

PRESS RELEASE

Jules de Balincourt
Parallel Universe

7 October 2012 – 27 January 2013



Parallel Universe is a body of work which Jules de Balincourt has realized specifically for Collezione Maramotti. The five new paintings presented in the exhibition have never been shown before, and now become part of the Collection. As is often the case with de Balincourt, the paintings were all worked on at the same time, in the same studio, allowing them to gradually come into dialogue with one another as a direct result of his studio practice. The artist's approach to his work is largely intuitive: preferring that the paintings evolve organically as he goes back and forth between them, and they take shape individually and as an ensemble.

The paintings in *Parallel Universe* can thus be seen as forming a kind of loosely interlocked map, one that explores and charts the relationships between representation and abstraction, and the act of painting. The image of the map in the artist's previous work has been frequently discussed in terms of its political and cartographic dimensions. But *Big Globe Painting* and *Globe Faces* – the map-based works presented here – de Balincourt

frees himself from any obligation to accurately represent the world in terms of continents, countries, and borders. Attempting instead to render a more universal sense of time and space, the artist reminds us that we also inhabit inner worlds, and he arrives at a representation that is truer to life than mere geography. These images, which verge on the abstract, as much of his recent work does, are symbolic rather than diagrammatic, and can thus be seen as representing a need for liberation, not only as de Balincourt moves increasingly from figuration towards the abstract, but also in terms of freedom from the modes of rational and objective thought.

Waiting Tree is an unmistakable emblem of the ways in which process is central to de Balincourt's work, of his way of proceeding without any pre-established plan, accepting the surprise of the transformations he encounters as an image comes to life. In the original painting, de Balincourt had presented a group of young musicians performing during an Occupy protest. As he went back to the painting over time, this image was progressively and almost entirely cancelled out, its only remaining trace being the tree, representing life, protection, and growth. Charged with an evanescent/psychedelic palette, the otherwise naturalistic scene became phantasmagorical, bathed by a spectral light in which absence and presence intermingle. The inhabitants of the scene, still regarded as agents of change, exist in an in-between space, one of waiting and transition, and of passage. As with his abstract mapping, de Balincourt represents in this work "a more general space of anxiety and hope," a sense of place and dislocation.

Psychedelic Soldier, can be thought of as a kind of self-portrait by an artist who never overtly represents himself in his work. It serves as a paradigm for the exploration of the painterly techniques of "camouflage," a hiding in plain sight, an immersion with one's surroundings. Lending the artist's work a complex transparency, camouflage can be thought of as a metaphor for the act of painting in general, as well as the overlay between the images in this exhibition. The face of the soldier and the surface of the globe, for example, can be thought of as different ways of rendering a landscape or a space of contention. For de Balincourt, the wearing of camouflage in a combat zone renders soldiers even more, rather than less, visible, and absurdly they thus become potential targets. This painting, then, is a protest against the absurdity of war.

Burst Painting, a radiant explosion that is central to the group of five paintings, is identified by the artist as the exhibition's anchor. Related pictorially to "action painting" and the '50s as well as to Pop and the '60s, it is more than a hybrid image. Seen alongside the artists's map and globe paintings, the explosion in *Burst Painting* appears to represent the Big Bang, the birth of the universe. And yet for de Balincourt it is both an image of creation and destruction, and can be read in terms of our inherent

strengths or weakness, to either cataclysmically self-implode or resonate positively outward. All of de Balincourt's work hinges on a polarity of forces and energy, and how it may be applied. He attempts to capture "the utopian/dystopian potential in all the images, as well as in [ourselves], in our ability to be swayed in either direction." As he himself has remarked: "Mixing abstract-based and representational work is [a] duality that I need to explore.... I think of the abstraction as coming from a primordial subconscious state, and [of] the image and [narrative] as coming from the more rational, conscious mind. [...] So just as I try to be open to transmitting images from both a conscious and subconscious state, I want viewers to approach the work as openly as possible."

The exhibition is accompanied by an artist's book, published by Silvana Editoriale, with a critical text by Mario Diacono and a conversation between Jules de Balincourt and Bob Nickas, an American critic who has taken an interest in the artist's work for over ten years.

Private view by invitation: 6 October 2012, h. 6.00pm. The artist will be present.

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The exhibition can be visited, free of charge, during the opening hours of the permanent collection:

Thursday and Friday 2.30pm - 6.30pm

Saturday and Sunday 10.30am - 6.30pm

Closed on 25-26 December 2012, and on 1 and 6 January 2013

Info

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