

Free time

Yves Zurstrassen paints as one composes music. He makes the music of each canvas heard in all its flashings, its variations, its silences, its additions and its withdrawals, when the finished painting is the graphic result of a pictorial device long experienced and that one also perceives the influence that had « his music to paint », this jazz that always accompanies him when he works.

It is therefore to a silent polyphony that he invites us, almost memorial, when we will have to listen, in this exhibition of seven monumental paintings in the very heart of the *Halle des Bouchers*, the free jazz of Evan Parker, the double-bass of Joëlle Léandre, the chords of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Archie Shepp or Ornette Coleman.

The artist uses a device that allows to « play the painting »: « The papers that I cut to the chosen forms are not glued, they are deposited on the canvas to form the composition. They are then removed very carefully to reveal their patterns in the finished painting which takes exactly the visible forms of the paper taken off.» He uses papers as stencils that, once removed, deposit their signs on the canvas. And it is precisely this narrative that Yves Zurstrassen makes of his practice that suggests the expressive orchestration of his work, up to the repetition of motifs that are as much ornamental as musical.

One is then tempted to see in this repetition, in this protocol of undefeated work, the signs of a ritual, and in the abstraction obtained « the shift towards the religious as soon as the subject fades» as Bernard Ceysson points out in the text of the catalogue published for the painter's exhibition in 2023 at the Picasso Museum in Antibes. A part of sacredness perhaps, that would not deny the painter who made for Vienne these seven paintings arranged, as in a back of a chapel, on the walls in arches of the Halle, or in altar. We think of the number 7, symbol of spiritual wisdom that invites meditation and so present in so many religions, the choice of color tones so that only the signs and the blue note can vibrate.

Layers of paint fixed to the support, frames, perforated papers with digital cutter directed by computer, a pointillism of repetition that suggests, by subtraction, appearances of other previous layers. It is this process that follows the sedimented time of the realization of the painting that gives rise to this game of occultation and revelation before the finished work shows the totality of the deposited layers, a subtle polyphony that finally we can hear.

A music of great freedom, an inventive and joyful free jazz, a music of «free time» with intuitive and fluid rhythm, almost jubilant. Yves Zurstrassen's painting is of this order, that of a very free game in an awaked dream, like that of life itself.

Bernard Collet
Exhibition curator