



With “Slight Crosswind”*, MAC/VAL presents France’s first major exhibition of the work of Noël Dolla, from March 5 to June 14 2009 in Vitry-sur-Seine. Noël Dolla is in essence a loose cannon – an artist who has never long been beholden to a single manner of painting. His work has constantly been marked by an experimental nature, a perpetual sense of motion, freewheeling starts and stops, hot and cold, abrupt chasms, biographical detours, and furtive return. Noël Dolla joins recent works with older pieces for the Val-de-Marne contemporary art museum, creating an artistic path for visitors to follow this daring painter.

MAC/VAL presents the first major French exhibition of the work of Noël Dolla, a major French artist who since 1967 has pushed painting and the status of the artist to their limits. Dolla calls himself a painter “in the spirit of abstraction”. He undermines the abstract/figurative divide by rightly shifting the problem of abstraction from one of style to one of method and model.

Over time, he discovered that space has no direction in abstract painting, and that it was therefore in “freefall”. One constant in his work, however, is that regardless the direction taken, history and memory have always left their mark. “I’ve always been obsessed with avoiding repetition, which is why I’ve adopted several different artistic practices while gauging how an artistic gesture is always conditioned by what came before it.”

For Noël Dolla, nothing can be taken for granted. Nothing is planned or foreseeable. He plays at painting and makes up the rules as he goes along. That is undoubtedly what gives his work such disconcerting freedom, its whiff of intelligent provocation. Dolla invents a popular abstraction verging on kitsch, transforming the most banal objects into artistic material: mops, handkerchiefs, rooster feathers, tarlatan cloth, lures. The works that built his renown in the late sixties, however, share little with the typical construction of the Supports/Surfaces movement which served as a main reference for their initial interpretations. This use of life as material also led Noël Dolla to work directly with nature.

With no absolute pronouncements, no penchant for demonstration, he leads us to question our way of viewing, forcing us to see painting in a multitude of available spaces. “In art, there are two phases: that of life and the artist, and then that of the public, the collector; the two meet only when there is a third phase, that of the atelier,” affirms Dolla. A teacher at the Villa Arson in Nice since 1974, he belongs to no artistic movement or school, and although he instructs, he does not claim to serve as a model.

That brings us to the exhibition phase, invited by MAC/VAL’s curator Frank Lamy. The exhibition is designed based on (or inside of) recent works (2002-2009) and older, sometimes even historical, works, set up inside three bird traps conceived as different areas of the brain, thus as traps of memory. The exhibition is complemented with representative works such as “the big lure” and, for the garden, a drying rack and garden shed – familiar household objects as a way of approaching the history of painting and the artist’s own personal history.

**His title “Slight Crosswind” is evocative of the spirit of the artist, as histrionic as he is sensitive (both an agitator and deeply human) and alludes to a 1991 play premiered following the death of his brother.*

Biographical notes by the artist:

"Noël Dolla

May 5, 1945, Dad was sixteen, Mom too. Three brothers followed: Claude 1947, Patrick 1957, Serge 1960. My mother's father, Homère, was a painter (frescoes, imitation wood and imitation marble). Gramps was modest, he did marine paintings and roses for fun. He went mullet fishing a lot.

Gramps died at dawn on Christmas Day 1966.

That day, I resolved to paint or go fishing every December 25 for the rest of my life.

Hey Grampa, what are all these Gods for? Nothing, kid, oh wait, they're to make the poor afraid and deluded, and to make the rich richer and to help those who want to get or keep power.

Hey Grampa, how big was the biggest fish you ever caught?

Hey Grampa, are housepainters really the masters of monochrome?

Papa drank pastis (a lot). He was a printer and sometimes built things alone, at night at home secluded in his little workshop.

Deaths: Gramps 1966, Grama 1976, Papa 1980, Patrick 1991, Serge 1997, Mom 2007.

1969-2003 Three marriages Michèle, Elisabeth, Sandra.

1964 Student in Nice, I meet C. Viallat.

1966 I am kicked out of school.

1967 On December 14, my first piece, Etendoir (Drying Rack) at the Hall des Remises en Question. (At Ben's place in Nice)

1968 I help create the Supports/Surfaces group.

1970 Friendship with R. Flexner.

1972 12 years of contemporary art in France 72/72.

Meet and befriend Bernard Lamarche-Vadel.

First Lures and images of Love Song (1972/1976)

1973 I obtain my DNSEP (college arts diploma)

1974 I start teaching at the Villa Arson in Nice.

1986 During their two months' imprisonment for drug use, two of my brothers are infected with the AIDS virus.

I paint the Chernobyl series. (Paintings of one-eyed one-legged figures)

1995 Véritable faux bons de trésor series (Real Fake Treasury Bonds)

Lorand Hegy arranges my first retrospective, L'abstraction humiliée (Abstraction Humiliated), at the Salmund Ludwig gallery in Vienna.

La parole dite par un oeil (The Word as Told by an Eye) published by L'Harmattan.

1999 Xavier Girard offers me a retrospective at the MAMAC, Nice. Birth of my son Loupio.

2000 First trip to Africa.

2003 Christian Bernard directs and installs my NON 1967-2001 retrospective at the MAMCO, Geneva.

2005 I currently live alone.

2009 MAC/VAL"

Examples of images available for the press (additional images available on request):

My mother II, Etendoir n. 2, Palissade

Carte blanche for Alain Bublex: “Nocturnes”

Alain Bublex, as MAC/VAL's first guest for a carte blanche program, submits a dual reinterpretation of the museum's collection by recasting his own work and that of the ties stretching from work to work. New pieces as well as older production exist side by side in a scenography which becomes a total work of art. Much like in a cinematographic fiction in which a reversal of fortune is underway, Alain Bublex radically transforms our perception of the works in the collection. In this project, entitled *Nocturnes*, the artist delights in scrambling the standard codes of museum display: he dims the lights to ease the visitor into a more enigmatic, intimate, and mysterious environment. His own works blend into the museum's collection, stepping aside to allow pieces by Sarkis, Tatiana Trouvé, Kimsooja, Pierre Ardouvin, and Cécile Paris to emerge. His goal is to induce slowness along this display itinerary devoted to travel, weaving his work into the museum as a whole. To the mindset of speed, he reacts with deceleration.

With shameless, unbridled rebelliousness, Alain Bublex again proves his mastery of displacement.

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