

Jérôme Zonder

*Portraits du paradis*

21 May – 24 July 2026

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4<sup>e</sup>



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #14, 2026  
Graphite and charcoal on paper, 150 x 120 cm (59 x 78 1/8 in.)  
© Jérôme Zonder, ADAGP 2026  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present in Paris *Portraits du paradis*, a new solo exhibition by Jérôme Zonder. For the first time since 2018, this new body of work brings together all the characters/models that have accompanied the artist for over twenty years: Pierre-François, Baptiste and Garance, figures borrowed from Marcel Carné's film *Les Enfants du Paradis*. Through them, Jérôme Zonder continues his exploration of portraiture where his drawing practice is constantly evolving.

"How can we depict the human figure today, when we don't even know what it looks like, or what it should look like?" asks the artist. Contemporary anthropological shifts—linked to technological advancements, to the proliferation of images and to the omnipresence of screens—are deeply transforming bodies and behaviors. It is precisely this complexity that the draftsman explores through his portraits: Jérôme Zonder interrogates bodily, physical, mental, and digital memories, to create his figures, which seem to flicker so as to better probe their mysteries. While some appear hesitant, groping their way under the artist's imprint, others are more rigid, chiseled by a bold line. His portraits oscillate between assertion and uncertainty, permeated by thousands of images—collected over many years—that structure, as best they can, the intimate architecture of his characters.

Pierre-François is the focal point of this body of work. He initiates a dialogue between image, material, and text, which runs through the entire exhibition. The various writing systems intertwine and collide, responding to one another in a ripple effect, and transcend the boundaries of these figures to reach the surfaces that host them. It teems, swarms, breathes, bursts, and spills, generating new images through these juxtapositions<sup>1</sup>. These visual effects arise from the diversity of images deployed within a rich graphic repertoire, challenging the spectator's gaze to find its way through them.

Historical archives, cinematic scenes, and current events—in their excesses of both violence and joy—overlap without hierarchy, concealed behind a half-open shirt or lodged in the characters' minds. Added to this plurality is a deliberate focus on text: heterogenous typographies, narrative fragments, slogans or dialogues from the film from which they are drawn are inscribed directly into the image, contributing as much to its construction as to its interpretation. In *Etude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #113*, the latter seems crushed by the front grille that presses down on his chest. Signs of the world scroll past him within a grid-like architecture, much like an Instagram feed: Pierre-François remains, passive, kept alive by this insipid material. What constitutes him is also what exhausts him.

<sup>1</sup>These connections between images can be read like the pages of Aby Warburg's Atlas Mnémosyne, a reflection by Benjamin Bianciotto, "Divertimento", in *Jérôme Zonder—Joyeuse Apocalypse*, exhibition catalog (Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, 2023), Luxembourg: Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, 2024, p.37.

Jérôme Zonder's virtuosity allows him to explore every facet of drawing, from hyperrealism to abstract compositions, right down to the textures created by the palm of his hand or his fingerprints, attesting to his physical engagement in the creative process. The work of the hand—rubbing, pressing, erasing—imprints his body directly onto the drawn surface: the subtly nuanced blacks produce a dense matter, evoking both the skin and the gray matter of his subjects, carbon being one of the fundamental components of the human body.

These gestures also embody a form of resistance in the technological age, where the question of bifurcation is implicit. As our societies organize themselves around machines operating at ever-increasing speeds, humans find themselves trapped in a logic of acceleration that exceeds their cognitive capacities, at the risk of being progressively stripped of them. As Bernard Stiegler put it, the bifurcation designates a critical point from which a system—in this case, humans in their relationship to technology—can embark on divergent trajectories. Whereas contemporary devices tend toward a *continuous modulation of flows*<sup>2</sup>, Jérôme Zonder's work reaffirms the power of interruption and displacement. His gestures introduce a different temporality, one that escapes the logic of calculation and optimization. It is in these intervals that the artist's freedom lies: to bifurcate out of desire, out of surprise, and according to an organic thought process—dimensions that elude the calculations of technical systems.

In contrast, the figure of Baptiste operates within a similar dynamic: his shifting forms oscillate between the organic and the insect-like, in a visual world reminiscent of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. This drawing belongs to the series *L'Autre*, begun in 2007, where the line seems to unfold "beyond the artist", guided by a process that allows possibilities to emerge. China ink, used for a drawing of almost surgical precision, interacts with accidental gesture, giving rise to the unstable, living or evolving forms. The figure of Garance, meanwhile, occupies a point of equilibrium between these two poles, bringing a relational dimension that enriches the whole.

In this new body of work, drawing becomes a space for experimentation where, with every line, the question of "image-making" today is reexamined. This exhibition invites viewers to engage with the uncertainty and to recognize, in the very fabric of these fragmented "portraits of the century," the echoes of a humanity in flux.

— Marie Chappaz, Editorial Writer

---

<sup>2</sup>Term used by Bernard Stiegler, drawing on the concept developed by Gilles Deleuze, during the roundtable discussion "Bernard Stiegler and Alain Damasio: Revolution or Bifurcation?", Gound Control, Paris, October 17, 2019.

---

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). In 2028, Jérôme Zonder will be presented in solo exhibitions at the FRAC Picardie in Amiens, France, and at the Musée de l'Hospice Saint-Roch in Issoudun, France.

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

Rosson Crow  
*La Rupture*  
9 April – 30 May 2026

Laura Henno  
10 June – July 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Jérôme Zonder  
*Portraits du paradis*  
21 May – 24 July 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

Romana Londi  
*Vein! Vain! Vane!*  
7 April – 20 May 2026

Quentin Gouevic  
21 May – July 2026

Brussels

Shirley Jaffe  
26 March – 23 May 2026

Group exhibition  
*Ebb & Flow: Perceptions de l'Été*  
30 May – July 2026

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

To stay informed about Galerie Nathalie Obadia:  
Instagram (@galerieobadia), Facebook (@GalerieNathalieObadia), Twitter (@GalerieObadia) via le hashtag #galerieobadia