

## LOHLE CHAUSSE LES BOTTES DE 2000 LIEUES

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From time to time - usually with intervals of one, sometimes two or three decades- the art of painting explodes, or rather erupts like a volcano under the pressure of its burning centre (and, as we knew all along, volcanoes are never really extinct) Since early XXth century this phenomenon has given us the following movements: fauvism and across the Rhine, its equivalent: Die Brücke; later abstract surrealism in Denmark, triggered off by Egill Jacobsen with his painting "Accumulation"; afterwards abstract expressionism in the USA, one of its leaders Hans Hoffmann, who had participated 40 years before in the early expressionism in Germany; later still, automatism from Quebec; then Cobra and its late offshoots. All of them tore apart pictorial form and this was manifested by colour splashes on the canvas - and thus on the public - as if painting had thrown itself overboard, rumbling in its own crater, as if each time there was a "final eruption" in which the art of painting exploded in order to question itself. There were floods of colour, streams of fire as a glance over the shoulder towards Rimbaud, and always at the craters' edges one or more painters were present. Indeed, in order to participate in the eruptions and to determine their limits, competent and courageous vulcanologists are needed, and obviously these are painters.

In the spring of 2000 Michel Lohle is one of these vulcanologists, an expert in playing with fire (see "Fire source", 2000) who nevertheless is always in control of the situation. He can be compared to Asger Jorn or Riopelle at the end of the forties, when there was talk of "catastrophe painting", a term which was used afterwards in the film world.

Michel Lohle, this Argentinian who has chosen to live in Amsterdam, is running risks, but he is always in control: as we can understand from the title of his work "bimillénaires" he has a hidden direction: his interest is foremost in the experimental truth of his art, much more than its mere seductive power. That's why his colours are so fierce that they are closer to the scream (think of Munch) and even to howling, than to murmuring or to song.

This search for the experimental truth is his philosophical pasture "par excellence" and it allows him to continue his personal itinerary with the intrepidity of a tightrope walker: in the early nineties he was immersed in research into "collective painting" with his friends who are also mine: Lina, Flores Knistoff, Leal Labrin, Tony Pusey and others (the participants varied from one work to another). This caused some to utter the name "New Cobra". But a "New Cobra" was out of the question: something very different was going on here; nobody was trying to bring back to life a movement which ceased to exist in 1951. If I have strong sensations today when viewing Lohle's works (e.g. "dialogue of a spectre" or "explosive phenomenon"), sensations as strong (and not only "agreeable") as those I experienced in 1946 when I first saw Jorn's works with Atlan, it's not only because the painting is likewise violent, or that the colour is likewise harsh, or almost unbearable. No, these strong experiences happen because in both cases I was immersed in the pictorial mystery, within its incandescent magma. This is what touches us, beyond colour which is, after all, in this case only the visible part of the volcano.

The intensity of being, and at the same time the intense experience of the world, is revealed in Nolde and Kandinsky in the '1910s, in Mortensen in 1943, in Jorn in 1946, in De Kooning or Hans Hoffmann in 1950, in Raoul Hausmann in 1960 and in Lohle in 2000. It is an automatic stream, through lyrical abstraction, surrealism and Cobra. To dare create this kind of turbulence implied great risks, and the wild escapade was not always commercially rewarded as it was for instance with De Kooning in his last years (but who could certify that it was not at the cost of the "experimental truth" of his work?). Miguel Lohle knows these things and he also knows this is not the best of times for this kind of attack; indeed a great part of the public is mainly interested in "installations" and other: videos, gimmicks and gadgets. Painting of the 2nd half of the XXth century, whether abstract or figurative, surrealistic or not, requires from the spectator a different kind of imaginative contribution. Michel Lohle knows all this, but for him it doesn't matter: he pursues his leap of faith on the mouth of the volcano with the same flame, the same intelligence, the same madness, the same eye - in a way the eye of Michael Strogoff who was saved by his tears. Because of his perseverance in braving the worst perils I appreciate him and I love his painting.