

Claude Guénard

Figurative painting seemed to have said its last word. During all the time that this history has lasted, this history of representation in the West, one could have hoped that the artists would have at last exhausted the subject of painting. This is in no way the case and over the last few years several exhibitions have proved the vitality of the pictorial act in our modern world. This is undoubtedly because of the disappointed hopes once placed in photography and cinema. Unfortunately, these images no longer speak better or more accurately about our daily life. The reverse would even be true. The debate on the loss of the real, this idea that our existence is influenced more by the fictions imposed by the media than by a real experience of life without doubt comes from the impasses of all these representations that deck the walls of our cities and adorn families' living rooms in the evening. This is undoubtedly a result of that shortcoming on which painting has finally succeeded in taking the most spectacular revenge. Claude Guénard is one of those rare artists who contributed to this reversal. In his work, there is no need to start off in the search for a stripped-down absolute. It is through his life, his trips, his whims and quite obviously his loves that the man has found both the source of his subjects but also a meaning to his compositions. The common point of most of Claude Guénard's paintings is to radiate from a center with as a central motif a figure that distributes the action, the characters and the settings. These compositions therefore speak of a man who places himself in the center of the universe. Because the experience he has of daily life permits him to distribute his feelings, to pretend to organize them before throwing them on the canvas. In this way, he can, through color, through gestures that are both controlled and sometimes impetuous, show how the world is built on its own contradictions. Nothing is simple in his works. Some characters seem to wage war with each other, others on the contrary visibly find the reasons for their presence in love and the carnal act. But no matter. What really is important is that these works are the artist's allegorical accounts. The paintings, drawings and sculptures don't talk to us about his life. They are not the catalogue of the anecdotes of his daily existence. They simply take their material and energy from the experience of one man. Because the principal lesson of Claude Guénard's work is to take us through a world in which the other is not reduced to a frozen image, where he or she is a genuine actor suddenly set down in the arena of a universe henceforth marked by contradictions. It is however precisely in transcending these contradictions that it is still possible for us to live. Claude Guénard has known it for a long time.

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