

Possible Remains of our Future
Lionel Sabatté/solo show

We sometimes like to imagine how our environment and the artifacts thereof may possibly appear in the distant future. We live in times that are the product of natural human error, but which may enter into a near future where AI-provoked catastrophes could change the landscape with which we are so familiar.

Millions of years from now, advanced humans—or perhaps visiting aliens—may dig up the remnants of today’s civilizations. What will they find, and how will they interpret our relationship to the creatures around us, or our relationship to art?

Sabatté’s work begins with an analogy between nature and almost primitive artifacts. The trajectory of his work questions the age of Anthropocene—not so much how we mirror nature, but how nature mirrors us back. His work therefore operates on a different plane, a different spatiotemporal axis, where the cyclical processes are longer, where time works differently, and where everyday events are replaced by emphasis on the deep ontological framework. Artist characterizes his approach in one of the interviews: “I’m doing what nature does better than me. I am organising the symbols, not applying them or directly using them, and defending my uselessness in the face of a hyper-productive world.”

His first solo at Ceysson Bentiere gallery I will allow myself to say is a less narrative version of his museum solo show at the Museum of contemporary art St Etienne that started in September.

Sculptures that we can see in the gallery are raising a question what are we left with? It’s whatever is buried in the ground. They are made of specific mix of diverse materials that looks like a ground but and they are immobile and incredibly silent. Shape is not easily defined and leaves deliberately to the viewer to choose his one narrative. His more abstract work source from different visual language using alchemical approach towards the material as a warning sign for the ambivalent relationship that we cultivate today with our environment

New works are therefore reflecting different forms of dealing with nature and our destructive behaviour towards it. Thinking of his fairy creatures made from nail clippings or wolves made of dust. Isn’t the fairy, paradoxically, the ultimate pre-human and posthuman subject all at once? Thus, in his use of leftover materials (nails, skin, dust, etc.) we encounter Sabatté’s radically connected worldview—an alternative understanding of nature which challenges the various presumptions of occidental thought (its dualistic nature, etc.) and channels the rediscovered knowledge of Amerindian metaphysics (animism, totemism, shamanism, etc.), for which this novel understanding is, of course, nothing new. Nevertheless the true source is his childhood memories originated from the cave of Wonders in Pyrenees .The way how the ancients created pigments is its ongoing inspirational tool . Not forgetting the famous hand from the Grotte de Merveilles Negative hand stencils were created when a hand was placed right up against the rock surface and pigment was then blown through the long bones of the animal onto the hand and surrounding rock surface leaving a negative impression of

the hand. This is the same technique used to make some of the images. We will clearly see that the pigment of the depictions was blown onto the rock face not applied with a paint brush or pencil. These are the origins of the visual dictionary that the artist has cultivated during his creative process by establishing unexpected relationships between materials , pigments and images

Sabatté's work is therefore spectral, almost hauntological in it's various configurations, as it's a materialisation of everything our modern subjectivities fail to (but simply must) see.

Lara Pan