

Fabrice Hybert: Galerie Anne De Villepoix - Paris - Brief Article

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Literary critic Lucien Dallenbach, who has previously written on Balzac, Claude Simon, and the Nouveau Roman, among other things, recently proposed a new metaphor for contemporary society: What if today's world took the form of a mosaic? Indeed, this ancient art is making a strong comeback of late: From the patchwork screens of CNN to the parceled urbanism of New York and Marseilles, from models for the structure of genes to the covers of magazines, or by way of the fragmented and kaleidoscopic narratives of today's novels, the mosaic has imposed itself as a form that structures our world, superseding such old models as the melting pot, the Deleuzian rhizome, and the network. A fragmented world, but one that valorizes each of its fragments--singular elements, cells living autonomously in the protean whole.

It may be no coincidence, then, that a mosaic was exactly what Fabrice Hybert presented in September. His show was a major event in the Parisian fall season: One of the best artists on the French scene, the recipient of a Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 1997, Hybert inaugurated Anne de Villepoix's new gallery in the Marais, presenting paintings, objects, and videos that demonstrated with remarkable lightness of touch the extreme openness of his artistic practice. For example, he did the work of a gardener with two playful variants on the art of bonsai: on one side, the liberated bonsai (that is, one taken out of its pot and placed on a small hill of earth); on the other side, a bonsai trimmed in French style, a hybrid of Japanese culture and the gardens of Versailles. In the back room, a pornographic video (*Vendanges-energie* [Energy harvest], 2001), meant to be the kickoff for a series of X-rated films made by artists, was rather disappointing but certainly broadened the spectrum of Hybert's artistic activities, while the canvas C'Hybert-Pshitt, 2001--phonetically, cybershit--outlined the plan for a video game in which you play with the encounter of air and water.

But what's the connection among works and practices that seem so far removed from one another? This is where the mosaic comes in. To those who wonder what Hybert is doing or who are under the impression that his work is scattered, the artist responds with his masterful *Peinture homeopathique* no 18 (Homeopathic painting no. 18), 2000, a vast mural mosaic composed of 800 ceramic tiles, on which he has assembled about two years of sketches and projects under way: varied and deceptively wayward research, whether scientific, meteorological, or formal--a work in progress, the ideal state of things for what we might refer to as Hybertactivity. This mosaic, then, is a parceled world in which every detail makes sense and asserts its singularity, a landscape that is at once coherent and shattered, and that

ends with the drawing of a tree whose branches allow us to link, ramify, and reconnect even the most rhizomatic of oeuvres.

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