

GUILLAUME VALENTI

Liste Art Fair Basel 2022

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Booth 19

Worlds cut off from the world, the museum and the amateur cabinet are among the rare spaces designed to draw attention to their walls, and thus act on the temporary but clear separation between their users and the rest of reality. Guillaume Valenti is interested in the image on the wall, or more specifically in the image of the image on the wall. In the same way as in theatre, the paintings constitute a synthesis and a mediation of reality in a restricted space-time continuum, a scenic composition which isolates a moment from the common world to then return to it with a different eye.

His works represent contemporary art exhibition spaces, oddly austere and familiar places, which he encloses in his paintings like one would in a box. The physical edges of the chassis form the fourth wall. He reconstitutes them with a concern for realism for which he makes them ecological units of museums to be transplanted into other museums, impenetrable dioramas which create the illusion of frontality and do not tolerate sideways vision. The exhibition spaces are always designed as decor sets for the eyes. Inside, abstract works, sometimes barely palpable; a legacy of minimalism that still seeks to define the structure of the painting and the radiance of the sculpture in the contained air of the room. Our vision passes through and stops again on the limits of the space in which they are encamped.

Looking at art is an exercise that constitutes the essence of Guillaume Valenti's work, its formal and conceptual basis. It condenses into images the spirit of the *amateur* with which a part of him identifies. Inseparable from the history of art that built him, he places his own referential field at the center of his works, and thus a whole cycle of consumption and assimilation of images of art in which he places himself. He apprehends painting as a language with its own games of intertextuality, quotations, responses, what-is-to-one-is-to-the-other; with a grammar of innuendos and *deja vus* to which everyone contributes, throughout the story.

At first, his very realistic pictorial technique sought to conceal the hand, the gesture of execution. On the smooth and icy texture, the gaze sinks directly into the depth of the scene, without being able to stop on the consistency of a trace, an accident, and without wanting to consider the backstage work of the image. We are looking for the artist. Subsequently, the successive states of the painting with its attempts and its repentances, its graphic traces and its materials, began to be told as a "writing" which translates on the surface a life nourished from below.

Pursuing the interweaving of images in the image, Guillaume Valenti began in 2019 a series of book paintings. Open books, to be consulted, where a litany of printed dots and lines does not, however, deliver any intelligible message at first sight. These images are taken from a page of a monograph on the artist Guy de Cointet which itself reproduces a page from a fully encrypted artist's diary. Beneath the Braille and Morse code, thanks to the transparency of the paper, float the shadows of the previous page. With Guy de Cointet, the microscopic and rigorous ordering of black signs on the white page is an exercise in composition with the white areas of the paper, as others do with the empty spaces of exhibitions.

Always painting the same double page, Guillaume Valenti delves into different aspects over the series. The framing that initially presented the entire book has moved closer to the object to a disconcerting degree of magnification. More than the text, it is the large sheet that appears all bent like perforated metal jail or the score of a mechanical instrument that appears. Language is lost, context disappears, the subject (as a “thing to see”) vanishes in this promiscuity. There is no just distance to be taken from the images, according to his works, but always an unstable, loving and critical distance, twice too close or too far.

In his most recent series, Guillaume Valenti returns to the representation of an exhibition space, but this time installed in a setting different from museum galleries. Two opaque white picture rails are planted on the edge of a forest to mimic a traditional place for art, fragmented and transplanted to accomplish its own return to nature. Following the model of alternative spaces, temporary places dedicated to art, the photographic genre of exhibition views meets that of landscape painting. The spatial cube opens in a call for air towards the leafy environment that takes shape in the painting.

The painter takes a further step back to add yet another imbrication of the game of a reality within reality. Planted in a larger background, the picture rails assume their artificiality while nature in turn becomes suspicious of being a decor. The heart of the work nevertheless remains an instance of the exhibition, which reiterates the framework in which the work is seen. In the same way, the spectator doubles up to see himself seeing in a social theatre of the gaze.

Guillaume Valenti was born in 1987 in Évry. He graduated from the Beaux-Arts de Paris and lives and works in Paris.

His work has been exhibited at *Viva Villa !* Fondation Lambert, Avignon (2020), *Itinerance*, Palais de l'Institut de France (2020), *L'écume des songes*, Poush Manifesto, Clichy, (2020), Salon de Montrouge (2017), *Jeune Création*, Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, Pantin (2017), and *Vendange tardive 2016*, CAC de Meymac (2017).

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