

The painting of Yves Zurstrassen testifies to an original approach that brings new fields of investigation and new life to abstraction.

The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Liège (MAMAC) gives a privileged place to painting and in particular to abstract painting, already richly represented in its collections.

The work of Yves Zurstrassen is strikingly illustrated there, and for this exhibition, both MAMAC and the *Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins* (CED) are given over to discover the topicality of paintings produced exclusively for the occasion.

Thus the high walls and large spaces of the museum will accommodate paintings of outstanding size, and for the first time, CED will show a major selection of works on paper, the origin of larger works.

Small and medium-sized paintings complete this ensemble, allowing us to trace the progress of the artist, who often tests out ideas in reduced size before moving on to the other formats.

Heir to gestural abstract painting, Yves Zurstrassen has defined a new direction in line with those who, keeping geometric abstraction at a distance, have opted for a formal expressive language.

However, his particularity stems from a creative process he developed around the year 2000 and which has fundamentally transformed his painting: the technique of application and removal – collage – and its opposite – *décollage*.

The general principle is the application of different shapes of fine paper on successive layers of colour and their removal; thus the canvas is primarily handled from background to surface, a phase during which collages and then in the opposite direction, *décollages*, reveal preceding states of surface and colour, a tension between the starting point of the concept and the hazards of realization, between combination and improvisation.

For several years, the artist has experimented with this new method, step-by-step, first investing in black and white compositions before confronting colour. In his latest works, and in particular the coloured series where he introduces computer-generated shapes, he has reached a new level.

Whereas in previous phases, the collage – *décollage* appears to be the creative process in itself, he now intervenes in a more accomplished manner.

The painter combines spontaneity and a renewed gestural energy, a formal and colourful audacity, a rhythm in the movement that, in harmony with the structuring of pictorial space and collage – *décollage*, attests to a mastering of language and liberty of expression.