

Slash

Benoit, Guillaume: Victor Man – Galerie Max Hetzler

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Victor Man, Girl with Goya's Skull (Memorable Equinox), 2021 – Oil on canvas

Courtesy de l'artiste et galerie Max Hetzler, Paris

VICTOR MAN — GALERIE MAX HETZLER

Point de vue September 16, 2022 — By Guillaume Benoit

Widely discovered in 2007 during the Venice Biennale, the work of Victor Man (born in 1974) has questioned for twenty years the virtuoso obsessions of a representation painting. The Max Hetzler gallery presents the first personal exhibition in its Parisian space of the artist, a figure of the romanian art scene who emerged with the opening of the Plan B gallery in 2005 by Mihai Pop and Adrian Ghenie who notably continued the adventure in Berlin.

*Victor Man – From
Wounds and Starry
Dreams @ Max Hetzler
Gallery from
September 3 to October
22.*

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Between respect for icons and religious passion, passion for bodies, the artist offers a dizzying dive into the contemplation of these faces that look at us as much as away, revealing themselves in the absence to consciousness and by the emergence of disparate elements. Man's extremely meticulous work plays with symbols and slips many traps into its interstices that disturb the initial reading and offer a painting that stands the test of self and others, tempted by the sublime and definitely contemporary.

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The Max Hetzler gallery thus welcomes, throughout a superb exhibition, a dozen works which are as many windows on the aesthetic world of a painter who continues to develop his line and today touches a figuration less ethereal than his early years, emphasizing by contrast even more the reflexive and articulated dimension of a conceptualization of memory and heritage. Beneath the silence and the apparent immobility roars the din of the occurrence of memory, a collective and historical force flushing out in bursts in the hiatuses of these forms which thwart normality and rationality at the margins. Greens, reds, blues become cutting lines in landscape portraits with Vermeerian accents.

The artist's Heideggerian tropism is undoubtedly not insignificant, considering the existent as a "being thrown there" on a horizontal plane whose parallelism with others underlies a shift, this time vertical, of his line of horizon. The silhouettes and faces overlap, agree and multiply in the features of others that memory confuses, in a way that is certainly less involuntary than expected. The temptation arises to reconstitute a mental and personal heritage by inviting the spectator to dive into the layers of representations, to read behind the shadows and before the veils the multiple mixtures that make each of the figures, each of the memories of the artist, a chimera that continues to haunt the present. Heidegger in the line of sight for sure but also all the romantic poetry he studied and loved whose infinite horizons, pains, promises, contradictions and risks that it makes play with rationality, digging a hole in the plane of realism of figurative representation.

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Because this “monstrous” materialization of the past in the present makes all the strength of a work whose mystery, in the absence of explanations and details from the artist, is not so much due to the preciousness of hiding as to the desire, precisely, to stir up the spectator’s sense of memory, thus replaying the capacity of poets to build a world from the intensive exploration of their own sensibility. Leaving the strictly personal dimension, Victor Man seems to dig a breach in his intimacy to invite us to lose ourselves in the abyss of collective stories. The veils, treasure hunts and collusions of distant signs in time then excite the fantasy of a memory that is never separated from the present, never separated from the place of its manifestation.

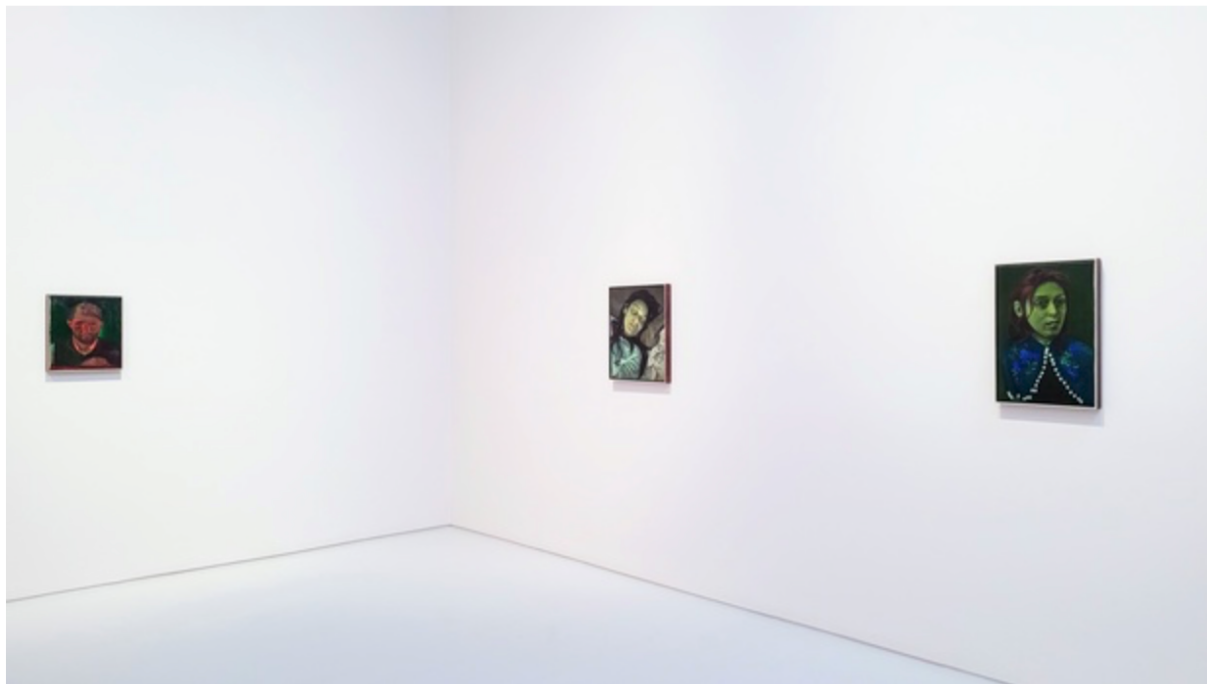


*Victor Man, Self as the Man of Sorrows, 2021 — Oil on canvas
Courtesy de l'artiste et galerie Max Hetzler, Paris*

A memory that has nothing to do here with dates, the memory emancipates itself from biographical reason to draw, through its works, a mental heritage escaped from the mechanics of time and punctuated by emotions, by manners. The Van Gogh way, the Rubens way, the Fra Angelico way, to name but a few, are so many borrowings in the service of a mental planisphere which rediscovers one of the primary meanings of Surrealism, this layer of reality, here the whirlwind of details of the history of art, affixed to reality to discover a deeper truth.

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Without a word of introduction, preferring to use a text by Georg Trakl to any description of his work, Victor Man maintains the mystery by anchoring in tradition and historical references the dissonance of his universe, where additions and transformations merge into split characters. break.



Vue de l'exposition *Victor Man, From Wounds and Starry Dreams*, galerie Max Hetzler, Paris 2022
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If the spiritual dimension emerges in the foreground, the flesh, the complexion are nevertheless just as pregnant in his work, testifying to a thought closer to poetry, more open to the image, to the language, than locked in the mystical. Confinement, however, is always a question with this artist, little inclined to publicity, fundamentally marked, in his adolescence, by the figure of Van Gogh; a liberating impasse in the years of the fall of the Soviet Union, while his country was experiencing a revolution in 1989. Turning the paradigm of symbolism upside down while drawing on his repertoire, Victor Man's shift is illustrated by an essential reversal; to subvert the transmigration of organs to that of souls.

By the meeting of bodies, the power of objects, the flesh becomes a receptacle of attributes that weigh on it and can be read no longer in the secrecy of the gaze, in the invisible gravity of emotion, but in the imbalance that memory makes support, in this advent of the "wobbly" contaminating, through perception, our own posture in the world.