

PRESS RELEASE

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FABIEN MÉRELLE

RECONSTRUIRE

24, RUE DU VIEUX-BILLARD

Art Bärtschi & Cie is pleased to present the recent work of the young French artist **Fabien Mérelle**. For this second solo exhibition at the gallery, he proposes a series of unpublished drawings as well as a new bronze sculpture. A very intimate work, both ultra-realistic and totally surrealist, inspired as much by the world around him as by his personal emotional landscape.

Fabien Mérelle's drawings strike above all by their meticulousness and precision, which are not unlike the finesse of Albrecht Dürer's dry point engravings. Inspired by real elements that he appropriates, the artist constructs his own intimate and intriguing universe. Starting most often from a tiny detail that serves as a framework, the artist elaborates his drawings in a long process that sometimes borders on obsession. For Fabien Mérelle, drawing is a necessity.

Dressed in his striped pyjamas and a simple undershirt, the recurring character that inhabits the artist's compositions is none other than himself. The sheet of paper becomes a theatre where he brings to life his most fanciful dreams but also his fears. Fabien Mérelle's drawings plunge us with irony into the phantasmagorical world of fairy tales, where imagination loses its limits and reality is no longer the master of the place. If the characters are always taken from the artist's personal environment and represented with quasi-photographic fidelity, the scenes they inhabit move away from reality to give way to a dreamlike and poetic world.

Despite its facetious character, Fabien Mérelle's work is never devoid of gravity. His allegories, both visual and linguistic, are in fact expressive; they allow the artist to channel his emotions and tame his terrors.

The title of the exhibition refers to the recent existential upheavals of the artist, who has become a father, and to the need to rebuild himself in this new configuration of life. Thus, in the sculpture in the exhibition (*Aimant*, 2015) the artist depicts himself clutching the rounded belly of his pregnant wife in an oversized embrace that evokes the universal anxieties inherent in fatherhood.

With an economy of means, using here the confusion of scales, there astonishing effects of suspension, the artist succeeds in infusing magic into subjects that are nevertheless deeply rooted in the concrete. At once personal and universal, ephemeral and eternal, Fabien Mérelle's work reflects a deep sensitivity and fascination for the world around him, which he invites us to share.

Fabien Mérelle lives and works between Tours and Paris. Graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2006, the artist was invited to reside at the renowned Casa Velázquez in Madrid the following year. Fabien Mérelle is now represented by prestigious galleries around the world: Praz-Delavallade in Paris, Edouard Malingue Gallery in Hong Kong, and his works have been included in more than one prestigious collection such as the Daniel and Florence Guerlain Contemporary Art Foundation. Fabien Mérelle has been awarded numerous prizes: the David-Weill Drawing Prize (2003), the Damon Drawing Prize (2006), the Keskar Prize of the Fondation de France (2007) and the Canson Prize (2010).