

JACQUES BLIN & BERTRAND HUGUES

SECONDE NATURE



(Left) Bertrand Hugues, *2020JBBH04*, 2020, Fresson carbon printing, 59,5 x 75,5 cm, 5 ex + 2 A.P.

(Right) Jacques Blin, belly vase with engraved motif of plants and imaginary animals, scarified and glazed earthenware, around 1960, 33 x 19 cm

EXHIBITION FROM NOVEMBER 6TH TO DECEMBER 5TH 2020
OPENING THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH FROM 4 PM TO 9 PM

Who would dare to assign to art the sterile function of imitating nature?

Charles Baudelaire

Galerie Eric Mouchet is please to present the exhibition *Seconde Nature* dedicated to ceramicist Jacques Blin and to photographer Bertrand Hugues, from November 6th to December 5th, 2020.

At the beginning, there was a group of ceramics. All born from the same creator, Jacques Blin (1920-1995). Pitchers, lamp stands, pots and other vases from Blin's studio are easily identified by the patterns that decorate them: animals or plants etched in clay, reduced to a few lines that hover between recognizable forms and elliptical symbols. The pots themselves, sometimes possessing a biomorphic allure, are glazed with deliberately faded colors, from pale orange to faded green or bleached blue, that reinforce the archaic aspect of their carved patterns.

This kind of touching and primordial reverie has taken on a new form in the recent work of Bertrand Hugues. This man, for whom a fallen tree leaf is enough to create an entire world, found in Blin's work the ripest of resources for generating strange images. It's not that Hugues attempts to imitate the art of the ceramicist (being faithful to the real is not his style), but rather because Hugues encountered forms within Blin's work that presented themselves as potential sketches.

Blin went from nature to signs, while Hugues appropriates signs in order to build, in his own way, a second nature.

Imagine Bertrand Hugues, in his studio-laboratory, attempting to hang a twig enclosed in a thin layer of wax, from which some leaves escape onto the fragile branch of another twig. It appears to be a children's game, so popular in the 19th century: "science for fun", which enabled one to dream of being a chemist, a physician, an officer making laws that govern the world. There's the look of a child, captivated by what he does in Bertrand Hugues' studio, as if it were something scholarly that required nothing except knowing what to take from lived experience.

Bertrand Hugues is an artist who employs photography, at a specific moment in his work, not as an end in itself but as a means, among others, to investigate through a series of acts what it means to see. Thwarting the laws of Nature, the artist also plays with those of photography. Thus, starting with the Hybrids he created, what he accomplishes in his studio dark room methodically cripples our common ways of seeing.

It could stop there, but the elation of the experience would not be complete for this inventor of forms, if he didn't indulge himself in one last practice, exercised in an intentionally indirect way. This last act was the transition of the Ektachromes in his studio into prints, given to the Atelier Fresson, heir of the carbon printing process to which it gave its name, invented at the end of the 19th century. The aesthetic effect brought about by the colors of this process bring to mind the first Autochrome photographs, thereby imposing a kind of distance. It's as if, between the hybrid being created by Hugues and those who observe it, a temporal veil has intervened.

This effect, which we can find among many photographers of another time, called the pictorialists due to the relationship their work fostered with painting, is the ultimate way for the creator of these works to distance himself from the image. But the Fresson process also has the very particular quality of providing its prints with a freshness and an exceptionally long conservation period. We understand that such a possibility has retained the attention of a man who loves to submerge his herbarium specimens into melted wax, in order to provide them with eternal youth. This, of course only when he doesn't subject them to a drying technique which, his says, preserves all the freshness of the dry elements... The "freshness of dryness". What better oxymoron could paint the picture of what we see here: this way, in the words of Baudelaire, of "surpassing nature" in order to bestow upon the living a deliberately artificial form of eternity?

Extracts from Pierre Wat's essay

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

PhotoSaintGermain - 10 years

6-21 November 2020 - Opening Thursday, November 5th from 4 to 9 pm

a p p r o c h e, salon dedicated to experimentation of the medium of photography

11-15 November 2020 - Ken Matsubara