more face: it is the real skin. And the one who stared at me, it is that skin he wanted."<sup>7</sup>

Bernard Gaube returns us the image of a real perceived under the lens of his sensibility and rendered by a daily act of painting lived as a necessity, an "exercise in painting" will he say in reference to Jean Bazaine and his journey within this medium. Out of every style, of every period but nourished by past influences skillfully assimilated, the painting ends up appearing in its authenticity. An existential practice that binds the being to the world and whose brush would be the absolute weapon against any drift.

<sup>5</sup> id., 4ème de couverture.

<sup>6</sup> Benoît Felix on Bernard Gaube, written notes from July-August 2016 (unpublished). Our translation

<sup>7</sup> ibid.





### From the skin to the body ... of the image

From the face to the full-size portrait, there is only one step that Bernard Gaube crosses: the "Painter's Figure," depicts the artist holding his brush. Following it, the touches of paint would have been scattered on the canvas. "Study of nakedness" as an outline of body to think, images of body and body of images ...The nude, the flesh become a subject in itself, it becomes "the sub-jectum, which has nothing above it and no longer conceals anything"<sup>8</sup> It is a desire for flesh as much as an allusion to fragility and preciousity.

### Nude study image

Bernard Gaube juggles with the codes of pictorial representation. He extracts fundamental components such as this secular subject of the nude, reviewed in a singular way to better understand the image, its essence; to better experience it in a fierce struggle with what flees from all grip.

### Theater of forms

Outside the schemes, he refuses the division between abstraction and figuration and passes from one to the other by pushing the limits of the frame, transgressing it or questioning it from within. Under the title "Theater of forms", a series of paintings are re-framed as the boundaries of a decor. A theatrical composition is elaborated in which forms moves like so many actors on stage. Dialogue often appears in this structural element to better recall this oratorical device like in the painting "Two" whose words have gone. From one to multiple, there is no limit.

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### From the singular to the plural

The question of the subject intervenes in the artist hidden by the mask, as we have seen, shown in its simplicity by the body naked or dramatized by the line. He also moves in his environment and tackles broader societal issues (migration, ecology, ...) as in "The Natives-Desolation-Dixit Sitting Bull" and other paintings referring to nature, the massacre of Native Americans, recurring theme to the artist or the question of sharing wealth with the series "We are the 99%". Works revealing as much desires as frustrations, wishes as much as revolts against a society in loss of reference. "That the painting is, in Greek semantics, mortification, in other words, transfer in the form of a graph and" in some surface "of the signs of the living, reveals in it a duel, a constitutive agon" <sup>9</sup>. This antagonistic part expresses a humanity shared between the shadow and the light, what one wants to see and what one cannot see.

### Birth and life of form

In turn, he transposes what he perceives as pictorial signs, the advent of form such as this white line in "Space of Line I" It adopts approaches with multidisciplinary accents marking a desire for experimentation without limitations: oil paint with brush or water-based paint, photography, video ... While centered first and foremost on the birth of an image, its first construction, many forms are thought in the time of practice as this evocation of (a) "Chronos" unfurling on the canvas. A real daily painting exercise, the result of which transposes us to the hollow of clean volumes or silhouettes concentrated within the frame. The outside and the inside join the line which is formed.

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<sup>8</sup> Frédéric Ferrari, Jean-Luc Nancy, Nus sommes, Yves Gevaert edition, Brussels, 2002, p.8.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Guerin, L'origine de la peinture (Coll.encre marine), Editions Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2013, p.98. Our translation.



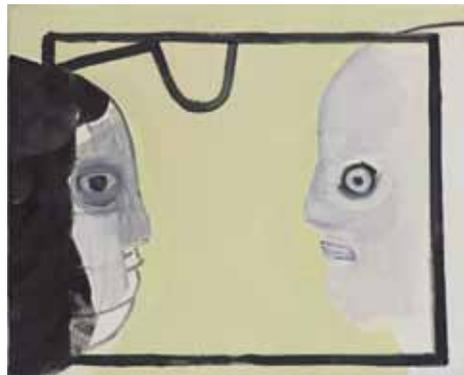
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- 1 SELFPORTRAIT - *TWO*  
Oil on canvas, 2014  
46x37 cm
- 2 SELFPORTRAIT - *ICON ON GREEN GRID*  
Oil on canvas, 2014  
46x37 cm
- 3 SELFPORTRAIT + *MASK A.H.*  
Oil on canvas, 2010  
37x30 cm
- 4 PORTRAIT OF P.M.  
Oil on canvas, 2010-2011  
46x37 cm
- 5 PORTRAIT OF R.P.  
Acrylic inck, Oil on canvas, 2015  
57x46 cm
- 6 STUDY OF NAKED - *O.G.*  
Oil on canvas,, 2010-2011  
148x114 cm
- 7 PAINTER'S FIGURE - 5  
Oil on canvas, 2012  
160x120 cm
- 8 THE NATIVES-DESOLATION-DIXIT SITTING BULL  
Oil on canvas, 2013-2014  
195x160 cm
- 9 SPACE OF LINE I  
Oil on canvas, 2014  
46x37 cm
- 10 PRECARIOUS BALANCE  
Oil on canvas, 2015  
46x37 cm
- 11 PORTRAIT OF B.F. 13 - *COMME UNE ESQUISSE*  
Oil on canvas, 2015  
46x37 cm
- 12 PORTAIT OF P.M.  
Oil on canvas, 2011  
37x30 cm
- 13 THEATER OF FORMS - *ABSTRACTION*  
Oil on canvas, 2015  
46x57 cm
- 14 THEATER OF FORMS - *TWO*  
Oil on canvas, 2014  
60x74 cm



CHRONOS  
Oil on canvas , 2015  
260x200 cm