

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Jérôme Zonder

"Ras bord"

October 10 - December 14, 2024

Espace II
3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4^e



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #99, 2024.
Graphite and charcoal on paper, 200 x 150 cm (78 1/16 x 59 in.)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris / Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *"Ras bord"*, the latest solo show by Jérôme Zonder. The exhibition brings together the most recent portraits of Pierre-François, a fictional character the artist has borrowed Marcel Carné's 1945 film *Les Enfants du Paradis*.

Although portraits are present throughout the work of Jérôme Zonder – Pierre-François, Baptiste and Garance have been leitmotifs in his oeuvre for more than fifteen years – the elements that compose them occupy a defining place. They are the substance that inhabits and embodies them beyond mere figuration; they constitute their very flesh and lend them form through their meticulously crafted intricacies and contrasts.

And yet, we should not forget that the artist has chosen to use the most elementary of materials and the most direct of techniques: drawing with graphite and lead pencils and charcoal. His virtuosity allows him to exploit every possibility available to him: realistic representations verging on photorealism, abstract compositions as well as the use of palm rubbings and fingerprints, which can both be distinguished among the variety of marks inscribed on the paper, all revealing Jérôme Zonder's dedication to the act of creation. Life itself seems to take control of the artist's lines. First and foremost, through the bodily contact he maintains with his drawings, but also in the manner he represents his subjects, with their skin as a protective sheath and their hands, so realistically depicted, as sensorial membranes. The subtly nuanced shades of black bring to mind the grey matter of his characters, carbon being one of the major constituents of the human body.

To this multiplicity of registers, the artist adds his own unique visual vocabulary. A body of images equivalent to years of collecting are interwoven within these portraits. Concealed behind an unbuttoned shirt or ensconced in his subject's head, fragments of images with diverse themes overlap, seemingly in dialogue with each other. Historical archives, scenes from films and current events coexist for the duration of a drawing, establishing whole new relationships. The viewer's eye creates its own pathway through this juxtaposition of styles and forms, delighting in the chance encounters and innovative narratives.

These connections between images might be read like the pages of Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas¹. The collisions born from this spatial organisation give birth to new strands of knowledge. A number of these visual motifs – such as victory or pain – are echoed from one image to another, whatever their vintage. Immersing oneself in these images can

¹Benjamin Bianciotto, "Divertimento", *Jérôme Zonder – Joyeuse Apocalypse !*, Catalogue d'exposition (Luxembourg, Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, 07.10.23 - 07.01.24), p.37.

be truly revelatory: The manner in which they are organised leaves open myriads of interpretations of what is happening between the images, in these spaces made up of voids, masses and infinite nuances. In this sense, each study of Pierre-François is an attempt to “produce a language that allow us to embody the issues that surround portraiture in drawing” the artist states.

“As words in a sentence join to articulate thought, so too his drawings operate as adaptable elements within his oeuvre”² Catherine Francblin asserts. For over fifteen years Pierre-François’ mental landscape has been in a state of constant evolution, accumulating an abundance of images like layers of sediment in his mind. And in “*Ras bord*” in particular, Jérôme Zonder pushes this logic to the extreme. He uses his technique of “filling in” as the means of representation to create the portraits of Pierre-François. Seated on a chair or in close-up, he unflinchingly faces the viewer. Filled to the brim with images of all kinds and from a vast variety of sources, their swarming constitutes the very substance of the character, saturating both his face and body. Sated, he waits, dreaming.

“*Ras bord*” concentrates in a single moment, in each of the portraits of Pierre-François, exactly what unfolds in the three phases of the layout of the exhibition *C’est un Petit Chemin* at the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme, on display until 27 October 2024.

Until 27 Oct. 2024

Jérôme Zonder. *C’est un petit chemin*
Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme
Hôtel de Saint-Aignan
71 rue du Temple
75003 Paris

²Catherine Francblin, “Jérôme Zonder. Le dessinateur derrière le dessin”, *Jérôme Zonder. C’est un petit chemin*, Exhibition catalogue, p.591, musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme, 01.06.24 – 27.10.24.

Born in Paris in 1974. Jérôme Zonder lives and works in Paris (France).

A graduate of the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in 2001, Jérôme Zonder has, for the last 20 years, developed a virtuosic work centered on the constantly reinvented practice of drawing. The variations in the scale of his works – realized in lead pencil and charcoal – generate spatial circulation games: the visitor strolls spatially and mentally through the mysteries of an extremely vivid polygraphic system. In his work, there are neighboring references to Albrecht Dürer, Robert Crumb, Rembrandt, Charles Burns, Otto Dix and Walt Disney, and together, these compose narratives with eclectic, sometimes cruel themes: “Narration pulls us into the drawing, and only the body keeps us on the surface. Drawing, for me, is existing constantly between distance and proximity, figuration and abstraction, attraction and repulsion.” The singularity of his narrative, historical and sociological approach, along with his great technical skill make Jérôme Zonder one of the most interesting draftsmen of his generation.

Jérôme Zonder’s work has been the subject of acclaimed solo exhibitions such as *Au Village* at Lieu unique (Nantes, France, 2014), *Fatum* at Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France, 2015), *The Dancing Room* at Musée Tinguely (Basel, Switzerland, 2017), *Devenir traces* bringing together over 130 works in the historic spaces of Château de Chambord (Chambord, France, 2018), *Jérôme Zonder, Portraits* at École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France, 2019), *Joyeuse Apocalypse!* at the Casino Luxembourg (Luxembourg, 2023) and *C’est un petit chemin* at the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme in 2024 (Paris, France).

Jérôme Zonder has taken part in numerous group exhibitions, including *Le Massacre des Innocents: Poussin, Picasso, Bacon* at the Musée Condé curated by Laurent Le Bon and Pierre Rosenberg (2017, Chantilly, France), *Guernica* at the Musée Picasso Paris (Paris, France, 2018), *Quel amour !?* at the Musée d’Art Contemporain de Marseille (France, 2018) and at the Musée Berardo (Lisbon, Portugal, 2019), *Déflagrations - Dessins d’enfants et violences de masse* at the MUCEM (Marseille, France, 2021), *La Beauté du Diable* at the FRAC Franche-Comté (Besançon, France, 2022) and at the MO.CO. in Montpellier (France, 2023).

Jérôme Zonder is receiving increasing attention on the international scene, as demonstrated by his participation in the exhibitions *Prière de toucher* at the Musée Tinguely (Basel, Switzerland, 2016), *La jeune fille et la mort* at the Drawing Centre Diepenheim (Diepenheim, Netherlands, 2016), *XXL, Le dessin en grand suivie de Art cruel* at the Musée Jenisch Vevey (Switzerland, 2021-2022) and *Traverser la nuit - Works From The Antoine de Galbert Collection* at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon, Portugal, 2022).

Jérôme Zonder’s work can be found in numerous international collections, including the Istanbul Modern Museum (Istanbul, Turkey), Musée Jenisch Vevey (Switzerland), Musée des beaux-arts du Locle (Le Locle, Switzerland), Musée d’Art et d’Histoire de Neuchâtel (Neuchâtel, Switzerland), Fonds Municipal d’Art Contemporain (Paris, France), Abattoirs, Musée - FRAC Occitanie (Toulouse, France), FRAC Picardie (Amiens, France), FRAC Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand, France), Musée des Beaux-Art (Paris, France), Musée National de l’histoire de l’immigration (Paris, France), Collection Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France), Fondation Emerige, Collection Laurent Dumas (Paris, France) and Collection Florence et Daniel Guerlain (Paris, France).

Paris Saint-Honoré

David Reed
Whirlpool
September 6 - October 26, 2024

Laure Prouvost
November 15 - January 2025

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Johanna Mirabel
Adieu la chair
September 7 - October 19, 2024

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

Jérôme Zonder
“Ras bord”
October 10 - December 14, 2024

Brussels

Nú Barreto
Sensibilité
September 5 - October 19, 2024

Joris Van de Moortel
October 24 - November 11, 2024

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