

# MONOCHROME - MOI

Opening on September, thursday 06, 2018

6 - 9 pm

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BOCLÉ

Septembre 6 - novembre 17, 2018

MAËLLE GALERIE

MEMBER OF THE CPGA AND THE GRAND BELLEVILLE

1-3 rue Ramponeau 75020 Paris

contact@maellegalerie.com

www.maellegalerie.com

+ 33[0] 6 14 80 42 00

In *Monochrome-moi (Monochrome Me)*, Jean-François Boclé creates what one might describe as a system of black boxes, or, more specifically, a series of opaque hotbeds of power that operate continuously within the element of history. Boclé revisits the legal-political treaties, the strategic alliances that configured the world of sovereignties in which we live: the Treaty of Tordessillas, for instance, signed on 7 June 1494 under the auspices of the papacy, attributing control of half the planet to Portugal and Spain. Or, for example, the Treaties of Versailles (1919), Paris (1898), and Utrecht (1713). We ultimately in substance know very little about how the negotiations crystallized, aside from their subsequent effects and their irreversible nature. The artist's undertaking subtly occupies and transforms the space of historic matter's still active subjacent vibrations. The past hasn't passed; or, in other words, history is not seen as a teleological and linear succession, but rather as a series of contingent acts superposed in layers that press the tensions of the global chaos-world.

For the *Craie blanche sur fond noir series (White Chalk on Black Background, 2018)*, the artist painted three canvases of varying sizes, then re-transcribed each of the treaties in white chalk over several days, or even weeks. Boclé wrote non-stop, erasing nothing, until he could physically no more, suffering extreme muscle cramps, inflammation, and scorched skin; until his eyes were exhausted too, blinded by the surface of the canvases as they became covered in white chalk. From this, abstract images emerge, produced by the superpositions of words; monochrome white on a black background, reminiscent of the spiritual journey of Malevitch. From a symbolical point of view, this process of abstracting the now-illegible treaties prefigures a regime of visibility that captures utterances. Here, this transformative cannibalizing operation reverses the power of enunciation. A space opens at the core of the body's exhaustion, traversed by the violence of carving up the world; a space in which a gaze stripped of its sedimentation is constructed to see at last. «A seeing unseeing », as Boclé describes it.

This force field is set in motion all the more with the video *Attachement aux quatre coins – Nkanga Mundele (Attachment to Four Corners – Nkanga Mundele, 2017)*, a reference to the 1955 Bandung Conference. This coming together of twenty-three «Third World» countries marked the emergence of an international force of resistance, and later the Non-Aligned Movement. It called, among other things, for the independence of the colonized nations and the fight against all forms of imperialism. In his video, Boclé knots the flags of the countries represented, the tying and knotting perhaps gesturing to an alliance to be continued. Although this polychromatic work stands out from the rest of the exhibition, it would be wrong to see it as a sign of a unitary counter-force. It tends, rather, to express a force *between* the centres of domination, a force whose filiation is not fashioned on a Western – that is, «transparentist» – conception of the world. «Transparency is no longer reflected in the depths of the mirror in which Western humanity saw the world in its image; in the depths of the mirror there is now opacity.»

It is indeed this opacity that we find in the *Je ne savais pas (I Didn't Know, 2005-2017)* sound installation, which plays on all the possible formulations of the French language that use the verb *savoir* (to know): «he must have known something about it. He couldn't have known. We always knew so...». It exhausts language, surpasses it, breaking with the desire for clarity, punctuating *knowing* to the very depths of the well of knowledge. Hence the title of the exhibition which, to me, echoes the right to opacity so dear to Glissant : the right for us all to keep our «shade», our *opacitas*, that is, the zones of not knowing that resist all attempts at categorization. In this respect, *Monochrome-moi (Monochrome Me)* is less a homogenizing imperative utterance than a call, a breath in the heterogenous weave of the present.

Mirna Boyadjian

<sup>1</sup> Édouard Glissant, « Transparence et opacité » dans *Poétique de la relation*, Paris : Gallimard, p.125.

