



Faire Face

May 20 - June 19, 2021

Gaël Davrinche

Curator : Olivier KAEPPÉLIN

Exhibition catalogue Gaël Davrinche, « Faire face »

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including an original work, oil and graphite on paper of 27 x 22 cm



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Painting in need of a name

What I like about people is what is unknown, which is worth more than any knowledge will ever provide.
Natalie Clifford Barney*

Gaël Davrinche paints portraits, he also paints still lifes and flowers. He paints the great classical subjects of painting. He paints them maybe because they are subjects that captivate him or because, from an insightful, sensual point of view, they provide him with the impetus to paint. It maybe that he is not interested in these subjects for what they are, but for their history, the figures that signify his true passion, which is painting. Painting as form, as matter, and as composition, painting as a living being whose heart he seeks, in whatever form it may appear. Painting as a partner in dialogue, in the manner of Gasiorowski perhaps, whom he admires; painting as a “figure” which Gasiorowski used to call KIGA, from Worosis Kiga, anagram of his surname. Gaël Davrinche has painted two superb portraits of Gasiorowski, which are a way of telling us that he has assumed Gasiorowski’s conceptual and visual legacy and that he continues, in his own way, to inhabit the spirit of it. In this adventure, anything can be a reason for an encounter with painting, with its flows and its critical powers releasing vital energy and generating epic rhythms like silent seductions, an extreme expenditure of effort, all combining to create zones of infinite calm where only aesthetic delight reigns.

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Looking, I am convinced, at the work of Gaël Davrinche, Gérard Gasiorowski had this to say about that: "All I need is the pleasure of painting the painting. Constant energy to be expended at every moment. Nothing must be held back, changed or redeemed. It's an attitude that might tend to isolate me from the world, but I can manage quite well, I think, without social niceties and the mass graves that they lead to."⁽³⁾ In this portrait exhibition, Gaël Davrinche has kept well away from the social niceties and their mass graves. Although he always avoids pastiche or caricature, he draws his inspiration from Flemish painting, Rembrandt, or simply from a genre of that period, located in Northern Europe. He does it with a paintbrush, charcoal or chalk. The subjects are "ill-treated", sometimes ridiculed. They possess the characteristics of "grotesques", with no added niceties, and the painter brings them out cruelly. I see this as a stand against commissioned painting. He uses every means at his disposal to deliver forthright, incisive criticism. His way of pulling a subject apart does not hide its violence. He creates a kind of painting that runs counter to the state of painting. In a curious way, the same painting can combine savage irony with a nostalgia for visual beauty.

With these elegies to the powerful magic of the picture plane, Gaël Davrinche takes us from "carnage", through chaos, to a sensual delight of "whites" in an infinite abundance of fascinating shades. The colour is applied to the canvas with a gesture that is never a quotation. It is a legacy of the modern period, but it is, above all, a complex gesture that can be understood as much through the technique in Frans Hals's portraits as in Miquel Barcelo or Gérard Garouste's treatment of whites, and with a total disregard for conventions. Painting in Gaël Davrinche's works is the expression of a journey, a path; a manifestation of the shift from one state of painting to another, as in the painting entitled *Fillette à la colombe* [Girl with a Dove], animated by what, following Augustin Berque or Marc-Alain Ouaknin, we might call "trajectivity." The painter passes, with no discernible hiatus, from Rembrandt to Marlène Dumas, not to mention Manet. It is not a matter of adding forms – far from it –, but of adding what binds them to each other to "make a picture", i.e. a device intended to interrogate us and bring us face to face with it. The same is true, but in a completely different way, of the work entitled *M. Arnolfini 2* in which the black is treated with a totally contemporary vision and execution. The hat in Jan van Eyck's painting is a disproportionate abstraction here, and signifies something quite different from Arnolfini and his distracted gaze. Here he is borne along by a vortex, and it takes us away from an exercise in portraiture. The duality of the original work (husband and wife) is dissolved and, through movement, a synthesised figure, an ambivalent female-male being, is created.

I imagine Gaël Davrinche thinking of this painting as a break with the past, one of the first non-hagiographic paintings in the West, and that gave him the freedom to do as he pleased.

Under the appellation M. Arnolfini 2, he has created a figure in which the couple has become one. Painting, by dint of its economy and its transgression of the model, has become a kind of nature in its own right, with the power to change, to create genres and realms, to assemble them as it pleases. The male is discovered in the female and so are the circumstances that surround them. Painting here soars; it is an excrescence. We realize that the austere Arnolfini couple have relinquished their place as "subject". Here, painting, its substance and its spirit, rule supreme. It dissolves the rules and brings other promises, knowledge other than that of art history that sees painting slipping away from it; the knowledge of a painter who knows that interpretation is endless and who, I think, shares this idea of John Coltrane's: "There are always new sounds to imagine; new feelings to get at. And always, there is the need to keep purifying these feelings and sounds so that we can really see what we've discovered in its pure state. So that we can see more and more clearly what we are. In that way, we can give to those who listen the essence, the best of what we are." To see more and more clearly what we are through this series of portraits is surely what Gaël Davrinche hopes for. He does it using figures or genres from the history of art (grotesques, bourgeois portraits, symbolic or psychological portraits, and so on). He does it on the basis of photographs or direct observation. In his relationship with objects, and the way he sets them up, he reminds me of Arcimboldo (*L'attente*, *L'Innocence révélée*, *Baudruche*) or, conversely, in his pursuit of pure sensation, of Vuillard or Bonnard (*Sunset*), and, in his singular use of colour, of Munch (*Incarnation*, *Précieuse*) or Markus Lüpertz and, closer to our time, of Jonathan Meese. Gaël Davrinche makes use of anything he needs to get closer to the truth he is after. He plays around, he juggles dexterously. Above all, he strives to "see more and more clearly what we are." And the further he proceeds in this adventure, the more I get the impression that he is looking below the surface, "under the skin" for the truth of his subject. Colour is introduced into the bodies and the faces (*Tie & Dye*) to tear them apart surgically, to bring out their wild, animalistic nature (*Kalashnikov 03*). The skin is a frontier that painting crosses, and, once it has got through, it shreds it, breaks it down, then puts it back together again, in order to sculpt it with the shreds, or make it reappear on the surface as in the astonishing self-portrait of 2014 or in *The Disagreeing Bridesmaid*.

Gaël Davrinche goes deep into the bodies he depicts, gets into their very entrails, into the bones of the painting. He connects them in the foreground with vigorous, nimble strokes or drips of intense colour, which rise up from the depths like groundwater discharging onto the surface. His portraits are constructed on the paradox that the truth of a portrait is revealed by masking it, by concealing it, so that a signifying heart that the portrait is exploring can well up in material form. It is in this sense that he plays with the mask – the mask, the Latin word for which is "persona", which reveals as much of the actor's character as it conceals. "Expersona ardent oculi histrionis" wrote Cicero – "The eyes of the actor radiating light through the mask" –, as in so many of Gaël Davrinche's paintings. "Mask and person" merge, blend together to disclose the reality of the portrait. A reality that does not concern the individual alone, their psychological identity, nor the aesthetics of a pictured model belonging in an iconography. No, it is an attempt, as we suggested above, quoting John Coltrane, to "see more and more clearly what we are."

“What we are.” To know what that is, it is perhaps appropriate to recall also that the decade 2012-2022 has been marked by extreme tension, and that is what is embodied in the “Kalashnikov original” series.

We might, for a change, begin with the titles, with the words. We know what they refer to: increasing violence, attacks, destruction, grievous bodily harm. It could be nothing but rhetoric and a dead letter, but the experience of painting is something quite different and it embodies this state. For more than twenty years, the “human condition” has been prey to dispersion and dissolution. Once again the body is subject to manipulation, dismemberment and carnage in extraordinary situations, but also in the ordinary course of things. The present time is endangering the profound integrity of our physical and mental identity. There is an urgent need to represent, to give form to this alarming dispersion, but also, through the resolute intent of painting, to thwart it materially. Today, as a new generation of creators is demonstrating, painting is one of the essential actors of creation. It is one of the rare activities which, irrespective of any crisis between categories, reiterates the importance of the human face. Gaël Davrinche is one of those who understand that this question is of paramount importance. His painting is undeluded and free of self-indulgence; it reveals a furious struggle to maintain the unity of a face in brush strokes or in paint. He paints this struggle, not in order to describe it but to experience it, line after line, brushstroke after brushstroke. The point is to prevent that spot, the flesh, the structure of that face, from disintegrating. Is there anything more “sacred” than a face? Whether intact or in tatters, it is kept alive through painting or, more accurately, by a sheet of paper, a canvas, and a frame, which, in the process, cease to be objects and become a living thing, more alive than any of us.

Olivier KAEPPELIN

Selected Works



Under the skin 11
Series Under the skin

2015, 200 x 160 cm, oil on canvas



Inside

2016, 200 x 160 cm, oil on canvas



Tie & Dye

2016, 200 x 160 cm, oil on canvas

About Artist

Gaël Davrinche

b.1971, Saint-Mandé, France

Gaël Davrinche is a French painter who was born in 1971. He lives and works in Montreuil. A graduate of the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris (in 2000), and professor of contemporary drawing and painting at the *Ateliers de Sèvres* since 2007, he has since then pursued an international artistic career, participating in exhibitions in Europe (France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, UK, Switzerland, etc.) as well as in Asia (China, Hong Kong, and South Korea).

Gaël Davrinche's prolific oeuvre, which is comprised of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints, primarily revives the traditional genres of portraiture and still life painting in a plastic dialogue that lies between tradition and the complete deconstruction of the latter. Indeed, the artist has relentlessly researched, explored, and drawn inspiration from the history of art in the works of his illustrious predecessors, which he believes is the very essence of painting. Frequently adopting a childlike approach to his work, he has produced humorous caricatural copies of masterpieces of European art as part of a marathon series entitled 'Les Revisités', which he began a dozen or so years ago and elements of which can still be seen in his current work.

Raising the question of the legitimacy of the painted portrait, at a time when there are no longer any commissions for portraits, Davrinche has refined his thinking over the years, notably in the series 'Under the skin' and 'Kalashnikov'. Fundamentally free in style, his work is sometimes incisive and expressive, and sometimes extremely detailed. The boldness with which the artist alternates between styles, shifting from skilful realism to spontaneous expressionism, illustrates his attachment to painting as a medium with inexhaustible possibilities, even though critics have stated otherwise on numerous occasions.

Perfectly complementary, the 'Memento Mori' give Gaël Davrinche's work a refreshing pensive quality. In this series of drawings and paintings representing wilted flowers, the artist tackles the timeless theme of the cycle of life through the prism of allegory, and paints a shadow portrait of man confronted by his own existential angst—a personal and universal theme that he explores in a very poetic manner.

Fanny Giniès, 2017



Born in 1971 in Saint-Mandé, France
Lives and works in Montreuil, France

Education

2000 École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, FR

Awards

2006 - Résidence d'Art Contemporain La Source, Domaine de Villarceaux, FR
2001 - Prix Maurice Colin-Lefrancq, FR

Public Collections

Fondation Colas, Boulogne-Billancourt, FR
Musée Ingres, Montauban, FR
Musée des Beaux Arts de Chambéry, FR
FRAC Haute-Normandie, Rouen, FR
Fondation Salomon pour l'Art Contemporain, Annecy, FR

Selected Solo Shows

- 2021 Faire Face, curator : Olivier Kaepelin, Galerie Vazieux, Paris, France
Floraisons, Médiathèque d'Uzès, France
Espace Schilling, Neuchâtel, Suisse
Art Paris, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Grand Palais Ephémère, Paris, FR
Espace Martiningo, Chambéry, France
- 2020 Expressions brutes, Galerie Vachet Delmas, Sauve, France
Des fleurs en hiver, Galerie Provost Hacker, Lille, France
- 2019 Nocturne, Mazel Galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique
Les expos d'été - 9ème édition, commissariat : Galerie Claire Gastaud, Château de la Trémolière, Anglards-de-Salers, France
Contemplations, Mazel Galerie, Singapour
128 000 couleurs etc. suite, Galerie Vachet Delmas - hors les murs, Lyon, France
- 2018 A spasso per campi cromatici, Doppelgaenger, Bari, Italie
Flower Power, duo show, Espace Martiningo, Chambéry, France
128 000 couleurs etc., Galerie Vachet-Delmas, Sauve, France
- 2017 Corpus Botanica, A2Z Gallery, Hong Kong
Aux doigts et à l'oeil, Mazel Galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique
Finger in the nose, New Square Gallery, Lille, France
- 2016 Festival d'Auvers sur Oise – Opus 36, Galerie d'art contemporain d'Auvers sur Oise, France
Primitiv Heritage, A2Z Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2015 Under the skin, Galerie Magda Danysz, Londres, Royaume-Uni
Défigure(s) 2, Espace d'art contemporain André Malraux, Colmar, France
Titien / Davrinche, ego gallery (hors-les-murs), Lugano, Suisse
- 2014 Hurricane, Doppelgaenger, Bari, Italie
- 2013 Solo Show, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
Memento Mori, ego gallery, Lugano, Suisse
Solo Show, Centre d'art contemporain / Passages, Troyes, France
Défigure(s), Fondation Espace Écureuil pour l'art contemporain, Toulouse, France
- 2012 Solo Show, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
- 2010 101 Monotypes, Artothèque d'Annecy, France
- 2008 Repères, Maison des Arts de Malakoff, France
Paintings, 20 Greene, New York, Etats-Unis / Projet hors-les-murs de Nathalie Parienté
Espace Martiningo, Chambéry, France
- 2006 Dépeindre et repeindre, commissaires : Dominique Roussel, Nathalie Parienté, Musée de Soissons, Fondation Atelier de Sèvres, France
Le cheval dans tous ses états, Galerie Sabine Vazieux, Paris, France

Selected Group Shows

- 2020
- Sérial Couleurs, dans le cadre du festival Normandie Impressionniste, Artothèque de Caen, France
 - Over The Rainbow, Red Bull Hangar 7, Salzburg, Autriche
 - Coup de soleil, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Lille, France
 - Pink by Quand les fleurs nous sauvent, Galerie Joseph, Paris, France
 - Paysages/Présages, Commissariat : Collectif Körper, Le 6b, Saint Denis, France
 - Deux jours, Galerie Vachet-Delmas hors les murs, Galerie de l'Espace Chouleur, Nîmes, France
- 2019
- De leur temps (6), Collection Lambert, Avignon, France
 - Une idée d'une collection, Galerie Vachet-Delmas, Sauve, France
 - Luxembourg Art Week, Mazel Galerie, Luxembourg
 - Galeristes, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Carreau du Temple, Paris, France
 - Ludovic Chemarin © , Les Tanneries, Amilly, France
 - Jardinons les possibles, commissaire : Isabelle de Maison Rouge et Ingrid Pux, Grandes Serres, Pantin, France
 - Tout doit disparaître, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Lille, France
 - Collection 7, Galerie Claire Gastaud, Clermont-Ferrand, France
 - Art'up, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Grand Palais, Lille, France
 - The ARtery, Mazel Galerie, Singapour
- 2018
- Ludovic Chemarin © - Moments, MFC - Michèle Didier Gallery, Paris, France
 - Luxembourg Art Week, Mazel Galerie, Luxembourg
 - Group show, Galerie Vachet-Delmas, Sauve, France
 - Positions International Art Fair, Mazel Galerie, Luxembourg
 - Beirut Art Fair, Mazel Galerie, Beyrouth, Liban
 - Art Jakarta, Mazel Galerie, Jakarta, Indonésie
 - Grafik aus Frankreich - Die Edition Buccioli, Grafikmuseum Stiftung Schreiner, Bad Steben, Allemagne
 - Un monde désiré / A desired world, Galerie Claire Gastaud, Clermont-Ferrand, France
 - Flowers, Mazel Galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique
 - Keep calm and summer on, Mazel Galerie, Singapour
 - Galerie de portraits, Musée Louis Philippe, Eu, France
 - Un espace pour une œuvre, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bernay, France
 - Loup y es-tu ? Bestiaire et métamorphoses, commissaire : Amélie Adamo, Château de Maisons, Maisons-Laffitte, France
 - DDessin, Galerie Vachet-Delmas, Atelier Richelieu, Paris, France
 - Art'up, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Grand Palais, Lille, France
- 2017
- Le Che à Paris, Salon des Tapisseries - Hôtel de Ville, Paris, France
 - Galeristes, Galerie Provost-Hacker, Carreau du Temple, Paris, France
 - Un Dessin, Galerie Vachet-Delmas, Sauve, France
 - French Touch, Mazel Galerie, Singapour
 - Wild and free, A2Z Art Gallery, Hong Kong
 - Art Central, A2Z Art Gallery, Hong Kong
 - Her Story, commissaires: Julie Crenn et Pascal Lièvre, Maison des Arts de Malakoff, France
 - Art up, New Square Gallery, Lille, France
 - Artefiera, Mazel Galerie, Bologne, Italie
- 2016
- J'ai des doutes, Est-ce que vous en avez ?, commissaire Julie Crenn, Galerie Claire Gastaud, Clermont-Ferrand, France
 - 50 ans après Walt, Mazel Galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique
 - Under Realism, 17th Art Biennial, Kulturni Centar Pančeva, Pančevo, Russie
 - Lucca Art Fair, Doppelgaenger, Lucca, Italie
 - Reinterpretation of Visibility, Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Corée du Sud
 - Art.Fair Cologne, Mazel Galerie, Cologne, Allemagne
 - ArtVerona, Doppelgaenger, Vérone, Italie
 - Le temps de l'audace et de l'engagement – De leur temps (5), Institut d'art contemporain (IAC), Villeurbanne, France
 - The hand that draws by itself 5, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
 - Seuls/ensemble, Artothèque de Caen, France
 - Cyclicity, UNC Gallery, Seoul, Corée du Sud
 - Salo IV: Salon de l'érotisme, commissaire Laurent Quenehen, Espace Beaubourg, Paris, France
 - Real Truth, Musée National de Shi Jia Zhuang, Chine

- 2015 La main qui dessinait toute seule 4, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
 État Second, A2Z Gallery, Paris, France
 Under Realism, Galerie Da-End, Paris, France
 Bonjour La France, commissariat: Sunhee Choi, Goyang Museum, Corée du Sud
 Cabinet Da-End 05, Galerie Da-End, Paris, France
 360 Degrees, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
 Masques et portraits, Espace Martiningo, Chambéry, France
 The London Project, Galerie Magda Danysz, Londres, Royaume-Uni
 Autofiction d'une collection : Ramus del Rondeaux, Galerie Polaris, Paris, France
 Être étonné, c'est amusant, commissaire : Philippe Piguet, Chapelle de la Visitation, Thonon-les-Bains, France
 Direction Artistique, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
- 2014 Under Realism, Galerie C, Neuchâtel, Suisse
 Art and fashion, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
 Extra(ordinaire), commissaire: Pearl Cholley, Musée d'art contemporain Saint Martin, Montélimar, France
 Mal d'Africa. ego gallery, Lugano, Suisse
 Totalement Désarçonnés, commissaire: Aurélie Wacquant, Château de Maisons-Laffitte, France
 Insight, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
 Due, Galerie Doppelgaenger, Bari, Italie
 Pense-bête Collection 1, commissaires : Sandra Aubry & Sébastien Bourg, Galerie De Roussan, Paris, France
 Cadavres exquis à la plage, Projektraum Ventilator 24, Berlin, Allemagne
- 2013 Il suo Stock! ego gallery, Lugano, Suisse
 Choices, Galerie Magda Danysz, Shanghai, Chine
 Nouvelles acquisitions, Fondation Colas, Boulogne-Billancourt, France
 Quelques instants plus tard... Galerie Petits Papiers, Bruxelles, BE & Centre d'Art A cent mètres du centre du monde, Perpignan, FR
- 2012 Old story / New Twists, commissaire: Vittorio Parisi, Galerie Doppelgaenger, Bari, Italie
 Prière de toucher, commissaires: Aude Cartier et Pierre Vialle, Salon de la Maison des Arts de Malakoff, France
 Quelques instants plus tard... commissaire: Christian Balmier, Réfectoire des Cordeliers, Paris, France
 Collectionner aujourd'hui, collection Philippe Piguet, Centre d'art contemporain de Saint-Restitut, France
 Le FRAC expose au Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, FRAC Haute Normandie, Rouen, France
 Je hais les couples, commissaires: Jeanne Susplugas & A. Declercq, WJamoisartpartners, Paris, France
 P. Nicolas Ledoux, artiste invité : Gaël Davrinche, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
- 2011 Paris forever, 100ème exposition, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
 C'est le Moment d'Emprunter, Artothèque d'Annecy, France
 Berinak « House to House », un projet de Jeanne Susplugas, Saint Pée-sur-Nivelle, France
 Not for Sale, Passage de Retz, Paris, France
 Le Beau est toujours bizarre, commissaire: Philippe Piguet, Frac Haute-Normandie, Rouen, France
 Salon du dessin contemporain, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
 La collection du Musée de Toulon et la collection de Philippe Piguet, Musée de Toulon, France
- 2010 Collection 3, Fondation Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Alex, France
 Speed Painting 1, Galerie Magda Danysz, Paris, France
 Figure Toi!, FRAC Haute-Normandie hors-les-murs, Mont Saint-Aignan, France
 Salon du dessin contemporain, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
 Face à Face, FRAC Haute-Normandie hors-les-murs, Musée de Fécamp, France
 Impasse, Galerie ESCA, Nîmes, France
- 2009 The hand that draws by itself, Galerie Magda Danysz. Shanghai, Chine
 Show off, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
 (Des)accords communs, FRAC Haute Normandie, Rouen, France
 Mes 20 ans d'exposition avec vous, et... Espace Martiningo, Chambéry, France
 Ingres et les modernes, Musée Ingres, Montauban, FR & Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, Canada
 Pièce-à-part, Galerie Éric Mircher, Paris, France
 Art Paris, Galerie Sabine Vazieux, Paris, France
 Salon du dessin contemporain, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
 Docks Art Fair, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
 Selest'art, Biennale d'art contemporain, commissaire: Philippe Piguet, Sélestat, France
- 2007 Baroquissimo, Fondation Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Alex, France
 Femme, Y-es-tu ?, Art-Sénat, Paris, France
- 2006 Comme un mur, Carte blanche à Philippe Piguet, Galerie Christine Phal, Paris, France
- 2005 Etats de Peinture, commissaire: Philippe Piguet, Maison des Arts de Malakoff, France
- 2002 Le temps des rires et des chants, Galerie Nathalie Parienté, Paris, France
 Salon de Montrouge, Paris, France
 Courant d'air, Courant d'art, La galerie des Galeries, Galeries Lafayette, Paris, France
- 2001 Sincères Félicitations, commissaire: Anne Tronche, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
 Salon de novembre de Vitry, Paris, France

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