

Jean-Baptiste Maitre

Warning: The Grape-Train Has No Breaks

RITA URSO artopiagallery
Via Lazzaro Papi 2, Milan

Opening Thursday 31 May 2018 at 7 pm

31 May | 13 July 2018



Split Still Life | 2018 Modeling paste, acrylic, ink, varnish on resin coated Paper, mounted on canvas | 60 x 40 x 2 cm

For his second solo show at RITA URSO, French artist Jean-Baptiste Maitre is exhibiting new visual experiments that focus on figurative representation. On the first floor of the gallery, portrayed subjects such as still-lives, battle scenes, landscapes and cinema posters are created through a particular technique invented by Maitre. Images are subjected to a great deal of transformations making their visual recognition hostile to the observer's eye.

As a first step in Maitre's technique, a layer of white acrylic paint is applied onto a resin coated paper. It is then modeled through quick and clear brushstrokes which create the base of the painting. At this stage, guidelines are set, and shapes are outlined.

In the second phase, the visual structure that has been created on paper is digitally scanned, in a similar way that the radiography of a drawing would identify the skeleton of an image.

Finally, using an image editing software, colors are directly printed onto the identified structure with a modified inkjet printer.

The result is a visually contrasted painting that combines a fast hand-painted image with a precise digital color print. The blurred effect that comes from this overlay alters the perception of the human-eye.

In Maitre's work, man and machine are overlapped, creating a dialogue between the topics of precision and intentions. The machine's precision and its automatic mechanics act upon something that is uncontrollable and imprecise: human intention.

On the second floor of the gallery, the work *Deep Throat Contracted/ Expanded* is inspired by the movie poster of the 1972 erotic film titled *Deep Throat*. The name also refers to the 1972 Watergate scandal, in which an informant was also known by the same name. The work plays with the idea that information is volume as the adjective 'deep' suggests. Sexual arouse can come from the depth of the throat of the performer of a sexual act. The depth of the throat also symbolizes the space where words are spoken from. By contracting and expanding that space, information can change.

In the exhibition, two versions of Maitre's work exist next to another: *Deep Throat Expanded* consist of the movie poster cut into 25 equal parts and mounted evenly on the wall, thus expanding visually the image. In the same room, *Deep Throat Contracted*, a contraction of fragments from the same movie poster is superimposed on canvas. The twenty-five parts cover the canvas, one on top of another, as if composed by centripetal strength. The title of the work changes accordingly to the size of the exhibition surface and the resulting proximity of the twenty-five fragments.

The exhibition title *Warning: The Grape-Train Has No Breaks*, is inspired by the name of a video-game killing method, a strategy, where the player gathers zombies together in order to have them killed as quickly as possible. Maitre suggests a parallel between packs of zombies and the branches of grapes and by extension, with the subject of still life. The exhibited works show the artist's thoughts on pictorial gesture made by machines –tools without a soul– rather than by living beings. This idea generates still lives that one could qualify as post-human.

Jean-Baptiste Maitre was born in France in 1978. He lives and works in Amsterdam. He studied Studio Photography, History of Art and Fine Art in Amsterdam and Paris at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, the Sorbonne University, the École des Beaux-Arts of Paris, and Gobelins École de l'Image. He is represented in the Netherlands by gallery Martin van Zomeren of Amsterdam and in Italy by RITA URSO of Milan. Recent solo shows are: *The Admirer and the admired* (with Dina Danish), Institut für Kunstgeschichte Der LMU, München (2017); *Fluid Carrying the Hope of Ships in Distress*, RITA URSO artopiagallery, Milan (2016); *Mandala République*, Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam (2014); *Post-Sculpture*, (with Bruce McClean), Galerie 1m3, Lausanne (2013); *Stripe Paintings*, La Salle De Bain art center, Lyon (2012). Recent group shows are: *wordswordswords*, Sofie Van De Velde, Antwerp (2017); IDFA, Eye Amsterdam Film Museum, Amsterdam (2016); *It ain't whatcha write, it's the way atcha write it*, Manifesta Foundation, Amsterdam (2014); *CODEX*, Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2014).