

**13 October - 17 November 2018**

In creative terms, you could say that Pierre Ardouvin is a «generalist» and he does indeed possess a broad scope of knowledge that he places at the service of a multi-faceted body of work - installations, collages and assemblages, not forgetting his brilliant reappropriation and modification of everyday objects. Over the years, he has reflected upon the entertainment culture, memories of past utopias and what the future holds for popular customs, whilst privileging the relationships with identity and affect that are crystallized in vernacular form.

By re-appropriating and working with ordinary objects, his artistic research questions such notions as authenticity and illusion. As he recycles and reassembles, he evokes familiar images that are sustained by both his own and collective memories, either drawn from popular culture or domestic life. His work is often tinged with violence or a latent melancholy that emanate from representations which seem inoffensive at first sight. «It is by means of these psychic explorations of everyday life in the West that Pierre Ardouvin's body of work could turn out to be secretly critical»<sup>1</sup>.

For his second exhibition at Praz-Delavallade, the artist has drawn inspiration from Rimbaud's journeys to Yemen and Ethiopia from 1878 onwards and the poet's stay at the henceforth ultra famous Hotel de l'Univers in Aden. The results of this face-to-face encounter between the work of Ardouvin and Rimbaud are astonishing in their modernity, despite the many decades that separate the two men. They reveal feelings of abandonment and a lack of connection with one's descendants, traits that are proper to people who have been uprooted. Pierre Ardouvin finds inspiration in current events, which he fashions in reference to a form of collective imagination, one whose barriers have been removed, where everyone has been set free from obedience to class, gender or age and where they can therefore find a space of identification. Combining popular culture and literary references, he extracts words, images and objects from diverse realms.<sup>2</sup> He welcomes pell-mell, stories about art, comics, tales, poetry, rock 'n' roll, cinema, childhood, and travelling. The public and domestic space become intertwined as, like the magician of Oz, he benevolently and good-naturedly orchestrates these questions of utopias and alterity.

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1. exhibition catalogue "Pierre Ardouvin - Retour d'Abyssinie", text by Julie Creen, Centre d'art Labanque, Bethune, July 2018.

2. extract from a text by the art critic and exhibition curator Guillaume Désanges.

The works that comprise Hôtel de l'Univers are suspended in an indefinite moment in time and space, one in which the artist's various propositions bring us into contact with the ghosts of Ferdinand Cheval, Houellebecq, Menelik II Emperor of Ethiopia and Rimbaud, the voluntarily exiled poet.

The cruel reality of the world notwithstanding, the timeless and personal signature style of Pierre Ardouvin's work dresses life's wounds – and his healing balm is named Poetry. *«I went off, my fists in my torn pockets; my coat too was becoming ideal; I walked under the sky, Muse! And I was your vassal; Oh! oh! what brilliant loves I dreamed of!».*

- René-Julien Praz

**Pierre Ardouvin** was born in 1955 in Crest, France. He lives and works in Paris. His work has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions in France and abroad : the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2005, 2010), the Fondation Jumex, Mexico (2008), the NMCA, Seoul (2011) and in CRAC, Sète (2013). In 2016, the MAC/VAL dedicates to him a monographic exhibition entitled «*Tout est affaire de décor*». Since September 2018, a series of unpublished works are presented at TOPAZ Arts, New York. Today, Pierre Ardouvin's work is included in many public and private international collections.

#PierreArdouvin  
#PrazDelavallade

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