

Sébastien Mettraux (Suisse, 1984)

May 3 - June 29, 2019

Opening Thursday May 2, 2019, from 6 pm, Vernissage Art-en-Vieille Ville, Genève



Untitled (Vanité n°1), 2018
Oil on canvas
180 x 150 cm



Untitled, 201
Oil on canvas
200 x 160 cm



Untitled (Vanité n°8), 2018
Oil on canvas
120 x 100 cm

A graduate of the the Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and of the Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design de Genève (HEAD) Sébastien Mettraux lives and works in Switzerland. His studio is located in the Vallorbe train station, where the Orient Express used to stop, an environment that seems timeless today and fascinates the artist with its offbeat atmosphere.

In perfect harmony with the universe where he grew up, Sébastien Mettraux assimilates characteristic topics of the Swiss environment, such as atomic bomb shelters, military training sites, luxury villas promoted by local real estate agencies, industrial machines or medical prostheses. These topics, which stand like powerful symbols of a specific era and a profoundly Helvetic way of thinking, compose the artist's vocabulary, leading to a visual language that reflects what could be defined as "Swiss DNA".

Part of the so called Millennials, the artist is infused with the digital culture, the transhumanism, the anthropocene and the insecurity of his age, as well as affected by the paranoia that appears at the turn of the 21st century. These topics feed his work in which there is no human presence and question our relationship to life, but also our relationship to death and the passing of time, such as in his latest series *Vanités* (since 2018), a sort of modern "memento mori".

The series produced with the backing of the Leenaards Cultural Grant in 2015, entitled *Ex Machina*, represents industrial machines as sculptural elements, witnesses of innovation and progress with improving effects on our lifestyles. The subjects are isolated, decontextualized like "still lives", totems of the impermanence of all things.

Sébastien Mettraux's solo exhibition at Gowen Contemporary presents the artist's most recent works from the *Ex Machina* and *Vanités* series. In a research between the living and the artificial, the artist tackles the notions of production, repair, functionality and sublimation in line with his artistic and philosophical concerns. Far from acclaiming the idea of an all-powerful man who today, more than ever, seems to believe in the dream of eternity, the exhibition is a paradoxical celebration of life in a search for the human and the essential.

Sébastien Mettraux lives and works in Vallorbe. Personal exhibitions (selection): Sébastien Mettraux, Solo Show, Gowen Contemporary, Geneva (May 2019); Exhibition for the inauguration of the ELNA building, HEAD, Geneva (2018); ART Paris Art Fair, Paris (2018); Ferme de la Chapelle, Lancy (2018); Forma Art contemporain, Lausanne (2017); Vallorbe Station / Yverdon Art Centre (2017). Group exhibitions (selection): Group Exhibition at Château de Vuillerens, curator Hérard de Pins (April 2019); Centre d'art Quartier Général, La Chaux-de-Fonds (2017); Museo Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona (2017); Mudac, Lausanne (2016); Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2014); Fondation de l'Hermitage, Lausanne (2013) Sébastien Mettraux won the prize at the Biennale d'art de La Chaux-de-Fonds (2018); the regional cultural prize of Yverdon-les-Bains (2017); the Leenaards prize (2015); the Swiss Art Awards prize, Federal Office of Culture, Bern (2009), Kiefer Hablitzel Award, Bern (20019). Sébastien Mettraux has just completed State of Vaud Art Residency in Berlin (2018-2019).

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