

Press release

David Raffini

Amours endormies/Sleeping love

March 6 - April 29, 2021

David Raffini's paintings very often begin with a story. *Amours endormies* is the story of a mythological character lying on a beach at dusk. The artist used to tell it to his daughters to put them to sleep, just as thousands of parents do every night for their children, here and there, all over the world. Except that not many of these stories are inspired by the death of Caravaggio and Pasolini (who both ended their lives on a beach) and even fewer become large images painted on canvas. The painting is not at all bucolic as its title might suggest. No sleepers, no heroes or heroines lying on the ground. Despite the luminous halo in the center, the image is almost abstract. The landscape is only a sensation, an impression. It is only a pretext. The narrative is instead hidden in the folds, stains or ridges that appear when the gaze goes beyond the limits of the representation.

Like all the other paintings presented in the exhibition (*Pardina, L'Atlantide, Après la pluie* or others), the canvases were abused because they were trampled on, rubbed, burned, scraped, sanded, exposed to dust, sun, rain or even put in the washing machine. Some are spread on the floor, others are fixed to the wall with a frame, all are made of cloth bought in ordinary fabric shops or found (such as stage curtains) in various stocks. Sometimes, the images come first, before the modifications to the canvas. Otherwise, it is the modifications that make the image. Everything can also be mixed in a short time, in one night when the chemistry of the paint blends with the natural elements of the studio. The processes can also last weeks, months, without graphics or applied methods. A work can be resumed, altered again until it is erased. As he himself says, his paintings are "disfigured" by their own life. Each one is an accumulation of fortuitous or constrained experiences, inconveniences or delicate touches.

This is how David Raffini paints with very few brushes. He instead uses tools intended for sculpture: a grinder, a blowtorch, even a hydraulic press. He is not the first, of course, to think outside of the factual clichés of the studio painter with their paint brushes and sponges in hand. But his thwarted relationship to sculpture is quite unique. Some of them are presented in the exhibition (*Souches*): large rolls of paper 140 cm high by 20 to 40 cm in diameter, burned extensively by a plasma cutting machine. But, where the sculptures attest to the violence of a gesture, of a visible and assertive action, the paintings are the result of slower, more tenuous processes, revealing a certain aesthetic calm, or at least a non-exuberant anxiety that has found its stability, like the calm after a storm. Being raw without being brutal.

Eric Mangion (February 2021)

Director of the centre d'art de la Villa Arson in Nice and Editorial Director of the magazine Switch (on Paper)
switchonpaper.com

David Raffini (1982 - Bastia, lives and works in Brussels) graduated from the Villa Arson in 2007 and won the 17th Ricard Foundation Prize - in duo with Florian Pugnaire, in 2015. In 2017, at the FRAC Corse he created "Processamenti", a personal exhibition revealing the path of his creative process. In duo with Florian Pugnaire, he participated in the exhibition "Dynasty" at the Palais de Tokyo and together they created a special installation in the courtyard of la maison rouge. David Raffini has had several solo exhibitions in New York, Saint-Etienne, Nice and Paris. "Amours endormies" is his 2nd solo exhibition at Galerie Papillon. His work is part of the public collections of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the FRAC Corse and the Centre Pompidou (with Florian Pugnaire).