

Press Release

Exhibition: « Stéphane Belzère. Floating Worlds »

From 3 December 2021 to 27 August 2023

Modern and Contemporary Art Museum (MAMCS)

The work of the painter Stéphane Belzère, born in 1963, has been fuelled by French, Swiss and German cultural influences. In the mid 1990s, he decided to set up his easel in Paris, in the so-called "Soft Pieces" room of the National Museum of Natural History. This was the start of an ongoing pictorial event, the artist filling his canvases with specimen jars, a motif recurring to the point of obsession. It has been subjected to multiple variations, accumulated, prodigiously enlarged, traversed by the artist's gaze and even seen from within, finally becoming an immense, indecipherable landscape.

Invited to occupy a room on the first floor of the MAMCS, the painter engages in a dialogue with the collections of the Strasbourg Natural History Museum (at present closed for renovation) by partly displaying its collection of jars containing specimens of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish or invertebrates. Nearly two hundred of these jars are being presented side-by-side with his paintings and accompanied by an installation specially designed for Strasbourg - *Les Mains des Anges*. This is a participatory and evolutive work in which Stéphane Belzère, with the willing collusion of young visitors to the museum, will "bottle" their moulded hands.

The exhibition title is borrowed from Japanese *ukiyo-e*, literally "images of the floating world," an art characterised by the introduction of everyday subjects into what remains a highly codified painting. These "Floating Worlds" oscillate between different scales and types of presentation making them at times highly realistic, at times indecipherable. In each is affirmed an original reflexion on light, colour and transparency. The jar, an ordinary container - of worlds that are not ordinary, hovers on the borderline between figuration and abstraction, between attraction and repulsion, between a scientific object and an inextinguishable source of inspiration for the painter.

In a room designed as a vast immersive interlude within the collection trail, *Mondes Flottants* is an exhibition of a new kind in the MAMCS' development. As a dialogue between two different types of collection, it offers to our gaze an encounter between a contemporary proposal and a scientific heritage, each complementing and shedding light on the other.

Exhibition curator: Estelle Pietrzyk, Chief Heritage Curator, in charge of MAMCS; with advice from Marie-Dominique Wandhammer and Samuel Cordier, directors of Strasbourg Natural History Museum.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCS)

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