

Alain Bornain
Éric Fourez
Jef Lambrecht

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Jef Lambrecht**

**amourable
On the traces of the North Sea...
Merci (contre)Facteur! Mail art #8**

Alain Bornain amourable

Curator
Pierre-Olivier Rollin

Written on the BPS22's façade, Alain Bornain calls out to passers-by asking them: *Aurez-vous le temps? (Do you have the time?)* This process and this question perfectly sum up the work of this artist, who often acts by erasure and questioning the meaning of existence.

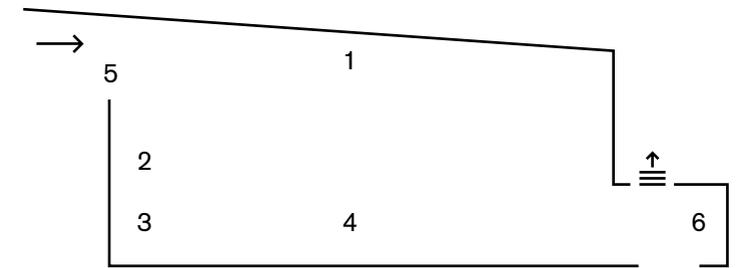
Since the 1990s, Bornain has simultaneously developed a number of different works, mainly in painting, before occasionally opening up to other media. He discusses topics such as time, erasure and traces, as well as identity, memory, transmission, the finiteness of all things and, *ultimately*, death. Each work is an opportunity to reflect on the uncertainties of life. When he heard a child invent the word "amourable", meaning "immortal", the artist appropriated this poetic neologism, an unexpected blend of love ("that can be loved") and death ("a-mourable" - the use of "a" in French being similar to that of "un" in English, expressing the notion that an action cannot be completed, as in this case, that cannot die).

Alain Bornain

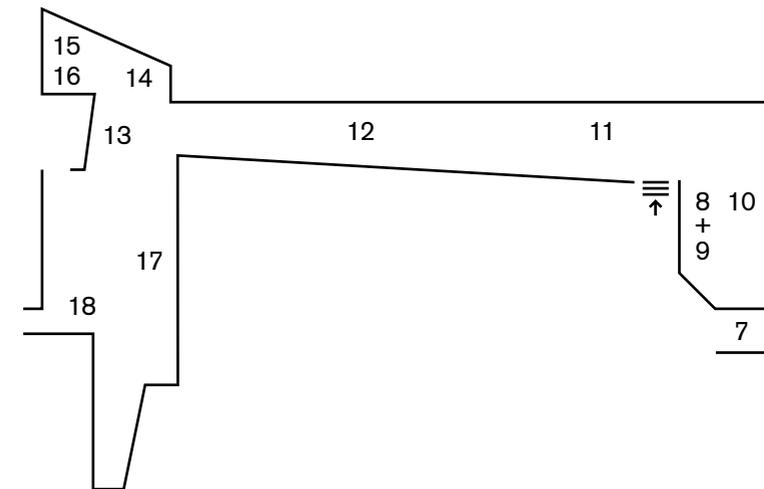
Born in Genappe in 1965, Alain Bornain moved to Charleroi where he lives and works. After receiving technical training in computer science and robotics, he became a self-taught painter. He quickly made a name for himself in the art world, winning numerous awards. Since the early 1990s he has been exhibiting in his native country as well as Europe and, in the last two years, in China.

Alain Bornain also teaches at the École supérieure des Arts de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, at ARTS² (Mons) and at the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Charleroi.

Salle Pierre Dupont | Ground floor



Salle Pierre Dupont | 1st floor



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1 Blackboards

**Set of oils on canvas
2022**

At the end of the 1990s, Alain Bornain exhibited small school slates on which he drew a few signs. He quickly freed himself from this object and began the *Blackboards* series, which gave him his first recognition in the art world.

These black or dark green boards, the kind you find in schools, are paintings? *everything on the canvas is a painting: the signs transcribed, the gestures, the media. In the end, it's all painting in the traditional sense of the term, as it involves pigments on canvas stretched over a frame.* (Alain Bornain, 2001)

As you get closer to the work and the materiality of its painted surface, you discover the meticulousness of the artist's gestures, as he mimetically recreates the chalk marks with a brush and their removal with an eraser. An erasure that is a matter of gradual disappearance and dissolution. The lacunar traces preserved are kept beyond the viewer's comprehension. They refer as much to the emotional charge of each person's school memories, as to the ephemeral nature of all things.

Mimesis

A philosophical notion introduced by Plato in *The Republic* and then developed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, *mimesis* is a Greek term that can be translated as "imitation". It is also a characteristic concept of artistic activity. The saying that *art imitates nature* is a perfect illustration of this notion.

We are talking about a paradigm of imitation - that of illusion, which confuses reality with representation - which has reigned over the history of art since Antiquity: the importance of imitating the Ancients in learning or the development of techniques that allow us to approach reality - such as perspective - are examples of this.

This notion is at the heart of the aesthetic debate because the artist, with his creativity and capacity for innovation and invention, is not necessarily looking for an equivalent of reality.

2 Un jour [One day]

**Installation of 1,000 paper posters
2006**

After his *Blackboards* pictorial series (1999), Alain Bornain developed the multi-media series *Memento* (2003). This poster is one of them. The data represents the 86,400 seconds of a 24-hour day. The tightly-packed digital script creates an optical vibration.

The poster is intended to be a material trace of the passing of time: each visitor can take it away, thus participating in the gradual reduction of the work, which will eventually disappear completely, like everything else... The work is therefore a trace of time to be looked at, a trace of the exhibition to be taken away, a trace of an action carried out.

Memento mori

Memento mori is a Latin phrase meaning *Remember that you are going to die* and expressing the brevity of life. Imbued with Christianity and its promise of life after death, *memento mori* is a form of moral reminder: we must accept God, accept death, realise that everything in this material world is vanity, and we will be rewarded.

In art, this concept is especially expressed in the form of *vanitas*. A *vanitas* is a type of still life featuring objects that symbolise the emptiness of life: a skull, an hourglass, a flower whose beauty is ephemeral, or a candle in the process of burning out. This type of representation took off in the 17th century.

Freed from religion, contemporary *vanitas* are rather invitations to make the most out of every second of every day, a kind of *carpe diem* (*seize the day*).

3 L'Écume des jours [Froth on the Daydream]

**Installation of 3,000 paperbacks
2020**

Published in 1947 by Boris Vian, *L'Écume des jours* is a novel that tells the story of a love affair between Chloé and Colin. A story described by the novelist and poet Raymond Queneau as *the most poignant of contemporary romances*. Haunted at the end by illness and death, this book is mainly an ode to love, life and freedom with a stubborn vigour.

From the pages of this novel, Alain Bornain has kept only the first names of the two main characters in the exact places where they appear in the paperback version, the version that fascinated the artist during his adolescence.

Like the posters, visitors can take one of these book-objects home with them if they wish.

4 Images

**Set of oils on canvas
2023**

After taking a break from painting to pursue the *Memento* project, the artist came back to it in 2006 with the *Images* series, a series of figurative black-and-white paintings in which each canvas exposes as much as it veils a fragment of a photographic image. These photographs are pre-existing documents. *I take them myself or collect them from newspapers and old magazines, then I transfer them all to black and white. I choose them for their meaningfulness, tensions and troubles, and because they carry a wide range of evocations and interpretations within (...). These "image propositions" are a logical continuation of my work, a complement to the earlier pieces. It involves life, erasure, memory, trace and identity. What do we leave behind?* (Alain Bornain, 2009)

Later on, around 2020, the artist took up this principle, painting these images and adding coloured discs. This dialogue between a figurative image in black and white and a new abstraction in bright colours introduces visual confusion and makes it difficult to read the perspective of the image, especially as the artist uses different stylistic registers (e.g. graffiti).

These images, purposely left without a title, appear enigmatic, so resistant to immediate identification. There is a hopscotch, the top of which is a symbol of paradise? stock market prices, a reflection of our capitalist society? a crowd in which the individual disappears in favour of the collective? red and white blood cells, the pillars of our biological make-up? chemical formulas for living matter and children taking a circular walk during a light therapy session. And then there is the repetition of the disc, the most perfect geometric shape symbolising the infinitely small (the atom) and the infinitely large (the star).

5 Nous [Us]

Scrolling LED messaging board
2010-2024

This luminous digital screen continuously displays hundreds of first and last names of men and women of different origins. These names belong to people spotted on the Internet, for the simple reason that they do not evoke anything or anyone to the artist and that their musicality appeals to him.

6 Alpha-Omega

Wood and 24-carat gold
2024

The letters at the beginning and end of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *omega* refer to the beginning of life, birth, and its end, death. The way they are intertwined and the gold paint that covers them indicate that these opposites, when brought together, are sacred.

7 2.500.000.000 secondes

Flashing neon
2008

This neon sign represents the average life expectancy of a European citizen. The switch between light and extinction, in a rhythm also calculated in seconds, evokes life and death. He suggests that we urgently live every second we are given.

Second vanitas

In this ode to life, Alain Bornain once again moves away from classical vanitas to the so-called second vanitas. Christine Buci-Glucksmann has clearly defined this genre in contemporary art: *The second vanitas show an ephemeral time, a pure modulation of the present or an anticipation of a destructive future. But this ephemerality can be divided into two categories. A melancholy ephemeral, that internalises death, enters its crypt and experiences the absolute misfortune of time as the alienation of the Self and the destruction of Being. And an affirmative ephemeral, lighter, more "secondary" and a more Nietzschean approach, which grasps time as a process necessary to life. Time slides by, fluid and transparent, through all the impermanences of being.* (Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Les Vanités secondes*, in Anne-Marie Charbonneaux (ed.), *Les Vanités dans l'art contemporain*, Paris, Flammarion, 2005, p. 80)

8 Assertions

Set of typescripts on palace letterheads 2023

An assertion is a proposition held to be true. Alain Bornain's are concise, quantitative statements based on scientific data, statistics and generalities that the artist gleans from his reading. It's disturbing, poetic information about man, nature, living beings in general, life, death, the universe and time.

To create a contrasting effect, these short texts in red ink are typed on the letterheads of luxury hotels.

9 Haïkus

Set of inks on palace letterheads 2020-2023

As a form of Japanese poetry made up of a few syllables, haiku gives its name to this series of finely sketched drawings celebrating the preciousness, fragility and beauty of life. Drawn with pens of different thicknesses, the motifs appear pixelated, reminiscent of the offset printing process.

10 Whiteboards

Set of inks on vinyl canvas 2002 and 2010

After his *Blackboards* series (1999), Alain Bornain developed the *Whiteboards* series (2000). Like the Velleda boards you might find in a meeting room, these vinyl canvases are covered in writing in blue, red and green ink, seemingly erased with a wide sweeping gesture.

The sign appears very early in Alain Bornain's work, right from his beginnings in lyrical abstraction in the 1990s. His initial training - in computer science and robotics - led him into programming and coding. In addition to his memory for and fascination with numbers, he has a passion for letters, stemming from his passion for writing and reading.

In terms of the choice of signs used, his work can be described as self-referential: *some of my paintings contain mathematical or computer formulae, reminiscent of my basic training, but also other signs and information taken from my everyday environment.* (Alain Bornain, 2001)

11 Images

**Set of oils on canvas
2022**

In the passageway, a series of twenty-six portraits is presented. Starting with a class photograph, Alain Bornain has isolated and created a faithful portrait of each child. However, each pupil's face is blurred, as if there was an attempt to erase them. And the erasure of the figure is reminiscent of the erasure of memory.

Concealment can lead to a disconcerting, questioning reading, but it can also lead to revelations in the epiphanic sense [...]. This revelation takes place at the level of affect and interiority. Addressing the phenomenon of concealment or disappearance means talking about the vanity of things. And like all things, we too are bound to disappear sooner or later... (Alain Bornain, 2001)

The aesthetics of erasure

Although it may seem contrary to the act of painting, which makes a form appear, erasure is an integral part of the artistic gesture and process [...] *all these forms of erasure in art have the same ultimate purpose, which penetrates them and lifts them up: to give birth to a new world? to discard in order to show more and better than what is discarded? to push back in order to attract? to cut away in order to add? to move away in order to make things happen? to deconstruct or dissolve in order to recompose and reconstruct better or differently? to make disappear in order to make appear.* (Michel Ribon, *Esthétique de l'effacement: essai sur l'art et l'effacement*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, p. 13)

12 Carbon paintings

**Set of carbon paper transfers on paper mounted on aluminium
2006**

This series is based on the repetition of the same word - in this case the word *image* - which is hidden. Carbon paper, a means of duplicating signs from an original, leaves a few barely identifiable lines on the white paper.

13 Sans titre

**Set of pigments on paper and wood
2024**

These works depict sleeping children. A girl and a boy. Images that call up our memories as a child or as a parent. A work that also exudes a certain serenity. Alain Bornain sees dreams as life within life, a suspended life.

14 Greyboard

Graphite and acrylic on canvas
2005

A condensation of the *Blackboards* and *Whiteboards*, the *Greyboards* series begun in 2001 explores a number of possibilities for erasure and covering. The writing - in this case the word *idea* - in graphite is covered with multiple successive layers of white paint. The dissolution and scattering of pigments on the canvas gives rise to a greyish, cloudy all-over effect.

15 Memento

Installation of 40,000 dice
2012

This installation evokes chance, and in particular the chance that guides our lives. Five sides of this dice present possibilities as well as fragments of life: OBLIVION, against which everyone struggles? EXTASE [EXTASIS] in theology or mystical misguidance? PROFIT and MANQUE [LACK]? PRESENCE, a *succession of conflicting concepts that cover the gamut of the hazard of existence. "Luck - whatever that means!" (Hasard — vaste bazar!)* wrote Michel Leiris, expressing (...) our inability to find any logic in the vagaries and jolts of human existence. (Pierre-Olivier Rollin, *Alain Bornain, amourable*, 2024) One side is left blank to evoke both absence and the next surprise that fate has in store for us.

Once again, the installation evolves as visitors take away one of these dice.

16 Still

Wood and 24-carat gold
2016

In gold lettering, the word *still* refers to still life, a genre associated with the phrase *memento mori*. It means silent or suspended, in other words, still alive.

17 Images avérées [Proven images]

**Set of pigment prints and gold paint
2023**

This series of photographs, taken from the artist's personal archives or from his Internet research, are covered in gold paint and reveal images of fireworks, woods, flowers, butterflies, crowds, the sea, waiting chairs and so on.

Gold

Gold has a prestigious symbolic value in the history of art. Both a precious material and a colour, it is found particularly in religious art. The golden background of Byzantine icons accentuates the divinity of the figure or scene depicted. The sacredness offered by gold can also be found in the backgrounds of works by Italian primitives from the 14th century, or in the exuberance of Baroque decorations.

Contemporary art highlights the use of gold in creative work, as in the *Monogolds* (1959-1962) by Yves Klein (1928-1962), canvases entirely covered in gold leaf, sometimes smoothly or texturally, demonstrating the artist's fascination with the material.

18 Untitled

**Synthetic resin and 24-carat gold
2012**

A fusion of the sexes, these replicas of human pelvises feature both male and female characteristics. At the heart of these precious bones, essential to anatomy, lies the origin of life: fertilisation, the preciousness of which is underlined by the presence of gold.

19 Apostrophe

**Text
2024**

When you arrive or leave, look up and discover the phrase "Will you have the time?" is an ephemeral work on the façade of the museum, created with a stencil to remove the material that has accumulated on the concrete over time.

Éric Fourez

On the traces of the North Sea...

Carte blanche
for Claude Lorent

Scenography
by Françoise Vandenberghe

Actively painting since the mid-1960s, Éric Fourez designed this exhibition in partnership with curator and art critic Claude Lorent, as part of a *carte blanche* granted to the latter. The exhibition brings together more than fifty art pieces, covering some forty years of work (from 1981 to 2023).

Fourez's creative work is marked by important aesthetic and conceptual constants. From the late 1970s, he identified the object, style and theme that would dominate his entire artistic output: monochrome, hyper-realistic paintings of seascapes. Something Claude Lorent would describe as a *landscape work that is infinitely the same but always different*.

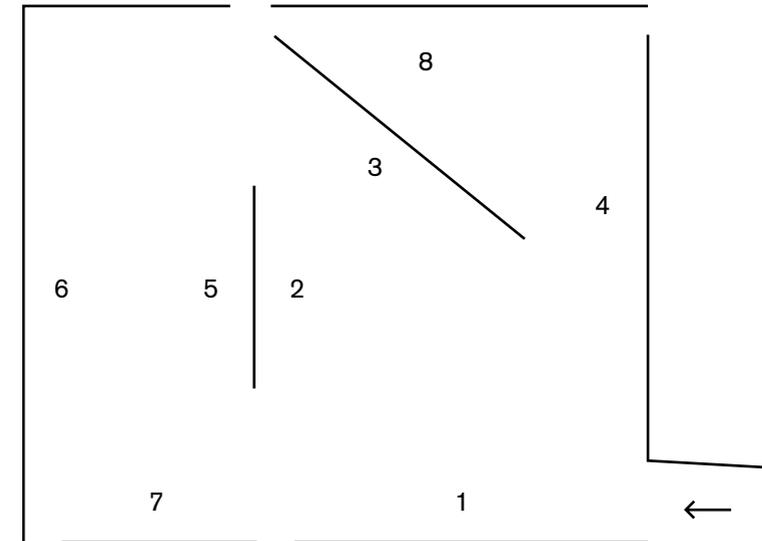
From 1983, he narrowed his field of vision to gradually focus on the traces left by the retreating North Sea. The result is a body of work that blurs the boundaries between the figurative and the abstract, revealing faint traces of grey against vast, immaculately white backgrounds. Canvases, repetitive yet always distinctive, that embellish the experience of time.

Éric Fourez

Born in Tournai in 1946, where he still lives and paints today. He worked there for many years as head of the city's visual arts department, creating the *Art en ville* festival and the *Prix artistique de la Ville de Tournai* contest in 1980.

He trained in drama, tried his hand at film and finally turned, as a self-taught artist, to painting at the end of the 70s? at a time when painting was pretending to confront the means of technical reproduction in carefully duplicating reality, but *truthfully was part of a much broader critical thought. But instead of the condensed dramatisation that hyperrealism sets out to achieve, Fourez chose an opposite path, less conceptual and more personal, less demonstrative and more intuitive.* (Pierre-Olivier Rollin, *Éric Fourez, Monographie*, 2024, p. 9)

Grande Halle



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|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | Sur les traces de la Mer du Nord [On the traces of the North Sea], 1983-2023 | 5 | Bleu de toi [Blue of you] |
| 2 | Marines [Seascapes], 2002-1981 | 6 | L'espace de la blancheur [The space of whiteness], 2020-2023 |
| 3 | Le même, infiniment [The same, infinitely] | 7 | Seules les traces font rêver [Only traces make us dream] (R. Char) |
| 4 | Le même, différemment [The same, differently] | 8 | Les amis [Friends] |

1 Sur les traces de la Mer du Nord [On the traces of the North Sea], 1983-2023

Perhaps Éric Fourez likes to roam the beaches of the North Sea, from November to February, to recapture the sense of solitude, immensity and danger he felt in the Egyptian Sahara. At this time of year, the shores of Belgium and Zeeland are often deserted. And when it is not obscured by mist, the horizon becomes imperceptible and the landscape becomes a monochrome painting in which the painter sees blue, grey and white.

Fourez used just these three shades - resulting in monochrome tones - to convey the atmosphere of the North Sea. And these three colours correspond to the three stages of his journey.

From the late 1970s onwards, he painted the shores of North Sea beaches. Beaches and rocks, but also scenery and man-made objects in which no human figure appears. The brushwork is realistic, but Éric Fourez veils his representations in a monochrome, blue hue that “de-realises” the present scenery.

In the mid-1980s, the artist switched to greys and blurs. He approached the shore, lowered his gaze and rested it on the footprints left by the walkers. In a paradoxical move with which painting is familiar, he narrowed his field of vision but broadened the pictorial space. The sceneries have disappeared and the surface of the canvas oscillates between infinite depth and bold flatness.

After an intermediate transition to black on white, Éric Fourez made a final conversion to white at the end of the 1980s. *To bring the silence back to the seascape, its immemorial toil away from humans, to think in painting of its power coupled with its fragility, is a question of taking away the throw of colours and entering the mystical realm of white.* (Véronique Bergen, Éric Fourez, Monographie, 2024, p. 15) From now on, the only traces the canvas will hold will be those formed by water and wind on the sand.

2 Marines [Seascapes], 2002-1981

Water is a symbol of life, but it is also a mortal danger. It can give life, but it can also offer death. When you're walking by the sea, quietly, in December, in the midst of fog, when you can't see the sea, when you can hear it and feel it roar, you could very well die in the next second because of it. (...) Calm is only an appearance, as still water sometimes run deep. (...) But water also saves. In my paintings, the desert and water are both present. (Éric Fourez, 2006)

The North Sea, a land of painters

Seascapes are a specific type of landscape painting in which the sea is depicted in all its states. The term can also be used for scenes of beaches, boats, rivers or lakes.

The genre became highly successful in the 17th century. It was particularly evident on the shores of the North Sea, in Holland, where commercial shipping was booming and Protestant iconoclastic doctrines had driven painters away from religious themes. In the 19th century, the genre made its mark on the canvases of Romantic and Impressionist painters.

3 Le même, infiniment [The same, infinitely]

2011-2012-2013

Éric Fourez's work is primarily photographic. He seeks a trace on the coastline. A trace that is still fresh and damp, and that hasn't had time to be altered too much by the wind. After carefully framing his subject and capturing it in photographs, the painter projects the image of the trace onto a blank canvas can then begin his work of reproduction in oil painting.

The artist had created this monumental triptych to reveal the relativity of perception: the same subject - in this case, the same trace seen from three different angles - can be represented in an infinite variety of ways depending on where the viewer is placed. At the same time, Eric Fourez questions the notion of truth by asking *what is the truth of a visual testimony, since reality appears differently depending on the point of view.*

Immersed in this constricted but expanded landscape, visitors can feel overwhelmed by the scale of the oversized reproduction. The image becomes blurred, and the boundary between abstraction and figuration seems to be no more than a question of distance, in the end. You have to step away from the canvas for the realistic motif to reappear.

The line between abstraction and figuration

For Claude Lorent, Éric Fourez debunks a long-held notion of antagonism between abstraction and figuration. (Éric Fourez, *Monographie*, 2024, p. 33)

So-called "figurative" works represent visible elements that we can recognise and attribute to something that exists. Just as you can identify a tree in a landscape or a jug in a still life piece. Although artists take their inspiration from reality, this does not mean that they do not stylize forms or elements in their artistic approach. This notion of figuration or figurative art is opposed to that of abstraction, or "abstract" art. So-called abstract works are made up of shapes and colours that do not represent things as we see them.

4 Le même, différemment [The same, differently]

1987-2023

It is time that the artist tries to slow down, by making these freeze-frames of a phenomenon as fleeting as a trace in the sand. A few moments, a few seconds, and the trace has already shifted. *I think that if we don't stop, if we don't take the time to stop, we're going to disappear without realising it, at lightning speed. Personally, I feel it goes by too quickly. I wander around and try to slow time down a bit.* (Éric Fourez, 2006)

For huge formats, 2 to 3 weeks of work at a rate of 10 hours a day are required. The large canvases are painted exclusively in natural light, from April when the days are getting longer and the insects - attracted by the white - are still scarce. In winter, when the days are short, the artist works more on smaller formats.

Hyperrealism

Dating back to the 60s and 70s, hyperrealism is an artistic movement that consists of reproducing an image in a very precise and realistic way. Hyperrealism can be sculptural or pictorial, and Éric Fourez falls into the latter category.

The artists show the world objectively by working from everyday photographs or portraits. The rendering of these works seems so close to reality that it casts doubt on the technique used.

There are several techniques artists can use to reproduce a photograph: projection, tiling or painting directly onto the photograph, which has already been printed in the desired format.

5 Bleu de toi [Blue of you]

1977-1984

The painter's first artistic period was dominated by blue. Éric Fourez claims to be a figurative realist, and even describes his work as a form of ambient realism.

The hyper-realist technique is in fact coupled with what he calls *an atmospheric translation of landscapes*, given the artist's desire to make his projection of reality on canvas coincide with the intensity of a single chromatic tone.

There is not a single human figure in these sceneries. But, as Claude Lorent observes, it is inaccurate to write that the man is absent ? he has simply left the stage.

Blue

Blue is the deepest of all colours: our gaze sinks into it without encountering any obstacle and loses itself in it ad infinitum, as if faced with a perpetual evasion of colour. Blue is the most immaterial of colours ? nature generally only presents it as transparent, in other words as an accumulated emptiness, the emptiness of air, the emptiness of water, the emptiness of crystal or diamond. The void is exact, pure and cold. Blue is the coldest of colours, and in its absolute purest form, outside the total emptiness of neutral white. (Dictionnaire des symboles, 1982, éd. Robert Laffont / Jupiter, quoted in Éric Fourez, Monographie, 2024, p. 46)

6 L'espace de la blancheur [The space of whiteness], 2020-2023

To me, monochrome seems to bring more poetry and fewer distractions (Éric Fourez, 2013). White, the colour to which the artist turned definitively and exclusively, is luminous, symbolising both fullness and emptiness. It expresses serenity, calm, silence, infinity, and erasure, too. Some of the emotions that often overwhelm human beings when faced with the sea.

These most recent paintings, produced between 2020 and 2023, account for Éric Fourez's considerable interest in these anthracite traces on an immaculate background. To preserve the initial purity of his completely white works, the artist mindfully refrains from adding thinners - oil - to his paint, applying the pure white material from his paint tubes directly to his paintings. It's an extremely physical task, since it involves applying white in dense, wide, thick layers, without the fluidity provided by the thinner, for days on end...

White

Turner placed white at the top of his chromatic scale, verging on abstraction. For Goethe, white, in particular, is the fortuitously opaque brightness of pure transparency, which could suggest a form of erasure. For Mondrian, white is a kind of non-colour, or non-existent, empty hue. Kandinsky considered white to be *the place where all colours disappear* and from which any figure or mirage can emerge. For Claude Lorent, Éric Fourez's paintings combine all of these considerations in their own way. (Éric Fourez, Monographie, 2024, p. 46)

7 Seules les traces font rêver [Only traces make us dream] (R. Char)

1987-2021

In his photographic work, prior to his studio painting work, Éric Fourez places the utmost importance to aesthetics of the trace that he will later transfer to canvas.

In a collection published in 1962 by Gallimard, poet René Char (1907-1988) develops the idea that *a poet must leave traces of his passage, not proof, because only traces make us dream.*

It is the traces and fragments left on this infinite white that awaken the imagination, the dream of what once was and is no longer. *Between the mirages of the surreal and the hypnosis of an immersion in almost nothing, between immateriality and the layers of oil paint, the canvases lie on the borders of cosmic life and inner life.* (Véronique Bergen, Éric Fourez, Monographie, 2024, p. 17)

Monochrome

In the 20th century, in the field of visual arts, the term “ Monochrome ” is used to designate “ radical ” paintings in a single colour.

A number of artists were responsible for the emergence of monochrome, including Malevich (1878-1935) and Rodtchenko (1891-1956). For both, the monochrome signals the end of the pictorial work, a kind of neutrality in painting.

Artists have explored, and continue to explore, the potential of monochrome : varying dimensions, colours, materials and media, multiplying modes of presentation and combining tones open up a whole new range of possibilities.

8 Les amis [Friends]

With oil paintings by Gabriel Belgeonne, Gaston De Mey, Patricia Dopchie and Guy Vandenbranden ? reliefs by Pierre Courtois and Francis Dusépulchre ? mixed media works by Jephane de Villiers and Jean-Michel François ? inked papers by Jack Keguenne and André Lambotte ? drawings by Michel Mineur and Baudouin Oosterlynck.

On the far left of this exhibition wall is a vestige of Éric Fourez's hesitant first steps in painting. Only two paintings from this period have been preserved as evidence of a period of surrealist inspiration that was definitively erased by the artist's voluntary destruction.

Mezzanine

Éric Fourez's personal archives.



The audio interviews broadcast in the centre of the Grande Halle are also available via a magnetic induction loop.

Jef Lambrecht

Merci (contre)Facteur!

Curator
Chris Straetling

Mail art #8

Jef Lambrecht, a political journalist, was also a conceptual artist. Throughout his work as a reporter, especially from the 1980s, he took part in a variety of artistic projects linked to current affairs, and maintained a prolific exchange with his fellow students.

Devised by his former colleague Chris Straetling, this exhibition features the various periodicals published by Jef Lambrecht: *La Lanterne de Lantin* and *L'Original Imaginaire* are just two examples. His magazines, postcards – those sent and received by him –, posters and drawings form a body of work marked by a certain poetic confusion around the notions of truth and authenticity.

Jef Lambrecht

Jef Lambrecht (Avelgem, 1948 - Antwerp, 2016) is a book and article writer, as well as a correspondent for the VRT (Dutch-speaking Belgian radio and television). In parallel with his work as a reporter, he had developed a prolific artistic output.

His work, always balancing the blend of lies and half-truths, includes paintings, sculptures, performance art videos and, of course, a large collection of postcards and magazines.

Entresol

- **Irises (VVVG) by Vincent van Gogh**
- **Holy See of the Pope of Halensee**
- **The cubic, heraldic, supremacist portrait of Vincent van Gogh**

On the 100th anniversary of the death of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Jef Lambrecht performed, in March and April 1990, at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, where the painter studied. He took the title of Pope of Halensee - a figure invented and embodied in the early 20th century by Dutch-speaking Belgian poet Paul van Ostaïjen - to proclaim the canonisation of Vincent van Gogh.

At the time, the painter's value was growing steadily. In 1987, *Sunflowers* sold for 39.7 million dollars? a few months later, the painting *Irises* fetched 54 million dollars? and in 1990, the *Portrait of Dr Gachet* fetched 82.5 million dollars. The performance also mocked the insane rise in an artist's value on the art market.

The chairs, the " thrones " of Pope Joseph I (Jef Lambrecht), the glass painting of the Dutch painter's famous self-portrait and a video of the Antwerp event* all survive from these interventions. On May 11th, 2024, Chris Straetling took one of these chairs with him during a " courtesy visit " to the Van Gogh Houses in Colfontaine and Cuesmes, in the Mons region, as a way of reactivating Jef Lambrecht's performance in a special setting. A number of photographs have captured this action.

- Selection from the Sheherazade series

This room also features a selection of drawings from the *Sheherazade* series, inks on paper produced by Jef Lambrecht during his journalistic missions, an echo to his notebooks.

Annexe

While the selection of drawings continues on the walls, the display cases offer a glimpse of Jef Lambrecht's postal production: *La Lanterne de Lantin*, *Halensee*, *L'Original Imaginaire* - inexpensive magazines, similar to the mail art fanzines, which the artist distributed randomly -, but also to the correspondence and other posters sent or received.



* The sound of the video is accessible via a magnetic induction loop.

