

Picture this Post

Julien des Monstiers **BÊTAVERSE** — Interview

"...this exhibition is intended as an ode to the real world, just as painting is an ode to the physicality of dreams..."



Julien des Monstiers

So says artist Julien des Monstiers about his recent series of works entitled *Bêtaverse*. The exhibition opened on 11 June, 2022 at Christophe Gaillard Gallery in Paris, France, and will close on 30 July 2022. *Bêtaverse* builds on the

idea of a meta world. In this creation, Des Monstiers aims to present an other world – a world with connections from the past, a world more real than the real world: full of intuitions, autonomy, and complexities to be rediscovered.

Des Monstiers explains that he has experimented with a variety of techniques and styles in his artist journey. In his works, you can find elements of geometry, repetition, color contrast, and rhythm. With the medium of oil, he produces both figurative and abstract pieces, sometimes combining other classical materials. In this sixth exhibition at Christophe Gaillard Gallery, Des Monstiers exhibits only figurative paintings for the first time.

Here, the artist Julien Monstier (JM) speaks with Picture This Post (PTP) about his works in exhibition *Bêtaverse* and the inspirations for his art.

(PTP) Does *Bêtaverse* convey an alternative reality?

(JM) This Exhibition embodies the idea that the Painting has always had something revolutionary, even in the digital era. The painting itself is already an alternative language. Sometimes, the promise of future progress makes

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Culture / Art

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us forget that we have to work with the real, the present, and the physicality of the world. Thus, I did not create an alternative reality. I simply highlighted that reality already exists.

How do you physically convey this idea in your work?

Painting is a beautiful idea in the sense that it renews itself continuously... The painters have to do it differently, but with the same ingredients. I work with oil on canvas and other classical mediums. The way I use the material of painting is rather complex: I have my own rules, my own processes. The canvas is textured, and then, the picture is painted. People think that I often ruin my paintings in the process, while on the contrary, I paint them like that.

Instead of being drawn to the subject of painting, I am always more interested in the elements of picture-making: the format, the gestures, the textures, and the mediums. With the medium of painting, I do not really create another world.

Instead, I reveal the world in which we live with my own vocabulary.

How does this Bêtaverse exhibit fit into your journey as an artist?

For a long time, I painted figurative works in a very conventional way. Around 2012, I started to paint on another surface other than canvas, and repaint the pictures I painted on the canvas. I have a big table in the studio

where I paint my pictures with the most precision. Then, I place a big plastic film on the fresh painting, on which the medium sticks and transfers. Finally, I pull up the plastic film, place it on the surface of the painting, and the picture transfers itself for a second time. It is a bit complicated, but very simple at the same time. It brings about the impression that the painting was not done by hand, even though it is in this case.

In this exhibition, Bêtaverse, I used my new techniques creating big abstract traces on the canvases. For the first time, I only exhibit figurative paintings, even though I usually also make big abstract paintings.

What are some others' reactions to your works?

In general, the first questions that people ask me are regarding the painting technique. The paintings seem to be simple, but when people look at them closer, they realize that something does not make sense. They are not able to know how and in what chronological order the paintings were painted.

The second reaction is often an appreciation of the colors. I have worked a lot with decorative patterns coming from an artisan background: with painted paper, carpets, tile patterns, etc. It does not bother me at all that the paintings are attractive aesthetically because I know that the decorative elements are not the only things that make them up. They have to be there

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before all the good paintings are made.

What elements from the physical and the cultural world did you want to include in your works?

The triptych with the same size (210 cm x 160 cm) represents the cover of the encyclopedia ALL UNIVERSE (TOUT L'UNIVERS).

Before the Internet, this encyclopedia was available in almost every French household. It was a collection with tens of volumes, in which we could find all the History of knowledge. It was a bit like the Internet before the Internet... The texts in the book were accompanied by illustrations: photos and the drawings that I always looked at when I was young. I used to spend hours and hours copying the illustrations. This exhibition speaks to everyone, but it speaks to those of my generation particularly, who clearly remember the world before the Internet. When I started to think about this exhibition *Bêtaverse*, I immediately told myself that I would make a triptych representing the red cover of this encyclopedia. These canvases are almost abstract paintings, except that we see the golden typography



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ALL UNIVERSE (TOUR L'UNIVERS) exactly as how it appeared on the books that I had at home. I consider this triptych as classical Vanitas. For this reason, they are placed on teeth. The triptych is a kind of homage to the physical world with a slightly ironic view of the past. Most importantly, I do not want to say that the world was better before. My idea is more of an homage to the physical world, and to not make it seem that it has never existed.

Additionally, in my works, I used images of cabins built by people who made the decision to live autonomously. These constructions are very interesting to paint because their architectural structures are very original. And also, the constructions show that in the real, physical world, people choose to isolate themselves from the system and their conditions of existence, without using technological skills or even taking refuge in a virtual reality. The real is more interesting and profound than everything.

For more information, visit the Christophe Gaillard Gallery website.

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