

EXHIBITION

A visionary's spirit in his paintings

Oscar Niemeyer is eternal for the painter Jacques Benoit. Benoit's focus on Brasilia magnifies the architect's œuvre, adding a dimension inspired by human diversity.

Oscar Niemeyer would have smiled, would he have seen anything related to him exhibited in some church. The transience of this fun idea bemuses Jacques Benoit, whose paintings are hung in L'Atelier, until Saturday evening. "Communist and atheist, he was not an enemy of paradox: we owe him the most beautiful cathedral of the modern world!"

The work of the Parisian painter is in symbiose with that of the Brazilian architect who "invented shapes that do not imitate anything."

His artistic approach probably seduced the designer of Brasilia during their meeting in 2004: the latter devoted four hours of

"Since 1997, I've used all possible techniques before finding my way with vinylics, that offer a matt texture and aspect"

Jacques Benoit

filmed interview to the painter on the genesis of the capital of Brazil. A city out of nowhere in very short time, between 1957 to 1960, under the leadership of President Juscelino Kubitschek.

It was still under construction when Belmondo went there by car while adventuring in "The Man from Rio". First shock for Jacques Benoit as a child:



Here the painter says goodbye to Brazil to devote himself to Orly Airport's modernist architecture, but Brasilia will catch him back there.

The Cathedral's forty meters high hyperboloid. Which remained a skeleton for twenty years (the works on the site were interrupted during the Military Dictatorship, and later because of lack of funding), and it is preminent as a reoccurring leitmotiv in the vinylic canvas that the painter dedicated to the architecture of the Modern Move-

vement. "For the Fiftieth Anniversary of Brasilia, I wanted to pay tribute to the city's site, that was truly an Wild West epic." Naked men and women interact with a city that is as ruthless as sensual. Blue, red, yellow bodies ... "A non-mimetic color base, as stated by art historian Gilbert Luigi, with a purpose to not reproduce reality as it appears, in a

context of a kind of painting that is realistic otherwise. This allows me to introduce my personal touch. Because we're all very different and similar at the same time, thus it is a way of showing human diversity."

Here, the curves of a female body echo those of the National Museum - "A globe with a ring of Saturn" - there, near the Presi-

dential Palace under a starry night sky, Kubitschek catches the Southern Cross: "A present to offer Niemeyer, to mark the architect's one hundred year anniversary."

When Jacques Benoit starts working on other projects and themes, Brasilia catches him back ... Niemeyer's death in 2012 inspired him the polyptych "A Ausencia (The Absence)": a black circle - "The magma from which we all proceeded, undifferentiated" - then two panels showing the bay window of the architect's penthouse, with a view on the crowned top of Brasilia's cathedral on the beach - "To summarize his life", and finally a white circle for "The survival of the spirit."

"Niemeyer is not dead. His spirit remains embodied within his work - immense. The man is just absent." Here, the artist offers the expression of a spirituality "independent of any religious feelings."

Moreover, his stories between buildings and human shapes echo Niemeyer's philosophy. Jacques Benoit pushes the viewer to "see."

How does react the public coming to L'Atelier? "People love the exhibition. They love the paintings but also the process. It warms my heart!" Jacques Benoit thanks Brigitte Milonas, head of exhibitions at the Cultural Department of the City, for this invitation to "show his work" in a decor as serene as his former church is.

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