

RECENT WORKS

JEAN BOGHOSSIAN

curated by Guy Ledune

Exhibition 11.12.2020 - 29.04.2021
Opening 10th December 2020 from 5.30 to 8.30 pm

Avenue Louise, 262
1050 Brussels

Entrance: Rue Gachard 101/102

From the diffuse feeling of disaster to the emergence of colour.

Bernard Marcelis

For about ten years now, Jean Boghossian has wanted to invest more in art on a personal basis: "I wanted to free myself from the jewellery business, to pursue a totally free artistic approach. It is fantastic, it gives me extraordinary energy.

When I'm facing a two-by-two meters canvas, it's above all a space for creation, a refuge and a passion. It's also a little bit physical" (1). The Belgian artist of Armenian-Lebanese origin took the plunge five years ago, distancing himself from the business world and taking a step back from the Boghossian Foundation to devote himself to a personal pictorial creation.

His encounters with the white canvas are now daily and marked by hard contacts. He does not spare his support, folds it, burns it, unfolds it, sometimes crumples it, before stretching it out on a stretcher, once the process of elaboration has been completed in his eyes, which remains a real adventure: "I already know that by folding it, I will obtain negative and positive. The difficulty of this work is to work blindly. As long as I haven't seen the unfolded canvas, I don't know what I'm going to get. Afterwards, I see and accept it or not". (2)

With this new series of works - a name that one feels obliged to prefer to that of painting, because, strictly speaking, it is not directly used - Jean Boghossian pushes even further the mastery of his favourite pictorial element: fire and its corollary, smoke. He has learned to tame its volatility, even if it partially escapes his control, to channel it, even if it breaks down.

However, he follows the folds, re-folds and creases that constitute the essential web of this new ensemble. At first, enclosed in the folds, the smoke tries to escape in volutes: these come to blacken the grid, to dress it, to energize it. Here and there, a few splashes of colour discreetly appear. They give the impression that they are making their narrow way through this magma to assert themselves, like the last crackling embers rising from a shapeless mass.

While the reds emerge, coming out first in contrast to the grey of the smoke, other colours seem more muted, such as blues, greens and even a few traces of yellow. Using pyrotechnical processes to integrate his pigments into the canvas, Boghossian transforms them into pictorial matter that energizes his compositions and conflicts with the initial weft on one hand, and the ghostly mass of the smoke on the other.

From then on, this personal composition - textures, fumaroles, coloured pigments - leaves a wide field open to the viewer's interpretation. It is difficult not to see the distant image or the memory of the facades of buildings in Beirut, desperately battered by the conflicts of the last century, or victims of a recent industrial explosion. The city is much more than disfigured, it is almost condemned to a new identity, the symbol of a human, social and political disaster whose factors of responsibility are as multiple as they are diverse.

Jean Boghossian does not, however, allow himself to be enclosed by these intense images that he himself admits come in part from his subconscious. His practice slips subtly into other domains, into other abstractions where the web becomes less rigorous, offering itself deviations, letting the smoke rush in to the point of drawing what could be described as a landscape.

These landscapes give the canvases a different amplitude, like these porticoes - that the artist calls a Cathedral - where the landscape and the architectural layout blend and merge in their respective planes, induced by a semblance of perspective. In the same way in this Fan where the light seems to reverberate like the facets of a diamond and irradiate the pictorial surface. Elsewhere, one could speak of vegetal elements that structure the canvas in a different way, in an abundance, although restrained, of new tonalities where the colour seems to finally struggle on an equal footing with the greyness of the smoke.

If Jean Boghossian is obviously not the only artist to have recourse to or to express himself with the action of fire - Claudio Parmiggiani and Yves Klein come to mind here - this recent work clearly explores new paths. In addition to the random results due to the use of smoke, the artist first intervenes on the support itself, the canvas, by practicing several methods and combining several techniques: folding, stapling, covering, burning, unfolding, correcting, redeploying, to finally end up with the tension on the frame of the canvas handled and treated in this specific way.

To the previous references, the new cycle should be associated with the work of the French painter Simon Hantai (1922-2008). What the art critic and museum curator, Marc Donnadiou, wrote about the latter and his work on the fold could perfectly apply to the work of Jean Boghossian: "But although the process may appear systematic at first glance - folding always amounts to defining beforehand the parts that one wishes to preserve, or on the contrary to exhibit - the organic nature of the canvas and the more or less controllable nature of folding always end up producing unpredictable and unexpected effects, without edges, centres or hierarchy"(3).

And this "without edge or centre" is indeed what we are given to see in this exhibition, where the hanging allows these paintings to breathe on the surface of the walls where they are displayed. This absence of "hierarchy" is found in the diversity of the formats used by the artist: with the exception of one or other diptych, all are different, as are the ways in which they have been created. Rather than a series, we should therefore rather speak of a body of works marked by a double and constant concern for the artist: "The aim is to bring painting back into my work in relation to burning. I am looking for a balance, a space, in relation to the white that emerges" (4).

(1) Jean Boghossian, interview with Steve Polus (Le Soir, 24/04/2010).

(2) Interview with the artist, 1 December 2020.

(3) Marc Donnadiou, Simon Hantai in *Déplacer. Déplier. Discover. La peinture en actes, 1960-1999* (Simon Hantai, Martin Barré, Marc Devade, Jean Degottex, Michel Parmentier), Lille, LAM (Lille Métropole. Musée d'art moderne), 2012, p. 43.

(4) Interview with the artist, 1 December 2020.

Recent Works
Jean Boghossian

**11.12.2020 - 29.04.2021 from 2.30 to 6 pm - Wednesday to Saturday
by appointment**

Contact : info@studioboghossian.com
Guy Ledune: +32 497 16 81 92

Avenue Louise, 262
1050 Brussels
Entrée: Rue Gachard 101/102

Press and communication : Mehri Ghaleghovand
(mehri@boghossianlb.com | 0032 494 54 79 48)

About the Artist

Jean Boghossian is an abstract multidisciplinary artist whose recent artworks all bear, at different degrees, traces of burn degradation. It is through the process of willful damage with an invasive and rather violent method (fire), that Boghossian continuously searches for harmony. Conscious that one will never completely tame the chaotic move of flames and smoke, he enters the fire dance and moves along with the blaze until he chooses to stop the process. This is where he feels the right balance has been reached.

Born in Aleppo in 1949, Boghossian stems from a family of jewelers for whom he worked while studying Economics and Sociology at University of Saint-Joseph in Beirut. In 1975, the Lebanese Civil War forced Boghossian to leave the country and settle in Belgium. Over three decades ago, Boghossian decided to enroll in the Academy of Fine Arts in Boitsfort, Brussels, while continuing to oversee the family business. In 1992, together with his brother and father he created the Boghossian Foundation.

Globally, Boghossian is one of the few artists who experiments by applying fire and smoke to various works. Fire, being his artistic language of choice, is used through a wide array of torches. Having transitioned a little more than a decade ago towards abstraction Boghossian's art may evoke a contemporary view on the Zero-movement and Fluxus although he claims not to belong to any artistic movement.

Objects that Boghossian has attacked through the flame include canvas, paper, books and plastics, at times leaving behind patterns of perforation. In his paintings and drawings, Boghossian uses different multimedia including watercolor, charcoal, oil, pigments and acrylic paint with techniques that include folding, collage, and uprooting. Boghossian's sculptures range from wood, polystyrene, clay, marble and bronze, some of which he also tickles with the flame.

Jean Boghossian has participated in recent solo and group exhibitions at Wooyang Museum in Korea (2019- 2020), Museum und Park Kalkriese Germany (2019-2020), United Nations Office in Geneva (2019), Galerie Tanit, Munich (2019), Galerie Valérie Bach, Brussels (2018), Galerie Pièce Unique, Paris (2018), German Bundestag, Berlin (2018), Cardi Gallery, London (2018), Museum Ground, Republic of Korea (2018), L'Orient Le Jour building, Beirut (2018), the National Gallery of Armenia (2018), Frieze New York, Cardi Gallery (2018), Art Monte-Carlo, Cardi Gallery (2018), Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (2018), Armenian Center of Contemporary Experimental Art, Yerevan (2017, 2007), 57th Venice Biennale (2017), Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels (2017), Beirut Exhibition Center (2015, 2011), Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collection Burri, Città di Castello (2015), Museo Archeologico di Atina e della Valle di Comino, Atina (2015), Villa Empain, Brussels (2014), Art Abu Dhabi, Saleh Barakat Gallery (2013), Youngeun Museum of Contemporary Art, Republic of Korea (2012) and Galerie Guy Ledune, Brussels (2012, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007).



Untitled, 2020, 200x380cm



Untitled, 2020, 130x200cm



Untitled, 2020, 198x85cm | Untitled, 2020, 200x275cm



Untitled, 2020, 200x130cm