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PRESS RELEASE
MATHIEU DAFFLON
COLMAR
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In his first series entitled "Waste Sessions," Matthieu Dafflon began by immersing himself in painting. He painted the pictorial material itself, making and breaking it down, taking an interest in its own expressive possibilities, navigating between figuration and abstraction, the sensuality of movement and flattening in Trompe-l'œil, in large compositions of vortexes of colors. Then, his practice evolved, with, in 2013, a series of small formats painted on wood imitating open fanzines or comic strip boxes: already mixed and collided without hierarchy or differentiation of the re-appropriated images, found in museums and on the Internet.

Continuing his research and drawing on masters of the past or other contemporary artists as much as the trivial representations of everyday life, he created a surprising portrait of Dubuffet in 2016, both funny and worrying. That same year, at the Salle Crosnier, he took over an entire section of the space with an imposing colored canvas, which, through the subterfuge of his technique, became a fresco or "mural" by integrating itself into the architecture of the place.

With "Colmar," this new cycle of paintings, Matthieu Dafflon has distanced himself from "painting that speaks of painting" and has sought to anchor himself in reality, everyday life and the banality of images, without turning his back on the artists of the past. In the infinite mass of images floating before our eyes, everything seems worthy of interest to the artist; we detect the recurrence of motifs and themes dear to Dafflon. He interlaces tragedy and comedy, the human body, sexuality, and banality daily life. Dafflon turns subjects that appear to be void of meaning into the sublime. He continues to question the relationship between image and painting,

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the status of the objects he creates, and what the viewer sees or does not see on a retinal level.

These questions materialize here in a set of nested tables, small paintings, sort of "vignettes," inserted and placed at the center of his compositions, which disturb and enrich the reading: what is the main subject, what is the background or the foreground, is it an overlay or a hole? The paintings' interplay, a coherent whole where each part exists on its own but viewed in relation takes on its full meaning, reinforces this. In the motifs, for example, a monkey with a phallic nose appears perplexed by masculine curves, worthy of a Greek Callipygian statue. Dafflon also plays with scale; monumental forms are saturated with colors, sometimes with striking contrast, then balanced by white plains where a single image floats, like a respite to rest one's gaze caught up in Dafflon's overflowing imagination.

After turning to Karel Appel, Malcolm Morley, Franz Gertsch or Jean Dubuffet, the artist draws inspiration for this exhibition from the medieval world, with its unbridled imagination and bestiary, and from Matthias Grünewald's stunning Issenheim Altarpiece (1512-1516, Musée Unterlinden, Colmar). How does one react to a visual jolt, teeming with details that are sometimes grotesque, sometimes unsustainably realistic, where the violence of the world competes with the virtuosity of execution? The artist proposes a two-step response: he quotes the artist directly by repeating a particular detail, but he goes beyond that and combines the monsters of the past with the violence of the present world. A burning car, for example, is sublimated act of violence against the images themselves: the painting, repainted in the form of destruction on a blood-red background, prolongs his "Waste Sessions," in the sense that the material, and the images kneaded into it, appear condemned to transform themselves indefinitely, and sometimes reappear, like ghosts; the burning cars represent a contemporary iconoclasm. Beyond their repulsive and seductive visual

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impact, a duality that the artist loves, they are the product of a materialistic world, steeped in vanity and hubris. The paintings can also be read in light of recent current events--cars on fire in the French suburbs, the end of the automobile in a world suffocated by pollution, and the overabundance of images. Dafflon seeks to ignite reflection on what is stronger and more real: the consumeristic world or the unadulterated one, both monstrous and sublime.

Yves Christen.

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