

*Albert Baronian proudly presents the first personal exhibition by Jean Bedez held at the Baronian art gallery. On this occasion, the artist will be presenting a new range of drawings, including the second opus of a collection dedicated to the constellations of the zodiac entitled "Aurora aux doigts de rose" (Eos with the Rosy Fingers), which shares its name with the exhibition.*

In ancient Greece, Eos was represented as a goddess with rosy fingers, who accompanied the sun in a chariot with two horses. Homer subsequently named these 'horses of the sun' Lampos (shine) and Phaeton (brilliant). They appear as immaculate figures at the centre of the drawing, surrounded by water vapour, which creates a virginal explosion of light, thereby transforming the antique surroundings of the Roman baths into something altogether different. In total contrast with this image of splendour, the fissured sun riddled with interconnected stumps and roots conjures up the image of a pattern of stars, firmly placing the scene under the zodiac sign of the Eagle, the bird that belonged to Zeus. It was also Zeus who granted Tithon, one of the mortal lovers of the goddess Eos, his status of immortality. From an astrological point of view, the constellation of the Eagle is situated in close proximity to the Square of Pegasus, Zeus' mount and the symbol of poetic inspiration. In this collection, the artist invites us to personally revisit these ancient myths, which also reminds us of a few of his earlier works, including *"La constellation de la Vierge"* (The Constellation of Virgo) and *"Les quatre cavaliers de l'apocalypse de Saint-Jean"* (The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse of Saint John).

In *"De Ordine"* we are presented with a bull fighting spectacle held in the marble and stucco hall of a grand hotel, with the lobby area just about visible in the background.

In the ancient religions of the Mediterranean region, the bull was regarded as the incarnation of the invisible force that fertilises nature. This sacred animal was identified as a sacrifice to the gods. As it symbolises brute force, it is also associated with symbolic characters of combat, both in Christian and pagan symbolism. Evocative of the temptation of Saint Augustine, the combat in the arena invokes both fascination and repulsion in the souls of the spectators, which is precisely what makes this fighting scene so strange, because there are no spectators present. The artist replaces the arena with the refined decorations of the hotel, which almost looks like a palace, despite the disparate architecture and furniture. The evanescent halo enveloping this space provides it with a timeless feel. This is the eternal truth of the contribution of evil to the human soul and the order of the world, a concept also touched upon by the barely visible tattoo on the rump of the left bull - a discrete tribute to Cavalier Bernin and his pastel drawing *"Le temps dévoile la vérité"* (Time Uncovers the Truth).

The themes interweaving Jean Bedez' work are all somehow connected to the history of representation of religious and political power. With his drawings and sculptures, he attempts to deconstruct and unveil de codes and conventions surrounding the construction of imagery and instead proposes representations of the contemporary world that function as modern allegories.

By producing a collection of works that is fully in tune with modern age, the artist develops a contrast with the ancient techniques and knowledge of the art of drawing, represented for instance by the humanistic themes and skilful paintings of the Renaissance.

Another example is *"Le Cénacle"* (The Cenacle), a work from 2010 that also features in the exhibition, in which the artist revisits an art-historical monument that was a real turning point in the representation of religious subjects. In accordance with the humanistic values of the time, the human characters are very much the central subject of any painting. This concept can also be found in Leonardo da Vinci's works of art. The Italian master paid great attention to the faces and expressions (the so-called "movements of the soul") of Christ and the apostles, features which are hidden behind a white halo in Bedez' work. By contrast, Bedez applies the same care to perspective and it almost seems as if he wants to present us with an X-ray of the original, even going so far as to copying da Vinci's famous sfumato effect by superimposing layers of graphite. But whereas the artist attempts to restore the details that have disappeared through successive restorations and the effect of time, he simultaneously indulges in an exercise of hide and seek, blurring the human figure to such a degree that it eventually becomes impossible to make out.

Article by Muriel Enjalran, art critic

*Jean Bedez was born in Colmar in 1976, and now lives and works in Paris. In 2014, he held a personal exhibition in collaboration with the Galerie Suzanne Tarasiève, entitled 'L'Art du combat' (The Art of Combat). His work was also recently exhibited as part of Drawing Now Paris in collaboration with the Galerie Suzanne Tarasiève (2015), at the Biennale d'Art Contemporain du Havre (2012), in the FRAC Corse and the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Ajaccio (2012), during the Prix Canson 2011 and in the CRAC Languedoc Roussillon de Sète (2010).*