

Natascha Mehlhop Gallery

Manon Bara

Trop d'amour

17 September – 24 October 2009

Vernissage: Thursday, 17 September, 6-9 pm

Manon Bara's oeuvre is both painting and about painting. It is as if she were an actor who talks in character and then stands at the side and comments on the play.

Bara's canvases are large in scale; spare in composition and extremely colourful in palette, with the paint applied with powerful gestures. She matches impressive paint-handling with a dose of purposely humble de-skilling, as beautifully demonstrated in her 'Cathedral Mountain' series where she dominantly applied the paint with her fingers and let the paint drop freely. Here, she comes very close to a watercolour effect allowing at the same time for an abstract reading. Bara likes to stretch the limits of the medium not only concerning the technique (in 2005 she produced an impressive series of fire paintings), but also when it comes to the setting. In 2006 she used paint to turn several cars into landscapes or narrative scenes on wheels.

'The Bear' from 2007 is part of her 'Disenchantment' series that she created during her stay in Germany. In this outstanding series she depicts animals and landscapes with an underlying feeling of menace and fugacity rooted in a distinctive momentariness. The bear is masterly drawn in his strong physicality and yet there is a certain melancholic air about him: he seems to wave goodbye to the spectator. Bara's paintings are unerringly on-target in their odd mixture of knowing charm and destabilising cruelty. With impressive subtlety she is balancing between a profound joy of life and its inherent tragedy. Bara says that she is trying to see death in rose tones and love in black. Still, most paintings end up with a positive spin – an aura of acceptance of whatever has happened as perhaps best put into practice in her series of exuberant floral wreaths that she depicted on the occasion of her boyfriend's death.

Manon Bara is a young French artist, born in 1985. She received a Diploma in Fine Arts from ESBA Academy of Arts in Angers, France. Having always been attracted by the German Expressionist way of painting, Bara went to Dresden in 2006 to study with Professor Hans Peter Adamski at the HbK Art Academy where she had a rigorous training in drawing. She will graduate with an M.F.A. in 2010 at Brussels' Art Academy 'Abbaye de la Cambre'. She currently lives and works in Brussels.

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