

1. Painting with bountiful, dazzling energy

Remember this name: Jeff Kowatch is one of the greats in today's art world, with works that enthrall the viewer as they trace out his personal path towards the sublime. The Brussels première opens at Véronique Menu's Galerie Faider.

Fortunately, we can still be totally astonished by a body of work, and a pictorial one at that. This art does not arise from any particular movement or current trend. It follows a path, instead, through both the modern and the contemporary, without heeding prevalent fashion or seeking out novelty for its own sake. It is an art that set its course a good while ago, and continues to pursue this direction ever further, with a drive towards continuous variation and a mastery that can safely be called remarkable. It is an art that brings together the qualities of a bold personality, a singular approach, and - let's not mince our words - technical perfection. It is an art full of meaning, infused with a rare energetic power and ability to dazzle. I mean this in the best possible way, as each of Kowatch's paintings not only captures the gaze, but, in a certain way, totally swallows up the viewer, body and soul. Are they exceptional works of art? They are indeed, without a doubt.

Don't try to pigeonhole his art or work out where to place it, in which popular niche it might fit... It takes its place, fully and unreservedly, in the domain of great painting, a vein of painting that has no real age, even as it remains grounded in its specific era. Such quality painting stimulates and awakens the senses, overpowers its viewer and induces a state of emotional receptivity, wonder and inwardness. We are not in the arena of ideas, evocations, illustrations or concepts here, but rather plunged into an art that cannot be decoded simply by reason, knowledge or general intelligence alone. We must connect with the sensitive element within ourselves and accept that not everything is reducible to a known quantity, that mystery is rich in meaning, and its infinitude is a quite incomparable trove, that what eludes human reason can be the source of true pleasure and inner questioning, of a well-being that transports us beyond contingencies, into another state which is at once admiring, touching and inquisitive.

Jeff Kowatch's paintings are neither bravura pieces, nor staggering stunts. They are abstract paintings handled with a dexterity that can pass unnoticed, as the image we encounter emanates its all-pervasive power, gently, with generous radiance. This abstraction, with its very delicate use of blurred forms, thus places its material in a sort of weightless space which is simultaneously nebulous and bubbling; it springs from the unformed and the unknown, from some fantastical journey in the world of color, in which we are all too happy to lose ourselves. These are paintings that resemble no others, despite the obvious temptation to place them within some artistic family. In fact, the nearest comparisons that come to mind might be Monet, with his pictorial wanderings on the verges of non-figurative, or Bonnard's luminous explosions of color, such is the joy evoked in each painting. This is a hymn to life and painting, in a tender and beguiling orchestration. Lest the viewer should forget, tenderness never killed anyone. The artist draws us in with every brush stroke, every unusual shade of colour, every bold and unexpected nuance.

Jeff Kowatch is an impressive colorist who shows elegance and an authentic, elevating nobility of art which allows him to lift his painting to inaccessible heights. From these heights, paradoxically, it can better reach us, bringing marvels fit to inspire life anew, spurring those emotive flights that mark out the human experience.