

MICKAËL DOUCET

Poétique de l'espace [Poetics of Space]

Exhibition : January 18 – March 2, 2024

Private View : Thursday 18 January 2024, 4-8pm with the artist in attendance

Curated by : Agnès Biro



Mickaël Doucet, *Le petit sanctuaire*, 2022
Oil and charcoal on canvas
44.8 x 63.7 in.

For his second solo show at Galerie Virginie Louvet, French artist Mickaël Doucet returns with a series of eight canvases, all created between 2022 and 2023. Entitled *Poetics of Space*, the exhibition borrows its title from French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's much-acclaimed work, published in 1957 at the height of the philosophical literary movement known as phenomenology, in which he explores the imaginary dimension of our relationship to space.

A silence laden with memories

*For our house is our corner of the world.
As has often been said, it is our first universe.*

— Gaston Bachelard, 1957 (p32)

Although the interiors depicted by Mickaël Doucet are not directly populated by human figures, they are no less inhabited by the trace of their presence in space-time. Some colored pencils, a radio, a camera: the existence of a form of life manifests itself through these compositions of objects, like ruins of a past or possible futures, which the observer can himself reconstitute or imagine. Indeed, the interplay of materials, shapes and lines, the horizon that can be seen in the distance, the emptiness between objects are all elements that guide our gaze and invite contemplation. While the image appears suspended, frozen, the exotic plants, the shadows on the ground and the breeze gently blowing on a jacket hanging on a coat hanger bring us back to the reality of time passing.

Longing for grey

Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain treasures of former days.

— Gaston Bachelard, 1957 (p33)

But the series of paintings presented by Mickaël Doucet takes the space-time confusion even further. In addition to his usual color palette, the artist introduces a new technique: charcoal on oil on canvas. The contrast between color and shades of gray, industrial architecture and contemporary architecture raises a new ambivalence. On closer inspection, the texture of the charcoal on the canvas recalls the grain of silver photography, whose character is well known to arouse a sense of nostalgia in its viewer. Furthermore, such a photographic process generally requests from the person capturing the image to take their time, wait for the ideal light, find the perfect angle so that the image captured by the camera is harmonious, and this is ultimately what Doucet succeeds in doing with his paintings. It is no coincidence that the artist is particularly interested in Japan, renowned for its Zen culture and minimalist interiors. After all, isn't design the quest to harmonize the human environment?

For Gaston Bachelard, the poet is one who is able to create images that will resonate with us, readers, because their images touch on our primitiveness, our origins. Mickaël Doucet's pictorial work is indeed that of a poet. It is an invitation to pause, a meditation, a kind of interruption, a breath that lets us take the necessary time to feel what it's really like to be alive.

Mickaël Doucet was born in 1974 in Blois. He lives and works in Paris.

A true self-taught artist, Mickaël Doucet took up the colossal challenge of learning to paint by reproducing/painting «in the manner» of the great masters of art history, before finding his own artistic line. While a trip to India and numerous encounters launched him on new research into techniques and materials, it was in the New School of Leipzig, and more particularly with Matthias Weischer, that he drew his deepest inspiration.