

MICHEL FRÈRE

September 28, 2019 - November 30, 2019

Opening: September 27, 6.30 p.m.

Galleria Gentili is pleased to inaugurate the new exhibition season with a solo show by Michel Frère (1961, Brussels -1999, Morlanwelz).

This is one of the reasons the paintings are so thick. They are an unending accumulation of errors and disillusionments. But, I guess, always done with a certain kind of Utopian spirit.

Michel Frère

Michel Frère's research seems to have been cut short all too soon, and at a time when his work was still given little space and received little attention owing to the kind of painting he practiced.

So for all those who had the fortune to know him, it is impossible not to be racked by the certainty that it deserved to have much more space than it was actually given.

Michel Frère painted for around fifteen years, commencing in the mid-1980s.

This was at a moment in history which, on both sides of the Atlantic, saw a return to painting.

While at the outset Michel Frère produced figurative works emblematic of that decade – somewhere between the Transavanguardia and Neo-Expressionism, it was in the paint itself that he found a road he was never to abandon.

A great admirer of Poussin and Constable, Frère painted pictures in which abstraction was transformed into landscape.

His method of painting in oil entailed a sequential application of thick layers of pigment, animated by a clean movement that resulted in a superimposition of the directions of the brushwork.

Michel Frère also had the habit of framing his large compositions under glass as if he wished to place the viewer at a distance from the intensity of those strokes of the brush.

Each of his works required a 'violent', lasting and physical effort. The colour is imbued with dominant tones that are roused in the multitude of details.

Each work is a world, at once a physical and temporal one: the embodiment of a total involvement.

We often compare his works with those of Eugène Leroy, whom Frère greatly admired and with whom he shared this singular interest in painting of 'thickness'.

But Leroy never abandoned the subject and his works do not have the lyrical quality of Michel Frère's.

To see the works of Michel Frère in Tuscany again takes on its full significance when one takes account of the long period he spent in Montecatini, a place where he loved to paint.

The tonalities that characterized this period bear witness to the way in which Michel Frère's abstraction is connected to the physical and mental landscape in which he was immersed.

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It is in this exceptional series that his ability to capture the material quality of the world and its vibrations is most visible and it is here too that the spirit of utopia – which never left him – resounds with most power.

Text by Anne Pontégnie

MICHEL FRÈRE, is a Belgian painter, born in Brussels in 1961 and died in Morlanwelz in 1999. His works have been exhibited with Galleria Gentili, Florence in 1993, 1995, 1997 and 2005. Among the selected exhibitions: a solo exhibition at the Kunst Rai 86 in Amsterdam, Holland in 1986 and at the C.I.A.P. in Hasselt, Belgium in 1987. Retrospective shows has been dedicated to him by several institutions in Belgium, such as the Palais Des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi in 1996, the MAC's Grand-Hornu, Hornu in 2002 and the Musée Dhondt-Dhaenens of Deurle, in 2011.