

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Guillaume Bresson

November 18 - January 13, 2024

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



Sans titre, 2022
Oil on canvas, 183 x 121 cm (72 x 47^{5/8} in.)
Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present Guillaume Bresson's new series of eight paintings. This is his fifth exhibition at the gallery since 2010.

Considered one of the leading figures in figurative painting, the artist who now lives in New York, is known for his resolutely contemporary scenes, reinvesting a mode of representation derived from classical painting, which had been cast aside until the beginning of the 21st century. The artist thus paints a contemporary history painting leveraging a mode of reconstruction of reality through the prism of his own time. An architect of choreographed *mises en scènes*, Guillaume Bresson uses body language and movement as keys to reading his paintings.

Guillaume Bresson's system for making his works remains unchanged: he begins with preparatory photography sessions with models in his studio. Staging their own bodies, the models offer —for this series— poses on the theme of falling, dramatized movements that recall the final judgment in religious painting. The rest of the process consists in isolating the bodies, which the artist detaches then re-positions into groups, composing works in which the same characters can appear several times.

However, unlike his paintings with their marked social character, this new series frees itself from the architectural elements and linear perspectives that served as reference points. Here, the untethered figures evolve in environments in motion — waves, clouds—, or stand out against an indeterminate black background, focusing attention on their fall. The meticulous treatment of skin and anatomy is underlined by a play of chiaroscuro, which continues in the folds of half-removed clothing. More than ever in the artist's work, the models' physique is scrutinized from every angle, with an attention to detail that leaves no muscle, fold of skin, joint or limb contortion untouched. While the jeans and other clothes worn by the figures are

contemporary, the way he paints these folds evokes the draperies of old master pictures, oscillating between present and timeless through the polysemic play that painting allows.

By taking up the archetypal painting of the Last Judgment, a motif used by artists from Giotto to Tintoretto, Michelangelo and Rubens, Guillaume Bresson questions the function of this trope of representation that spans the ages, from religious scenes of the Renaissance to the great dystopic representations created today.

The artist thus draws a parallel between this theatricalization and cinematic references from apocalyptic films like *2012*, *Don't Look Up*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, *The Impossible*... where fears and anxieties linked to the end of the world and to climate catastrophes get the spectacular Hollywood treatment. The lyricism of Guillaume Bresson's actors' poses weaves a link between the scripting of these films and scenes from old master works of art. Here again, the artist interrogates these narrative figures, these common places that seem to transcend time, from classical painting to Hollywood blockbusters.

While these disoriented bodies mark a new direction in Guillaume Bresson's oeuvre, he is no less detached from the societal issues that punctuate his paintings. The artist thus lends his brush and his understanding of the tools of the great masters to depicting the problems of the *zeitgeist*¹: the spirit of our time.

¹ Term borrowed from German philosophy, designating the intellectual and cultural climate of an era.

Born in Toulouse in 1982, Guillaume Bresson lives and works in New York (USA).

In 2007, Guillaume Bresson graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris with distinction. His work questions the notions of staging and narrative in painting. He came to the attention of the public with *Dynasty*, an exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris held in 2010 – the year in which he also received the Sciences-Po Prize for Contemporary Art. Having participated in 2016-2017 in the Residency Unlimited programme, he currently lives in New York after a residency at the FLAX Foundation in Los Angeles in 2020.

Bresson's work has been shown in numerous international institutions such as the Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe (Germany, 2011), the Curitiba Biennial (Brazil, 2011), the Perm Museum (Russia, 2012), l'Institut du Monde arabe (Paris, 2015), la Collection Lambert in Avignon (France, 2015), the ArtSpace Boan in Seoul (South Korea, 2016), the Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard (France, 2018), Domaine Pommery (Reims, 2018), the French Institute Alliance française (New York, 2019), the Centre Pompidou (in a group show *Dust, The Plates of Present*, 2020).

Bresson was chosen in 2015 by Olivier Py, the Director of the Avignon Festival to embody the poster of one of the world's greatest performing arts Festival and to benefit from a personal exhibition in Avignon's renown Célestins Church.

Bresson was selected the same year by the board of Patrons of "Les Nouveaux Commanditaires" to create a polyptych for the RedStar soccer team, which became the emblem of the club and was shown in several group shows including *La Grande Galerie du Foot* (Grande Halle de la Villette de Paris, France, 2016) ; *Le Sport est un Art* (Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac, France, 2017) and *Par Amour du jeu* (Magasins Généraux, Pantin, France, 2018). Guillaume Bresson's works have been reproduced in numerous articles and exhibition catalogues. In 2019, two of the artist's large scale paintings were chosen to be reproduced for the set of Clement Cogitore's *Les Indes Galantes* opera at the Opera Bastille in Paris.

The painter has been the subject of two monographic publications : *Guillaume Bresson* published by Editions Dilecta in 2012 and *Guillaume Bresson, Red Star Football Club* by Presses du Réel in 2016. In 2017, Guillaume Bresson receives the Pierre Cardin Prize from the Académie des Beaux-Arts in the painting section before being awarded the Del Duca Painting Prize in 2020, on the occasion of a collective exhibition of the winners at the Institut de France.

Guillaume Bresson's works are present in numerous private and public collections notably those of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Louis Vuitton collection and the MUDAM Luxembourg and the Musée des Abattoirs in Toulouse, each of which holds one of his major works. Drawings by the artist are also present in the collections of the Cabinet Jean Bonna of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

In 2019, the artist enjoyed his first solo exhibition in the United States at the invitation of the French Institute Alliance Française in New York. In the same year, he was part of a group show on figurative painting *Les Enfants du Paradis* at the MUBA in Tourcoing (France), as part of the Lille 3000 art event entitled *L'Eldorado* (curators: Jean-Max Colard and Jérôme Sans). In 2020, the Couvent des Cordeliers in Toulouse hosted a solo exhibition of the artist's frescoes.

Guillaume Bresson has been represented by the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, since 2010.

Paris Saint-Honoré

Luc Delahaye

Reportage

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Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Nú Barreto

Silhouettes Parfaites

November 18 - January 13, 2024

Brussels

Jorge Queiroz

Shape the echo and other works

October 26 - December 16, 2023

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri II

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For any further information, please contact : Eva Ben Dhiab
evab@nathalieobadia.com / + 33 (0) 1 53 01 99 76

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