

ESPACES TÉMOINS
28 June - 28 July, 2018

VINCENT CHENUT, THOMAS FOUGEIROL,
ALICE GUITTARD, LUCAS JARDIN, MANOELA MEDEIROS

Curated by Célia Boldrini and Sarah Suco Torres.

Praz-Delavallade Paris presents "Espaces Témoins", an exhibition featuring a selection of artists working both in France and abroad, with Vincent Chenut (Paris-Brussels), Thomas Fougeirol (Paris-New York), Alice Guittard (Paris-Istanbul), Lucas Jardin (Brussels) and Manoela Medeiros (Paris-Rio de Janeiro). These artists have, each in their own way, set themselves free from classic supports, so they can experiment with a material, not just as a pre-determined substance, but as a support, a multi-faceted medium.

But exactly do these artists experiment with their chosen medium in order to better define it? Their approach involves a long period of gestation, in which a process of addition, superposition, excavation and subtraction bears witness to the creativity that lies at the very heart of their practice: canvas, paper, wall fragments, marble or board are just some of the materials they use, revealing by their actions the hidden riches of the medium itself.

This approach leads them to explore the organic world, experiment with the mineral world and transcend the materiality of day-to-day objects. In so doing, they make it possible to rethink the relationship between artist, artwork and medium. These artists' paradoxical activity that brings together creation and destruction, situates them in the aesthetical realm of ruins. Perhaps what is most striking is their freedom to use any medium they wish. The way in which they use their bodies or start the day, a routine that makes way for something unexpected and surprising: sketching, scratching, excavating and collecting...

As they bring their material to life, each is free to express those feelings that fashion their art; their creations, as if revealing substrata of their intimate selves, employ a unique visual language that is individualised by the incidents, deteriorations and accidents they encounter in their artistic practice. If some fix strict rules as a means of freeing themselves from constraints, others scratch away at the material like archaeologists until, for example, only a fleeting impression of the paper's fibres remains. All however question these shifting spaces, trying as best they can to understand and tame their medium. Their experimentation-based practice translates an obsessive search for an existential quest in which they make their own Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas epitomised in the phrase: "The one thing which permits him [man] to have life is the deed."

By setting themselves free from representation, these artists endeavour to broaden our understanding of the world we experience. Moving to and fro between creation and deconstruction, these five artists express an undeniable attraction to stigmata, marks and debris. The works on show in "Espaces Témoins" question time (long gone) and our memories, connecting the past to the present as if in a duty of remembrance, whilst stimulating our imagination. This dialogue with the past reminds us that, as human beings, we are subject to that essential, omnipresent and inescapable concept: the passing of time.

If time and matter are resolutely antagonistic, when associated they express the very foundations of the world with all its contradictions: their struggle leads to a moment of rupture, when one of the two finally wins the day. Dialectically, there is nothing surprising in these foundations coming from a domain where two opposites meet face to face in a constant struggle, like positive and negative poles. From this point of view, these young artists' creations embody how consistent their art is with the times they are living in.