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# Triple win for Jeff Kowatch



Jeff Kowatch, Man Jok, Oil on linen, 2021, 180 x 375 cm

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Three exhibitions in Brussels, one already closed, the other two in terminal mode: you have to run run to soak up the Kowatch colors!

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★★★ Jeff Kowatch "Man Jok" Paintings and drawings *Contemporary art* Where Galerie La Forest Divonne, 66, rue de l'Hôtel des Monnaies, 1060 Brussels. [www.galerielaforestdivonne.com](http://www.galerielaforestdivonne.com) and 02.544.16.73; Faider gallery, 12, rue Faider, 1060 Brussels. [www.galeriefaider.be](http://www.galeriefaider.be) and 02.538.71.18; Odradek, 35, rue Américaine, 1050 Brussels. [www.odradekresidence.be](http://www.odradekresidence.be) and 0475.27.38.77 **When** Until November 6 at La Forest Divonne; until 23 October, at the Faider Gallery; exhibition finished at Odradek.

The Espace Odradek presented older works. Recent paintings and drawings can be seen at La Forest Divonne and at Faider. And you won't be disappointed!

One has to dive into Kowatch as we would into the open sea to wash away our evasiveness, our conformism, what clogs our minds with too much sterile insistence.

With Jeff Kowatch, an American from Brussels, it is plenitude that we enter, serenity that we are filled with, with emotion that goes without saying, and not in a small way but a long-lasting accomplice, like a fresh wine of which you keep the taste you for a prolonged pleasure.

It's been a while now that Jeff Kowatch has been obsessing our inner gaze with his harmonious propensity to lift us off the ground for a rare moment of of full enjoyment.

Kowatch, it is an open secret, has the art of subjugating by working like a madman on the chromatic prism, which, with him, calls as much on the old as the very current know-how of an artist who does not balk at any sacrifice, and especially not the one to trade with time so that success follows.

### Magical impact

You enter the space of the gallery and a crowd of unforeseen feelings is set in motion. The play of colors, shapes and very sensitive approaches of the matter spice up the unforeseen, almost sonorous, events as a certain music makes them dance before your eyes.

Jeff Kowatch is a funny guy **who does not ignore himself** and says what he has to say without hesitation. In this respect, and by the way, I recommend you the little book of writings from his youth that he has just published in the collection "Alentours" of the Belgeonne couple's Tandem editions. It is to be meditated upon as it is to be done in front of his paintings that move the space, so much they innervate it with unforeseen treats.

At La Forest Divonne and at Faider, the two spaces are nothing alike, more "up to date" despite its age at La Forest Divonne, more *bourgeois* style at Faider. Both, however, reflect the white, which, in harmony with the sometimes vibrant colors of Kowatch's paintings, reverberates with an even better adjusted light.

And the two spaces, which complement each other nicely, also linger on the recent plastic explorations of an artist who, while remaining himself, constantly reinvents himself, because his work is a work refined to the extreme, without concern for the time it will take him to dare to conclude it.

### Paintings and drawings

Mixing harmoniously the two approach techniques of a creator being in two places at once with his desires and his convictions, the two exhibitions offer us two variants in the path of colors of Kowatch, son of a policeman, born in California in 1965 and installed in Brussels for about fifteen years after having found there that rare pearl.



Jeff Kowatch, *Que Seurat Seurat*, 2019, Oil Bar on Dibond, 235x190cm

First, there are the paintings, often monumental, created in the wake of those we already knew but so different one from the other by their infinite games of forms and colors and his obedience, surmised, to a very long term work which, as we can imagine, must leave the artist exsanguinated, once the task is closed.

That will not have been without difficulty, the realization of one of these paintings being able, for him, to require more than three years of modifications. "*His paintings,*" says a delighted Jean de Malherbe, "*are, for him, emotions.*" The incessant search for balance by superimposing successive layers of glazes – sometimes a hundred – for painting to become. He works on a whole series of paintings at the same time. And thanks to a "cooking" of his own.

Kowatch uses oil that is oxidised and dried (on the roof of his house!), which he mixes to apply on the canvas in very thin layers, without thickness. This results in infinitely subtle colors and a material that is soft to the touch.

*We can see in his work a link between the technique of the old Flemish painters and American painting, that of Brice Marden, for example, of whom he became a friend when he was exhibited, still very young, at the Earl McGrath Gallery in New York and Los Angeles.*

At the time, Kowatch was copying the masters to make his mark. In these 2021 exhibitions, it is impossible not to see the profound contrast between the paintings and what he calls his drawings. An identical approach to a process, very different results because of the techniques used.

In the paintings, Kowatch puts forward a more meditative expression, soft on the canvas... He seeks depth. With the drawings, he creates a more expressive work.

To better understand him, one must also know that, for several years, Kowatch practiced Zen meditation, that of an immobile plenitude. Hence the name he received: Man Jok.

### Man Jok

Man Jok undoubtedly expresses this unspeakable balance between movement and balance. A fragile balance between colors and composition. As a young man, Jeff Kowatch first thought of becoming an actor and took three years of intensive acting classes. He was able to rehearse, almost endlessly, the same little scene from Chekov's *The Seagull*.

At La Forest Divonne, an immense triptych, posed in front of the benches which await you, is deserved provided that one pauses and lets oneself be taken by the meditation that it requires. An immense serenity envelops it, everything seems to move and everything is balanced. The fruit of three years of concentration which, as the gallery owner said, is astonishing at a time when the gesture, the speed of execution and perception are valued.

This painting, at the same time luminous and quiet, requires you with its variants, with its paintings so soft, fragile and confounding of secret penetration. With his drawings painted with a stick of oil pastel. No under-layers here but powerful juxtapositions.

Roger Pierre Turine