

VALENTIN CARRON

“Allô, Allô Alluvium”

November 7 - December 7, 2019

The exhibition « “Allô, Allô Alluvium” » is accessible from Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6:30pm at 51 Brook Street, London.

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In 1972, The Modern Lovers sang:

*Well some people try to pick up girls
And get called assholes
This never happened to Pablo Picasso
He could walk down your street
And girls could not resist his stare and
So Pablo Picasso was never called an asshole.*

*Well he was only 5'3"
But girls could not resist his stare
Pablo Picasso never got called an asshole
Not in New York*

For this exhibition, Valentin Carron (born in Fully in 1977) reminds us that the forms of modernity are rich in alluvium.

“Allô, Allô Alluvium”

A phone call, like the laconic announcement of a final, greyish, earthy wave.

Valentin Carron has covered one wall with a dull surface onto which a collage has been applied. Elsewhere in the space, he is exhibiting two crosses and three mid-sized sculptures. In this way, he is playing (just this once) with the theme of the exhibition. Offering a dull frame to a series of mid-sized, slightly unbearable objects in a London gallery could look like nonchalant cynicism. But Valentin Carron's project is much more ambitious than that. With violent unpleasantness, he is getting back to the forms of our modernity, purposely stirring up a few of our common ghosts.

Valentin Carron doesn't hide his spirituality. *Disgust and Tonic* and *Apples and Pears*, from a series of resin crosses apparently covered in coloured ceramic, offer a sincerely familiar and yet consciously tough image of his hopes. If he has nothing to defend, he has nothing more to doubt. For him, being an artist means daring to confront your own symbols and accepting the risk of their banality.

Valentin uses these symbols and clues of our daily failings to make his particularly careful collages. An attentive collector, he collects, reproduces, and cuts up a vast dictionary of found images that are equally funny and cruel. In the collage *Ten Fingers*, the components come together in compositions as aggressive and displaced as their modern precedents. Carron explodes a whole chronological barrier. His work reconnects with the mean but salutary virulence of Dada and

Surrealism. In this he tries again to kill off emphatic modernism.

This violence—which he unfolds with all his heart but without any real illusions—can be found in his recent sculptures. In *merci Gustave*, *Merci gustave*, *merci gustavE*, it is the Eiffel Tower that is the designated scapegoat. Reduced to an outline, a rough cut-out in painted scrap metal, it rises fragilely from foundations that appear to be too large for it. Like other ghosts who haunt our bad taste, it seems to struggle to survive the flood that sweeps along the brackish waters of our contemporary dreams.

With the sharpest intuition, Valentin Carron is revealing an important moment in our perception of our history of visual forms and its associated values.

During the 35 days of flooding that swept Paris in 1910, photographers could capture in the water covering the tracks of the Champ de Mars train station a mirror image of the Eiffel Tower. Postcards at the time reproduced this effect of amplifying the modern. Photography revealed what artists had already perceived: that the tower moved just like the other forms of modernity that were gradually impacting everybody's destiny.

But for some months now, a barrier of armoured glass has separated the monument from the city. The Eiffel Tower, a victim of rising levels of tourism, of the desire to control public space, and of its own destiny as a supposedly threatened symbol, has become isolated and fixed in place. This transparent wall became a target during the recent demonstrations in Paris, as if the protesters saw the wall as clearly reducing the Eiffel Tower to a simple outline, out of reach and gathering dust.

Valentin Carron's works deal with this perhaps still collective destiny along with certain forms of modernity. If his conclusions are often cruel, at times willfully disillusioned, they are not heavy for all that. As The Modern Lovers sing, if we have little chance of being Picasso, the great prowess of the Eiffel Tower is still to rise up within a cylinder of air heavier than the steel used in the tower's construction.

Samuel Gross

Born in 1977 in Martigny (Switzerland), Valentin Carron lives and works there.

His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions: at the Kunsthalle in Bern, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Conservera Centro de Arte Contemporáneo in Ceutí/Murcia, the Kunsthalle Zürich, the Swiss Institute in New York, the Chisenhale Gallery in London (with Mai-Thu Perret), the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève (with Mai-Thu Perret), the Fri Art in Freiburg; and group exhibitions: at the SculptureCenter in New York, the mudac in Lausanne, the Migros Museum Für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich, the Kunsthau in Aarau, the Consortium of Dijon, the Rubell Family Collection in Miami, the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne, the CAPC–musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux.

Valentin Carron represented Switzerland at the 55th Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2013.