

ROTWAND

Sabina Kohler & Bettina Meier-Bickel

Lutherstrasse 34, CH-8004 Zürich, T/F +41 44 240 30 55/56

[www.rotwandgallery.com](http://www.rotwandgallery.com), [info@rotwandgallery.com](mailto:info@rotwandgallery.com)

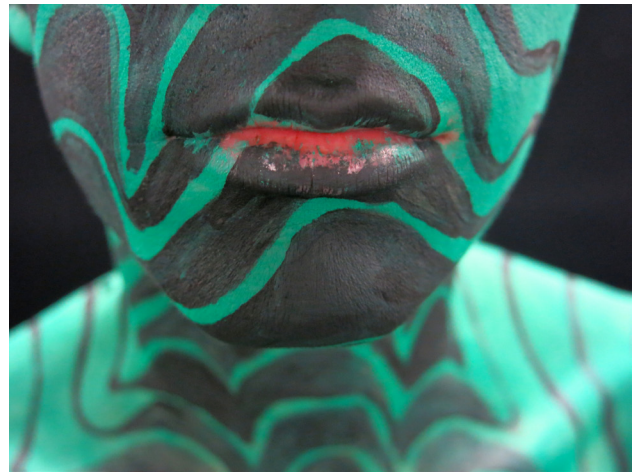
# Guillaume Pilet

Documentation

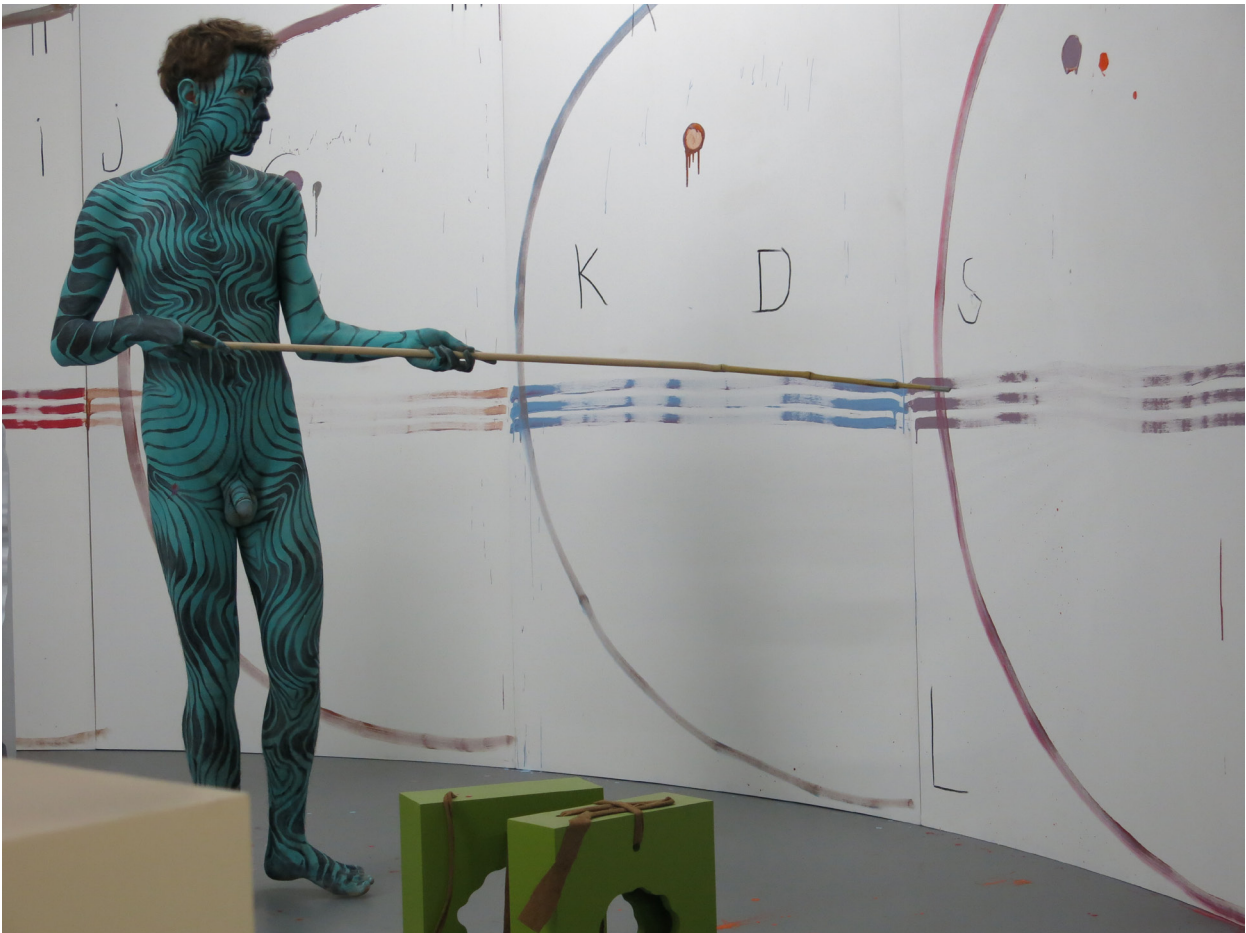
# La mesure harmonique



*La mesure harmonique: la dislocation du soi son*, 2015  
Performance at Les Urbaines, Arsenic, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2015



*La mesure harmonique: la dislocation du soi son*, 2015  
Performance and installation at Les Urbaines, Arsenic, Lausanne, Switzerland,  
2015



*La Mesure harmonique, De l'humain applicable aux règles transgressées de la peinture étendue à l'espace (création), 2015*  
Performance and installation at Centre culturel suisse, Paris, France, 2015  
Photo credit: Simon Letellier



*La Mesure harmonique, De l'humain applicable aux règles transgressées de la peinture étendue à l'espace (création), 2015*  
Performance and installation at Centre culturel suisse, Paris, France, 2015  
Photo credit: Simon Letellier



*La Mesure harmonique, De l'humain applicable aux règles transgressées de la peinture étendue à l'espace (création), 2015*  
Performance and installation at Centre culturel suisse, Paris, France, 2015  
Photo credit: Simon Letellier

## A SENSE OF MEASURE

After becoming interested in the figure of the monkey, Guillaume Pilet has drawn inspiration from Brazilian modernism to develop new experiments in painting and performance art.

Performance art has always occupied a central place in Guillaume Pilet's multi-faceted work. He likes to be precise in terms of the references he uses, focusing on historic forms and repurposing them to fit the context. Begun during a trip to Brazil when he was exhibiting at the Kunsthalle in São Paulo in 2014, the new performance series entitled *La Mesure harmonique* draws its inspiration from the tropical roots of Brazilian modernism.

Guillaume Pilet has always used a wide variety of different references in his work and drawn inspiration from his surroundings: he works at the crossroads of his interests in primatology, ethnology, modernist architecture, concrete art, literature, poetry and contemporary music. That's why, when he went to Brazil, he had a copy of Le Corbusier's *Modulor* in his luggage. But these architectural theories take on a new dimension when seen through the tropical prism. Some even have practical applications, like the *Dom-ino* principle, where the hot climate of São Paulo means that supporting walls can be replaced by large glazed windows open to the exterior. The full meaning of the social dimension of architecture became clear to Pilet, and major personalities such as Lina Bo Bardi joined his hall of fame.

As concrete art has many followers in Brazil, Guillaume Pilet found motifs he could play around with in his *Shape Canvases*. These became freer forms via freestyle drawings inspired by wave motifs (*bossa*), reminiscent of Brazilian landscape architect and artist Roberto Burle Marx's famous mosaic on the promenade at Copacabana. The wave then became a Warburgian motif drawn from many cultures and periods—from its use in vernacular and primitive representations to its optical exaggeration in tropicalist psychedelicism. Unconsciously modelling himself on Burle Marx, Guillaume Pilet picked up leaves from endemic tropical vegetation the first time he went for a walk in São Paulo. The very history of Brazilian culture is discovered and redigested in these free sources of inspiration, as prescribed in *Cannibal Manifesto* by the poet and novelist Oswald de Andrade. In this way, the social dimension of Brazilian modernism challenges the artist and becomes a meeting point for his various influences, as evidenced in his exhibition *Sintese Humanista* in São Paulo.

Guillaume Pilet is now using body painting for the first time. His interest focuses on cultural minorities and certain Amazon tribes for whom body painting has a ritual and symbolic meaning. He is especially drawn to the Xingu Indians who use stylised animal motifs, each person having his own formal vocabulary. In his performances, the performer is first painted so that the wave motif follows the lines and curves of his body. It becomes hard to distinguish the man behind the pattern, and by the same token his nudity becomes irrelevant. The body really does become a living medium for painting, donning the motif so that it can dissolve and then appear unexpectedly in space. The performer has to execute a number of sequences designed by the artist, first relatively spontaneous, then gradually more and more complex. These are postures and choreographed movements relating to the space, its architecture and its décor. *La Mesure harmonique*, of which Guillaume Pilet will be presenting a new version for five days at the CCS, is a work in progress that takes into account the social context of the artist and his public appearance in the exhibition space: both on a human scale and in terms of the interaction that occurs between painting, a motif, a body, a building, and an audience.

Tiphonie Blanc, art critic and freelance curator





*La Mesure Harmonique*, 2015  
Performance and installation at Swiss Art Awards, Basel, Switzerland, 2015



*La Mesure Harmonique*, 2015  
Performance and installation at Alpina Haus, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Germany, 2015



*Le Pavillon de la Pensée Sauvage*, 2015  
Installation view at Art en plein air, Môtiers, Switzerland, 2015



*Sintese Humanista*, 2014  
Performance and installation at  
Kunsthalle, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2014



*Humpty Dumpty sat on a Wall (Série noire), 2015*

Glazed ceramic

35 x 31 x 13 cm

Unique



From the series *Pathosformel*, 2015  
All glazed ceramic  
Different sizes



La synthèse humaniste, 2015  
From the series *Pathosformel*, 2015  
Glazed ceramic  
23 x 15 x 7 cm

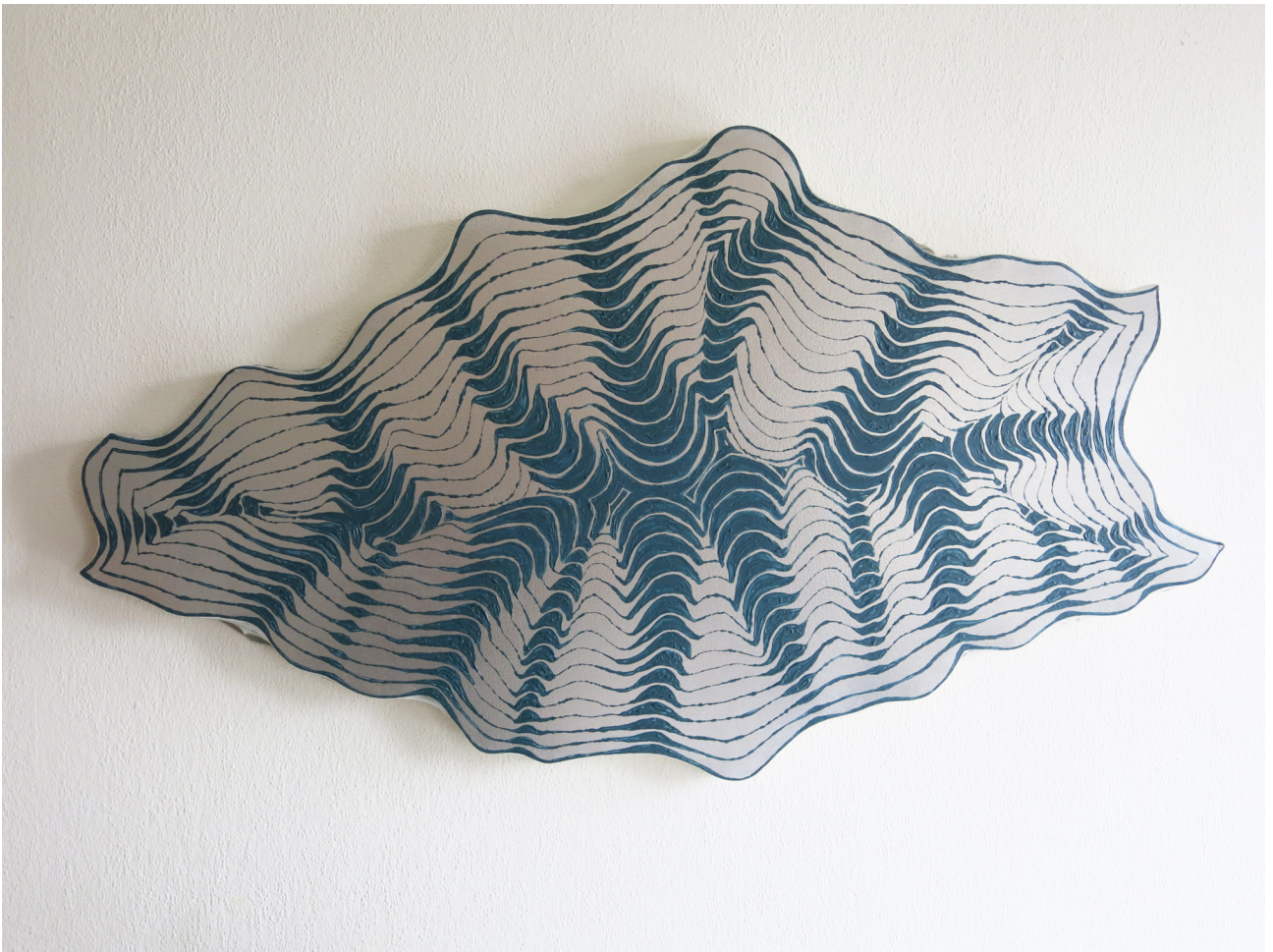


*She Devil in a Green Dress or The Mermaid*, 2015  
Glazed ceramic





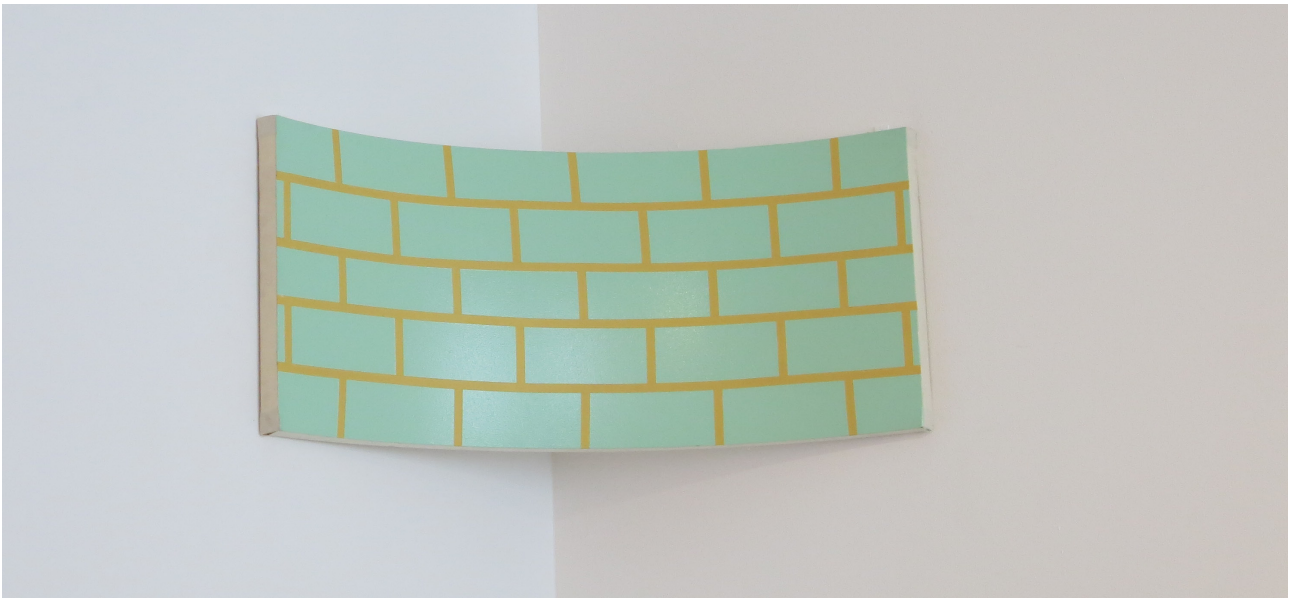
*Untitled, The Ballerina, The Baby Venus, The Teacher*, all 2014  
All glazed ceramic  
Different sizes



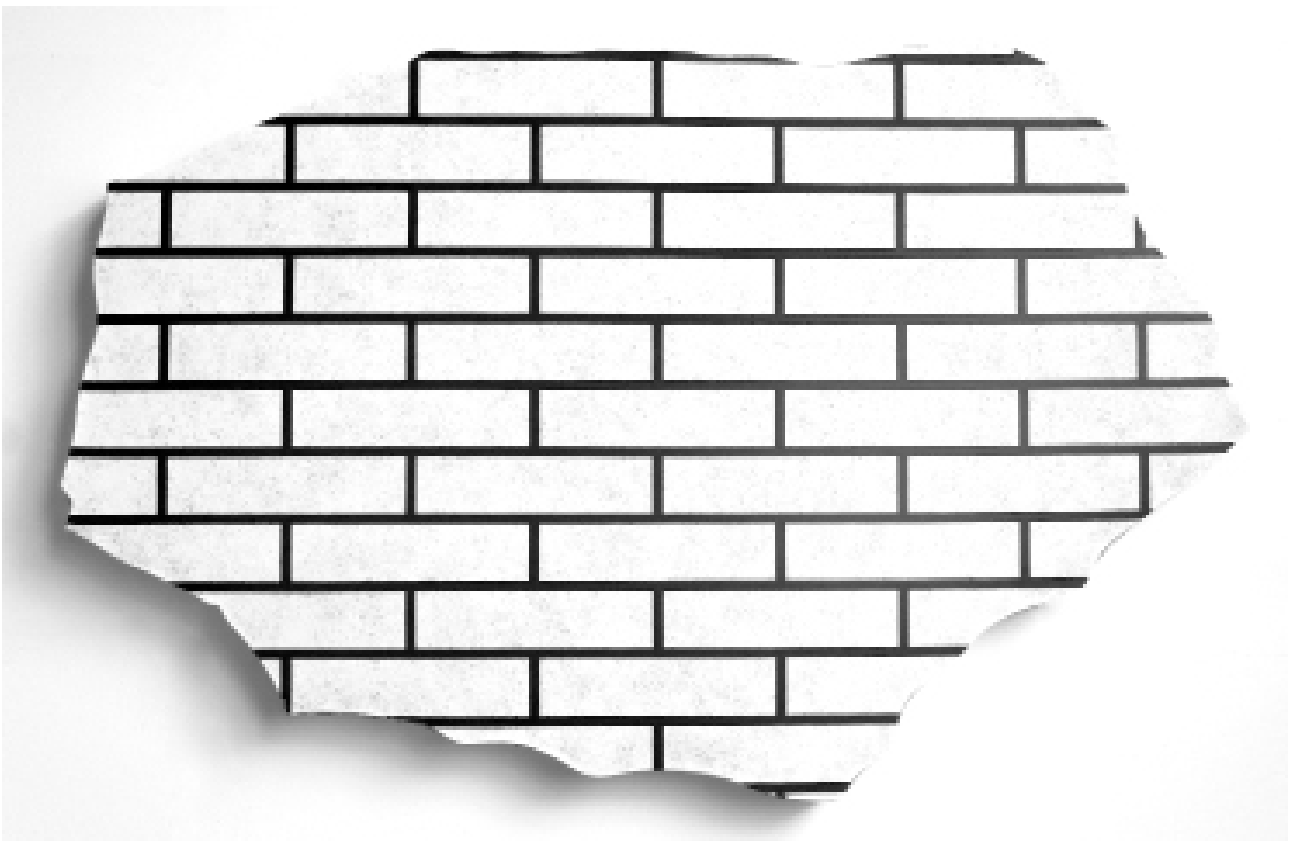
*Acid rain on venus, 2016*  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 97 cm



*Eau saumâtre*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
100 x 64 x 24 cm



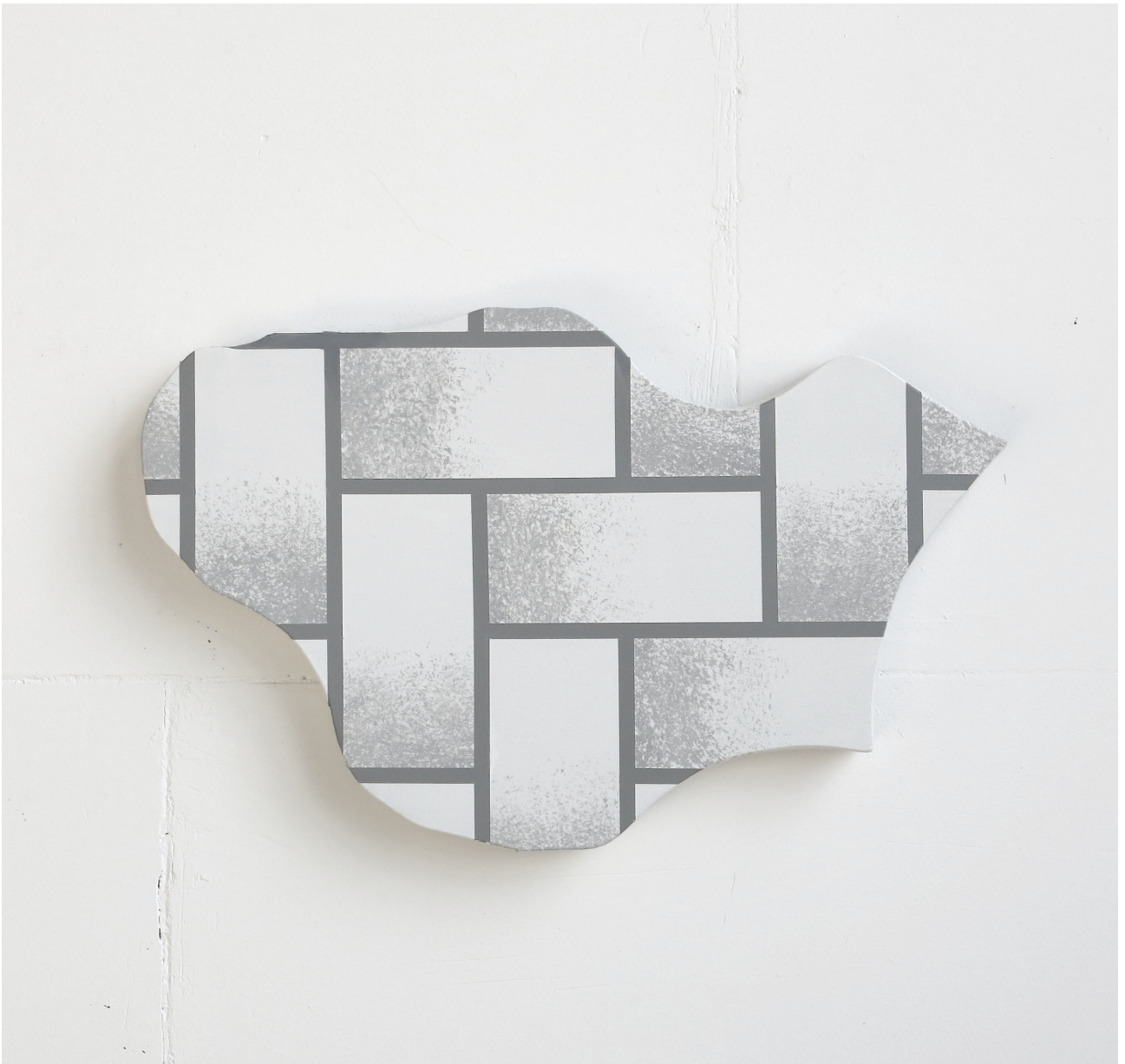
*Métropolitooon*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
32 x 69 cm



*Bricks n°11*, 2014  
Acrylic on canvas  
70 x 107 cm



*B&T n°2, 2015*  
Acrylic on canvas  
43 x 47 cm



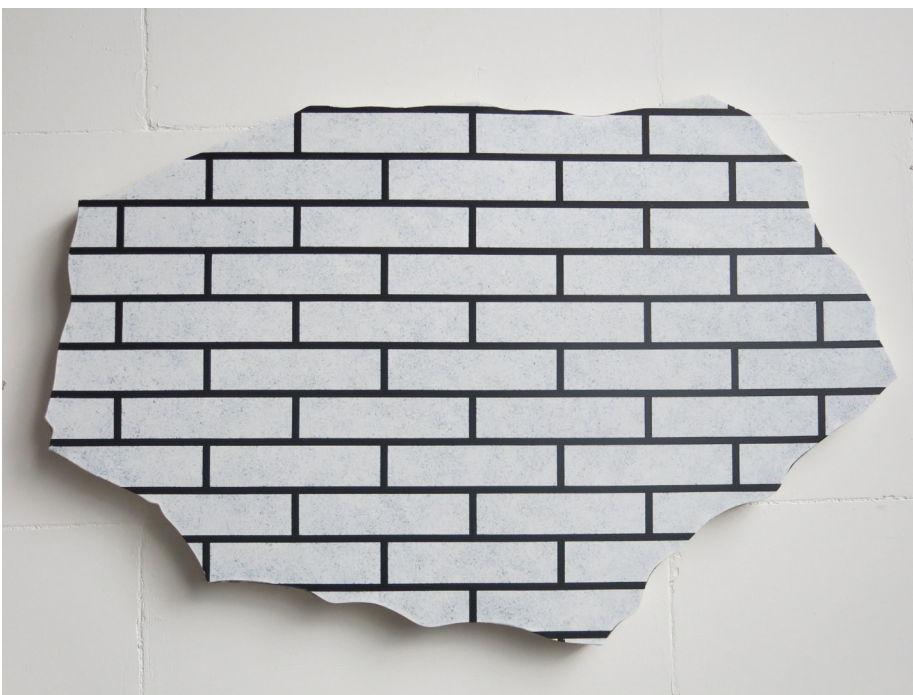
*B&T n°4*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
32 x 52 cm



*Untitled, 2014*  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 40 cm



*Untitled, 2014*  
Acrylic on canvas  
40 x 40 cm

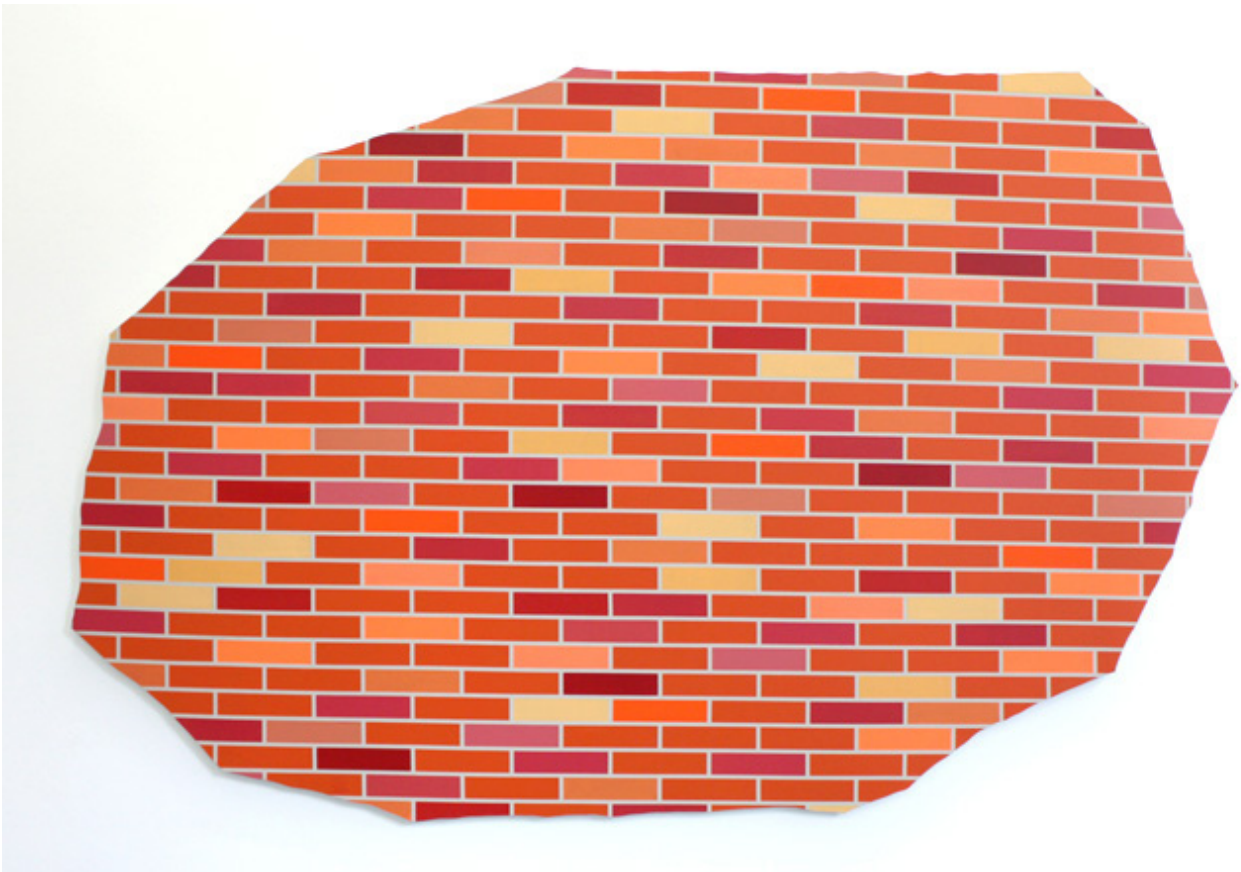


*Bricks n°12, Bricks n°11, both 2014*  
Both acrylic on canvas  
117x67 cm, 70x107 cm





*Give truth a chance n°5*, 2014  
Acrylic on canvas  
74 x 100 cm



*Bricks n°8, 2013*  
Acrylic on canvas  
175 x 272 cm

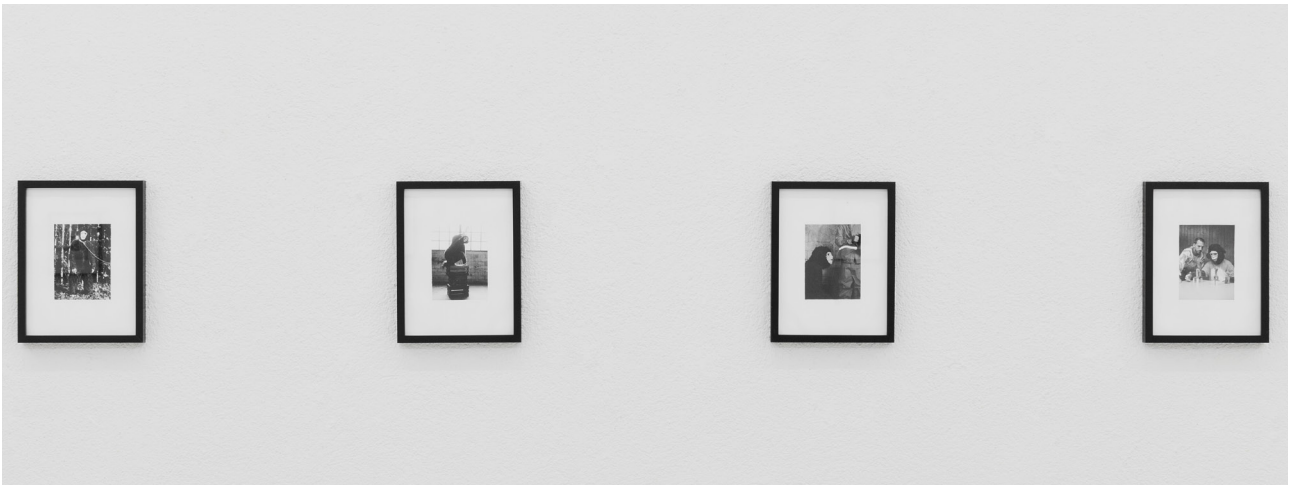
**Learning from aping**



*Zoo Manners*, 2014  
Solo Exhibition at Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014  
Installation view  
Photo credit: Gunnar Meier



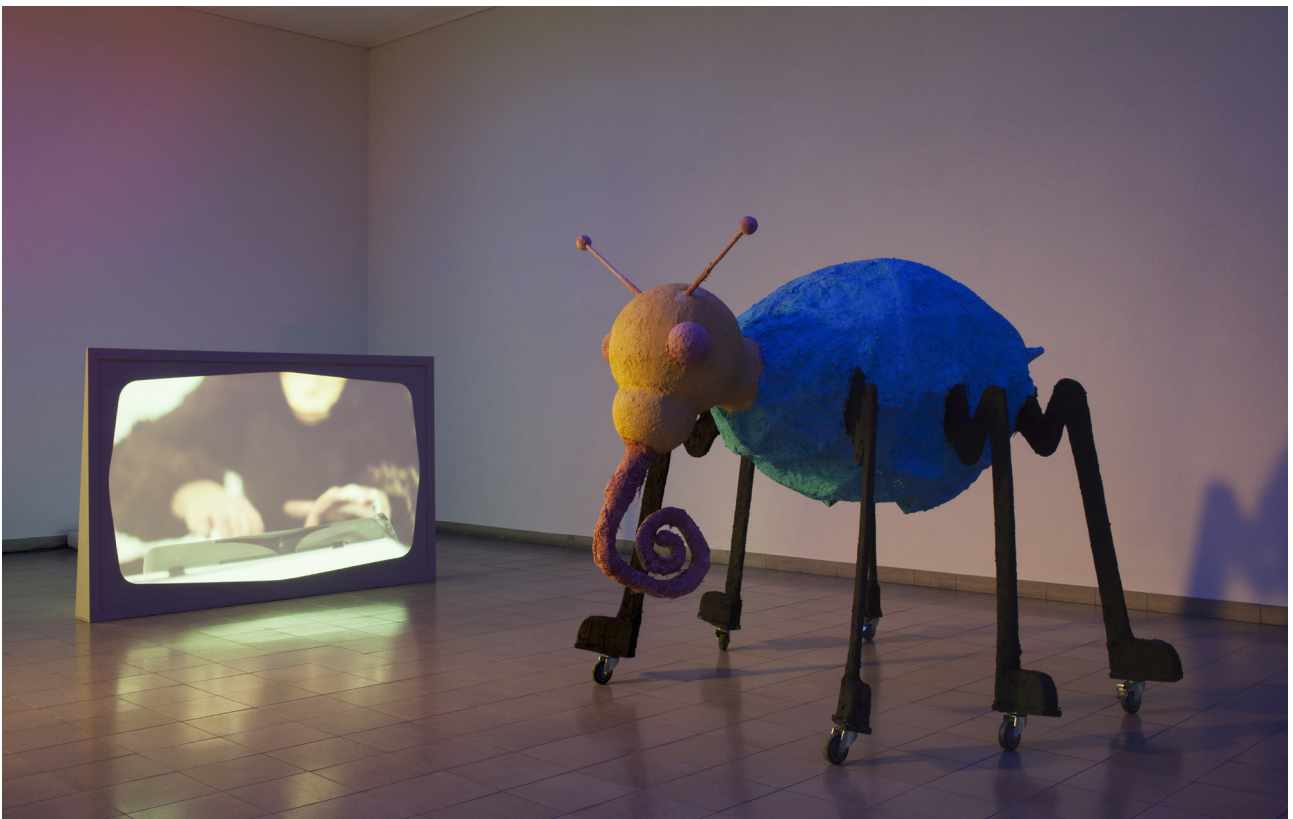
*Cage Painting (Sunset)*, diptych / *Cage Painting (Wet Jungle)*, 2014  
Solo Exhibition at Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014  
Installation view  
Photo credit: Gunnar Meier



*Learning to Love*, 2013-ongoing  
15 framed silver prints  
Solo Exhibition at Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014  
Installation view  
Photo credits: Gunnar Meier



*Learning from Aping - The Mind Map, 2012-2014*  
Solo Exhibition at Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014  
Installation view  
Photo credits: Gunnar Meier



*I Ape Therefore I Am / Cootie (a.k.a The Unknown)*, 2014  
Solo Exhibition at Kunsthhaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014  
Installation view  
Photo credits: Gunnar Meier





*Imago*, 2014  
Performance at Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland, 2014

KUNSTHAUS GLARUS  
09.02.2014 – 04.05.2014  
GUILLAUME PILET  
LEARNING TO LOVE

Guillaume Pilet (born 1984 in Payerne, lives and works in Lausanne) describes himself—although he already counts among today's established young Swiss artists—as an interested amateur in the world of art. In his works, he skillfully juggles between high and low, art and do-it-yourself, and, in so doing, incessantly blurs the boundaries between the genres. Naïve forms and motifs, simple materials and techniques such as wood, ceramic, batik or sponge painting, and everyday objects are intermixed with references and figures from art history and the sciences. He energetically blends intuition and careful analysis, aesthetics of bad taste and distinguished chic. These elements coalesce in his paintings, photography, videos, sculptures, and installations into a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk. With such juxtapositions, he also negotiates hierarchies of cultural production and mechanisms of representation. In a nonchalant and incessantly tongue-in-cheek approach, he probes mechanisms of art and his own output as an artist.

### Guillaume Pilet — Halb Affe, halb Mensch

Im Kunsthaus Glarus zeigt Guillaume Pilet, wieviel Mensch in einem Affen und wieviel Affe in einem Menschen steckt. Dabei erzählt der Westschweizer Künstler von den menschlichen Unzulänglichkeiten, von unserem Verhältnis zu den Primaten und von den Abgründen emotionaler Bindung.

Glarus — Die Theorie der Evolution behauptet eine Abstammung des Menschen von den Primaten. In Experimenten wird seit dieser Entdeckung das Verhalten der Primaten in Hinblick auf ein besseres Verständnis der menschlichen Verhaltensweisen untersucht. Nichtsdestotrotz bleiben uns diese scheinbar vertrauten, mit sozialen und technischen Fähigkeiten ausgestatteten Wesen fremd, weshalb deren unberechenbare wilde Seite bis heute Stoff für zahlreiche Bücher und Filme bietet.

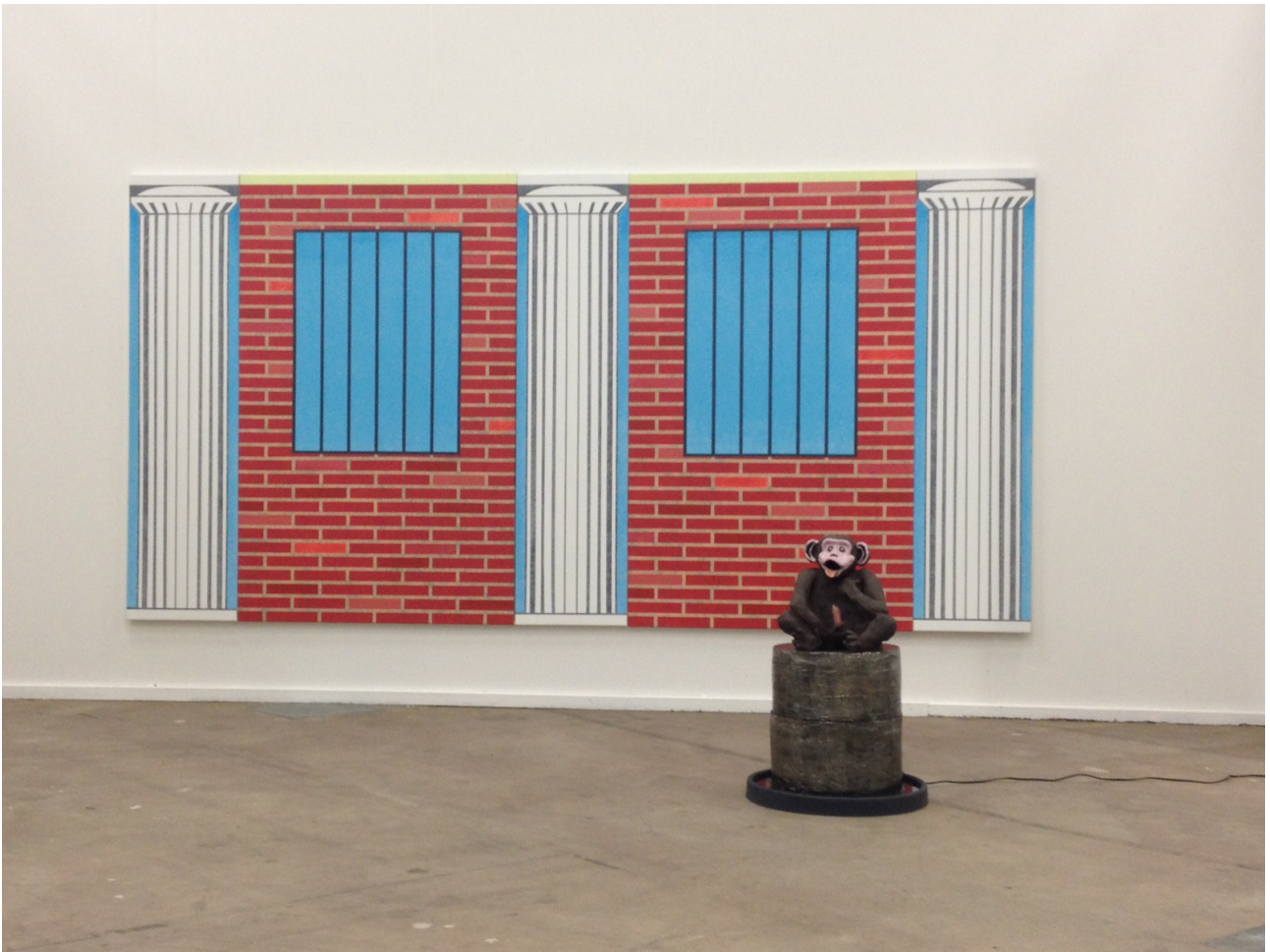
In die unheimlichen Tiefen dieses ambivalenten Verhältnisses führt uns der in Lausanne lebende Guillaume Pilet (\*1984, Payerne) in seiner ersten institutionellen Einzelausstellung. Der Titel der Schau «Learning to Love» ist einer gleichnamigen Studie des umstrittenen amerikanischen Entwicklungspsychologen und Verhaltensforschers Harry Harlow entliehen. In dieser in den Fünfzigerjahren begonnenen Studie stellte der Forscher junge Rhesus-Affchen vor die Wahl einer Milch spendenden Erbsatzmutter aus Draht sowie einer in weichen Stoff gekleideten Mutter-Attrappe. In diesem Experiment konnte die zentrale Rolle emotionaler Bindung für die Entwicklung der Primaten nachgewiesen werden. Pilet stellt in einer Videoinstallation die von Harry Harlow entwickelten Versuchsanordnungen nach. Allerdings ist bei Guillaume der Affe ein Mensch in einem Kostüm. Dieser wird von einer zweiten Person zu bestimmten Handlungen angeleitet, wie bspw. aus einer Tasse zu trinken. Der als Affe verkleidete Mensch tritt auch alleine auf und muss seine Fähigkeiten – wie Trommelspielen, Malen, eine Schreibmaschine betätigen – unter Beweis stellen. Diese allegorisch zu verstehenden Szenen verweisen einerseits auf die menschlichen Unzulänglichkeiten. Andererseits wird im Wechselspiel der beiden Protagonisten die emotionale Bindung zu einem durch Macht und Abhängigkeiten geprägten Verhältnis.

Auch in den im Treppenhaus hängenden «Cage-Paintings», 2014, ist ein paradiesischer Zustand – hier durch eine an Henri Rousseau erinnernde tropische Vegetation symbolisiert – nur mit dem Preis des Verzichts auf die Freiheit zu erlangen. Das vermeintliche Paradies wird zu einem Gefängnis. Den Abschluss der sehenswerten Ausstellung bildet ein vom Künstler angelegtes und im Untergeschoss sorgfältig inszeniertes Archiv mit Nippes, Filmplakaten, Kostümen, Zeitschriften. Dieses stellt die präsentierten Werke in einen erweiterten kulturhistorischen Kontext und beleuchtet unser ambivalentes Verhältnis zu unseren Vorfahren. *Pablo Müller*

→ Kunsthaus Glarus, bis 4.5. [www.kunsthausglarus.ch](http://www.kunsthausglarus.ch)



Guillaume Pilet - Cage Painting (Sunset), 2014; Cage Painting (Wet Jungle), 2014, Acryl auf Leinwand, Diptychon. Foto: Gunnar Meier



Installation view at Swiss Art Awards, Basel, Switzerland, 2014



Installation view at Bex & Arts, Bex, Switzerland, 2014

## Guillaume Pilet — *Zoo Manners (Totem)*, 2014

[30]

FR Située dans une fontaine de rocaïlle, la sculpture de Guillaume Pilet rejoue cet élément à la fois décoratif et utilitaire. Un singe en céramique accroupi tient entre ses mains une théière et boit par le goulot, faisant l'impasse sur l'utilisation de la tasse. Rituel qui semble cristalliser les bonnes manières et plus largement une forme de civilisation, le *tea time* des chimpanzés a été pendant une grande partie du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle l'attraction du Zoo de Londres; pour satisfaire les visiteurs lassés des manières trop humaines des singes, les gardiens leur ont appris à boire le thé à la manière (supposée) des chimpanzés—en tenant la théière par les pieds, ou en buvant à même le récipient.

Entre une esthétique ludique et un contenu à la fois historique et critique, cette pièce fait partie du projet *Learning from aping* que mène Pilet depuis 2012. Terrain de jeu particulièrement propice à l'hybridation et au décloisonnement des styles, des pratiques et des disciplines qui marquent son travail de manière générale, le singe permet à l'artiste d'aborder des questions scientifiques (la primatologie, la psychologie comportementale), l'histoire de l'art (figure de l'artiste en singe, qui imite le réel), ou la culture du divertissement.

Concentré de tous ces questionnements, le singe-fontaine résonne de manière singulière avec le contexte historique du parc de Szilassy, fondé selon l'esthétique et les valeurs du siècle qui a développé le mythe du bon sauvage et les théories des origines, où le singe occupait déjà une place de choix. [i.v.]

Né en 1984 à Payerne. Étudie les arts visuels à l'École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (2005–10). Expositions personnelles au Kunsthhaus Glarus en 2014, à la Galerie Rotwand à Zurich et Forma à Lausanne en 2013, à SALTS à Bâle et la Rada à Locarno en 2012 avec Claudia Comte, à la Galerie Alain Gutharc à Paris en 2010, à la Galerie Blancpain à Genève en 2009 (sélection). Expositions collectives au Centre d'art contemporain de Genève, à la Galerie Blancpain en 2013, au Kunsthhaus Aarau, à Forde à Genève en 2012, Môtiers Art en plein air en 2011, à Liste Bâle, invité par le Centre culturel suisse de Paris en 2010 (sélection). Prix fédéraux d'art en 2009 et 2010; Prix Kiefer Habitzel en 2013. Cahier d'artiste Pro Helvetia, 2010. Enseigne à la Haute école d'art et de design de Genève et à l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne. Vit et travaille à Lausanne.

EN Guillaume Pilet's sculpture gives a new twist to the at once decorative and utilitarian rock fountain at its source. The ceramic monkey sitting there drinks from the spout of the teapot it holds in its hands, skipping the use of a cup. As a ritual so-to-speak crystallizing good manners and, in a larger sense, a certain form of civilization, for years the chimpanzees' "tea time" at the London Zoo was one of its main attractions. In order to satisfy zoo visitors, who soon tired of the overly human gestures of the chimpanzees, the zookeepers taught the latter to drink in a (supposedly) more natural manner, namely by holding the teapot with their feet, or drinking directly from it.

With its playful aesthetic impact, together with its at once historical and critical content, this piece fits in with the *Learning from aping* project that this artist has been carrying out since 2012. Monkeys provide a playground particularly well suited to the hybridization and decompartmentalizing of styles, practices and disciplines to which Guillaume Pilet adheres in his work in general. They enable him to broach certain scientific realms (primatology, behavioral psychology), art history (real-life figure of the artist as a monkey) and mass entertainment culture.

As a concentrate of such a wide range of questionings, the monkey-fountain fits in particularly well with Szilassy Park's historic context. After all, the park was founded according to the aesthetic norms and values of a century that raised the "noble savage" to great heights and adhered to theories of origins where monkeys already enjoyed pride of place. [i.v.]

Born in Payerne in 1984. Studied visual arts at the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (2005–10). Solo shows at Kunsthhaus, Glarus in 2014; Rotwand Gallery in Zurich and Forma in Lausanne in 2013; SALTS in Basel and Rada in Locarno in 2012 with Claudia Comte; Alain Gutharc Gallery in Paris in 2010; in Geneva in Blancpain Gallery 2009 (a.o.). Group shows at Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva, Blancpain Gallery in 2013; Kunsthhaus, Aarau, Forde in Geneva in 2012; Môtiers Art outdoor show in 2011; Liste, Basel, invited by Centre culturel suisse in Paris in 2010 (a.o.). Swiss Art Awards in 2009 and 2010; Kiefer Habitzel Prize in 2013. Cahier d'artiste Pro Helvetia, 2010. Teaches at the Haute école d'art et de design in Geneva and the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne. Lives and works in Lausanne.



*Surrogate Mothers*, 2013  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland, 2013  
Installation view



*Surrogate Mothers, 2013*  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland, 2013  
Installation view





*Surrogate Mothers*, 2013  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland, 2013  
Installation view



*Surrogate Mothers*, 2013  
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Installation view

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## GUILLAUME PILET

### *SURROGATE MOTHERS*

March 21 – May 18, 2013

Opening: Wednesday, March 20, 6 – 8 pm

An interview between Tiphonie Blanc and Yann Chateigné with Guillaume Pilet

**Tiphonie Blanc and Yann Chateigné:** *You have referenced key figures in primatology in a number of projects before. What sets this work and research apart is your personal pantheon, which now has a number of new entries. What role do Dian Fossey, Jane Goodall, Harry Harlow and their apes play in your exhibition at Rotwand?*

**Guillaume Pilet:** Harry Harlow is everywhere, I even reference him in the title. *Surrogate Mothers* is a concept I borrowed from a series of experiments that the behavioural scientist carried out with baby monkeys. Through these experiments he demonstrated the importance of love – something previously ignored by science – for learning processes and the development of cognitive thinking. This is also a central theme in *Learning From Aping*, which is the name of my own research into apes which I started a year ago.

I invert the concept of the surrogate mother, shifting the focus to the women scientists who dedicated their lives to studying apes. Dian Fossey gave her life and even died for the mountain gorillas when she was murdered in her fight against poaching. Jane Goodall studied chimpanzees in their natural habitat, and Penny Patterson spent much of her youth exclusively in the company of the female gorilla, Koko, who she taught to use American sign language.

This form of selflessness interests me in a number of ways. For one, the first groundbreaking insights into great apes were all thanks to young women, because supposedly female characteristics such as patience, gentleness or empathy (mother instinct) were considered the best qualification for ethological studies. However sexist this assessment, it did mean that women were able to make real headway in this branch of science.

Then as regards these women figures, I am interested in the image of them in the media. Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall, who are mostly known through *National*

*Geographic*, as well as the cover photo that Koko took of herself, are an integral part of our collective visual heritage.

But I should admit that I was also fascinated by the reports of their total and obsessive selflessness. When I read Dian Fossey's biography it followed me into my dreams.

In the exhibition the three women are represented in huge busts, their faces are egg-shaped and without contour and their expressions are drawn from photographs. So there are these massive, exemplary figures who I have added to my personal mythology, as well as faces we know from the media who are part of the collective visual heritage.

I refer to Harry Harlow in three ceramic figures inspired by the *Surrogate Cloth Mother*, which provides love and security.

*Let's talk more about Koko photographing herself. She evokes the clever ape but also the self-portrait genre as a whole. This gesture can also be interpreted as an image of the artist in the distorting mirror of the anthropomorphic animal and thus as a grotesque pseudoscientific self-presentation. Your interest in an image like this must have a deeper meaning.*

Aside from the portrait of the artist as monkey, which goes back to the Renaissance expression *ars simia naturae* (literally, art is the ape of nature) and is an admission of art's inability to portray nature as well as art's shortcomings in general, what I find interesting about this self-portrait is the anthropomorphising of the object, which at the same time implies the dissolution of the human figure. What you see on the cover of *National Geographic* is not just an ape, but a portrait that is not made by a human hand. To an extent this is really a form of emancipation/liberation. Last year, however, another monkey self-portrait went through the print and online media and actually triggered a serious debate about copyright. To return to Koko, interestingly she made it onto the cover of *National Geographic* a second time in 1985. This time Koko was holding a young cat in her arms. Anthropomorphism were so far here that people were crediting the gorilla with having emotional affect, a universal feeling evoked by her interaction with a little cat.

*Don't you worry that visitors will see only the humorous, grotesque side of these images and forget about the project's scientific and anthropological aspects? How will you realise these experiments formally?*

I think that the seriousness and energy with which I carry out my research will prevent it sliding into comedy. What I obviously found so fascinating about the image

of the monkey is that it crops up in such different areas: in art history, as I mentioned earlier, in groundbreaking experiments in behavioural psychology, and in the entertainment sector in regressive shows like the TBS *Chimp Channel* show, where parodies are played by chimpanzees.

I'm not a scientist. My intuitive methods of assimilating these various allusions often have a metaphorical or allegorical character. I think that viewers who follow their own associations will pick up on the more serious questions behind these humorous-looking forms.

Their *a priori* playful appearance might even make the effect of these works even more brutal.

*Can you explain a little more about how these questions are transmuted in the exhibition?*

Through the different interpretations of the works, I think. On the wall, for example, are small abstract images, hung classically. A diverse formal vocabulary is played out on these canvases, but actually they are copies of lexigrams created in the USA in the early 70s. They are abstract word symbols that were created to communicate with great apes whose vocal chords are unable to produce any of the sounds that resemble human language. The small square images are simply abstractions made for apes – *a fortiori* “intelligent” apes who can determine their “exact” meaning. I have frequently chosen concepts that are not usually associated with the conceptual world of apes, such as “tomorrow”, or which describe interactions such as “feel”, “hug”, “play”, as well as words that allow the monkey to express an opinion, like “yes” and “no”.

*As in many of your projects, here you also use classical, canonical or even academic artistic forms to play with the codes of artistic expression: the portrait bust, abstract painting – either gestural or geometric – and even monumental art. But you use these forms in a deliberately clumsy, regressive and naïve way. One could also see them as a sort of negative development of artistic expression. You are also very interested in the question of mediocrity, perhaps that's what is about the image primates convey when they ape humans – what you might call a primitive reflection of our culture.*

*Magritte had his cow period, would you say that you are now in your ape period?*

Yes, definitely. A period which will continue until 2016, the year of the monkey.

*Learning from Aping* certainly seems to occupy a special place in my work as a whole, you could compare it with what Deleuze describes as the advantage of being a stranger within one's own language. But this series of works is not fundamentally different from the rest of my practice, even if I have to admit that in this case I am granting myself greater freedoms because my sphere of activity, one could call it a pretext, lends itself so wonderfully to experimentation. The project consists of extensive documentation – I am compiling a library specialised in monkeys, and collecting articles and objects from everyday culture – and also a very free interpretation of all these phenomena from a point of view that sometimes verges on the pseudoscientific or even pseudoartistic. The fact that I see myself in Magritte's cow period as much as in amateur art is something I put down to my impartiality towards all forms of artistic expression. *Learning From Aping* offers wonderful possibilities for play, even my own artistic autonomy/authorship is thrown into question. Sometimes I feel like a character that I have invented myself. This is the role I also play in the film that is currently being made about this research. I often ask myself how I position myself as an artist, but there's no way I could say. I ape art, I think, if not deliberately. I can't seem to do anything else.

(Translation Lucy Powell)

## Guillaume Pilet

Zürich — Empfangen wird man von Abbildungen eines Affen, der in amerikanischer Gebärdensprache «I love you» ausdrückt. Die Liebe, genauer die Affenliebe, ist denn auch Thema dieser Ausstellung. Das im Ausstellungstitel angeführte Phänomen der Ersatzmütter ist ein Begriff, der einer Reihe von Versuchen entliehen wurde, die der Verhaltensforscher Harry Harlow mit Affenbabys durchgeführt hat. Damit erbrachte er den Beweis, wie wichtig Liebe für Lernprozesse und die Entwicklung des kognitiven Denkens ist. Guillaume Pilet (\*1984, Payerne) hat archaisch-naïv anmutende, zarte Keramikfigürchen als Hommage für die Ersatzmütter auf hohe Sockel gesetzt. Sie thronen in einer schummrigen, nur von eleganten Designlampen aus Pneuereifen beleuchteten Rauminstallation. Ihre Pendants bilden drei weibliche, wuchtige Porträtbüsten aus Keramik mit eiförmigen, flächigen, nach Fotografien gezeichneten Gesichtern. Sie repräsentieren die berühmten Wissenschaftlerinnen Dian Fossey, Jane Goodall und Penny Patterson, die ihr Leben der Beobachtung von Affen widmeten. Die Ausstellung zeigt einen Aspekt des Werkkomplexes «Learning From Aping» – einem experimentellen Projekt über Affen, kognitive Wissenschaften, kulturelle Übertragungen und den Nachahmungscharakter künstlerischer Praxis –, mit dem sich Pilet seit über einem Jahr auseinandersetzt. Abstrakte Wortsymbole sollen der Verständigung mit Menschenaffen dienen. Sie sind in kleinformatigen Acrylbildern von Lexigrammen wiedergegeben. In ihren abstrakt-konkreten Konfigurationen deklinieren sie gleichzeitig die Formen der Moderne durch und erinnern punktuell an Werke von Olivier Mosset, John Armleder, Jean-Luc Manz und der russischen Avantgarde. So spiegelt die Ausstellung die ganz persönliche Mythologie von Pilet. Der Künstler flüchtet jovial mit kunsthistorischen Motiven, arrangiert sie spielerisch, jongliert virtuos mit High und Low. Entsprechend facettenreich sieht sein medial breit angelegtes Œuvre aus. Die Ästhetik oszilliert zwischen fantasievollen, kitschig-witzigen Formfindungen

in kunsthandwerklicher Manier, volkstümlichen Bildwelten und Versatzstücken der Moderne. Pilets künstlerischer Methode liegt gemäss eigener Aussage die «Haltung des interessierten Amateurs» zugrunde. Über die Allegorie des Affen als Sinnbild für künstlerische Produktion gelangt er zu eigenen Stilformen und unverkennbaren künstlerischen Metaphern. *DvB*



Guillaume Pilet - Ausstellungsansicht, 2013, Galerie Rotwand



Guillaume Pilet - Ausstellungsansicht, 2013, Galerie Rotwand

→ Rotwand, bis 18.5.

→ [www.rotwandgallery.com](http://www.rotwandgallery.com)



*La jeunesse est un art*, 2012  
Group show at Kunsthaus Aarau, Switzerland, 2012  
Installation view



La Jeunesse est un art, Jubiläum  
Manor Kunstpreis 2012, Aargauer  
Kunsthaus Aarau, p 226-229

ment, the ape plunges us into a curiously ambivalent situation; while we laugh at the resemblance, our closeness to primates also confronts us with the somewhat uncomfortable question as to who is aping whom.

Patrick Gosatti

Guillaume Pilet conducts his research in a variety of techniques, making reference to both popular culture and so-called academia. Constantly shifting between art and craft, academic erudition and the art of do-it-yourself, scientific knowledge and the fun of the fair, the artist casually adopts an approach advocating the blurring of disciplines, the mixing of media and the hijacking of techniques. Combining empathy with careful analysis, Pilet reveals a penchant for the aesthetics of ugliness and poor taste alongside a determination to undermine any and all established hierarchies of images.

Pilet's visual experimentation leads to a kind of iconographic "poaching", in which interest in the symbolic and the semantic impact of images and their cultural memory takes precedence over the images themselves. Treated as iconological objects, these images become "ghosts" or vestiges that may disappear again the moment they crop up in one form rather than another. Pilet's agenda might be described as an inquiry into the status of representation, into the forms that it can take and, hence, the semantic potential that lies in images transformed through time.

Using the methods of a scientist, anthropologist or ethnologist, the artist has accumulated a veritable archive devoted to the world of primates. His studies allow him to take a slightly oblique look at the issues of mimesis and representation, in which the artist as imitator does work that involves aping. In *Primates' Hall of Fame*, 2012, an installation that is part of the larger project *Learning from Aping*, since 2011, Pilet enquires into the figure of the primate and explores its ambivalent, metaphorical power. In a kind of parallel society, halfway between the circus big top and a gallery in a natural history museum, the artist presents sculptures of ape cosmonauts, celebrities from the worlds of showbiz and science, and a set of reproductions of paintings done by primates. Perceived as both a strange parody of the human being and an endless source of entertain-

Nachfolgende Doppelseite:

- 1 Studie zur Büste *Congo*, 2012  
Glasierte Keramik, 15 × 38 × 22 cm
- 2 Installationsansicht *Le Cabinet Préliminaire* (Detail),  
La Placette, Lausanne, 2011
- 3 Skizze für *Primates' Hall of Fame*, 2012  
Gouache auf Papier, 18 × 22 cm

**Others**

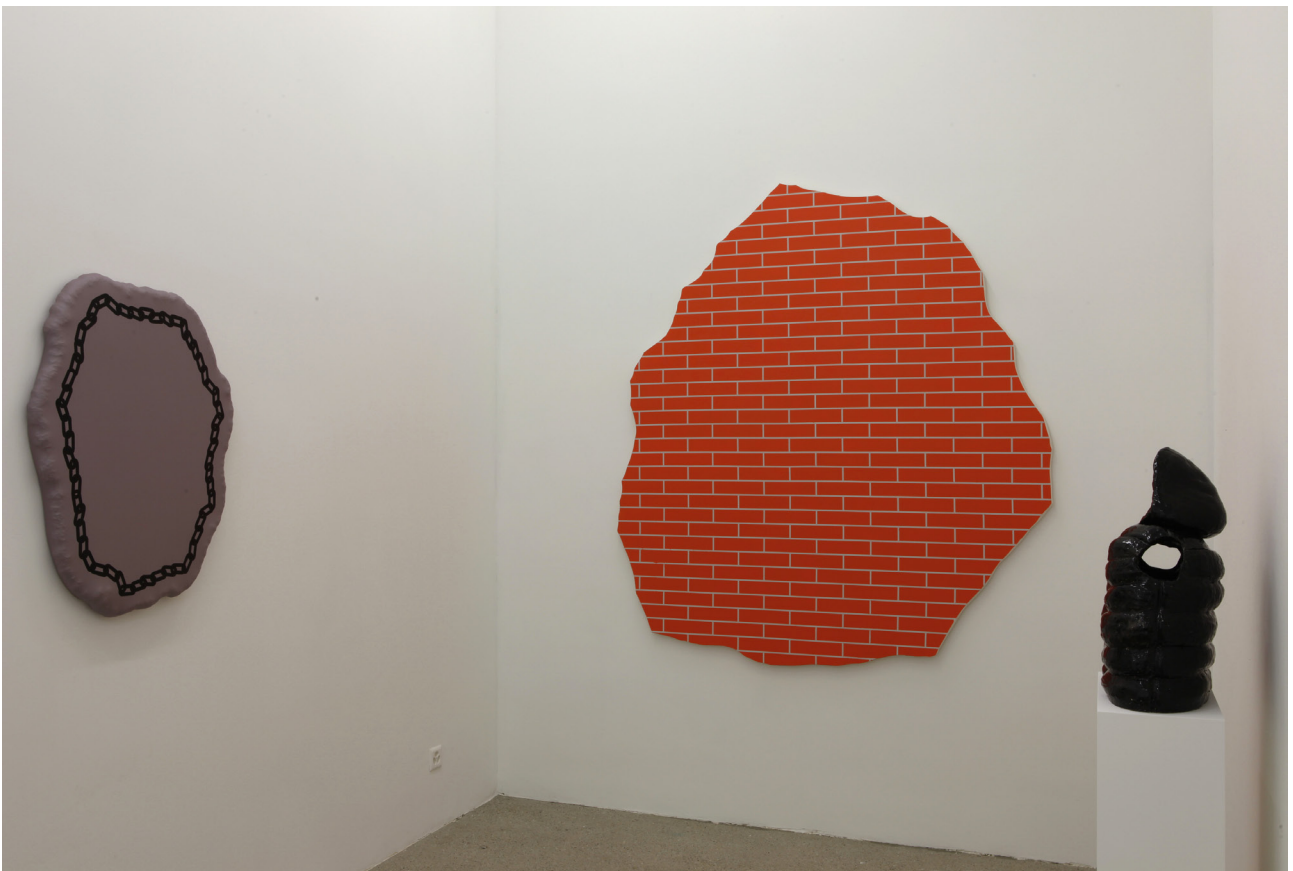


Solo exhibition with Rotwand at Art Brussels, Belgium, 2012  
Installation view



Solo exhibition with Rotwand at Art Brussels, Belgium, 2012

Installation view



*L'Art de la Fugue*, 2011  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland, 2011  
Installation view



*L'Art de la Fugue*, 2011  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland, 2011  
Installation view



*L'Art de la Fugue*, 2011  
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## ROTWAND

Sabina Kohler & Bettina Meier-Bickel

Lutherstrasse 34, CH-8004 Zürich, T/F +41 44 240 30 55

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## GUILLAUME PILET

May 20 – July 2, 2011

Opening: Friday, May 20, 6-8pm

Everything about Guillaume Pilet questions the status of the work of art: artifact, pedestal, background, wallpaper – all genres and origins get mixed and combined. From popular culture, the artist uses childish shapes, batik, pressed wood, ceramics, and representations of objects from daily life; from art history, he evokes emblematic figures, institutional criticism, Pop Art, the “Gesamtkunstwerk”. He successfully incorporates into his work the items used to display the objects themselves by creating a setting made of clashing juxtapositions. The items used to display the artifacts become installations, drawing in the visitor and his world with panache. The use of naïve figures only serves to emphasize the feeling of empathy that takes the visitor by surprise and with humor.

*L'Art de la Fugue* (The Art of the Fugue) is the first monographic exhibition in Zurich devoted to this artist from the Canton of Vaud. The title itself is a play on words using the language and reference to classical German culture. The double meaning involves two words that are very close, since the Art of the fugue by Johann Sebastian Bach could also mean the art of flight (lat. fuga, flight) by the French-speaking Swiss artist in the face of the serious of “high” art. Does this mean he is running away like a child in the face of the pseudo challenge reflected in the fact of showing his work in the country’s cultural capital, or is this a tribute to the art of combined chaos like in the work of the Leipzig composer? The answer, naturally, is a combination of both and much more.

The shaped canvases with motifs of brick walls or chains rebel against the principle of artistic representation by making everyday shapes into geometrical abstractions. The ceramic sculptures mock great art by symbolizing existential themes such as representations of death, still life paintings, Greek mythology and cynical philosophy, but in the style of a cartoonist. *Concrete Series* is a joke on language and styles: objects from everyday life are frozen in a layer of concrete that becomes a painting; at the same time, the word concrete refers to Swiss concrete art, based on a mathematic geometric, and by extension, it refers to the highly concrete look of the objects displayed this way.

Active since 2005, Guillaume Pilet combines presentations of his plastic work with his curatorial and critical research. Aside from numerous personal exhibitions, he has participated in group exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad. With Tiphonie Blanc and Vincent Normand, since September 2010, he has been a member of the Forde Art Space committee in Geneva. Since 2009, the three of them have edited the fanzine “Criticism,” defined as the magazine critiquing the critics.

The exhibition *L'Art de la Fugue* offers the opportunity to see in Zurich first-hand the latest work by Guillaume Pilet who bordered on the iconoclastic because of his irreverent views of artistic codes.

Text Denis Pernet



### Guillaume Pilet

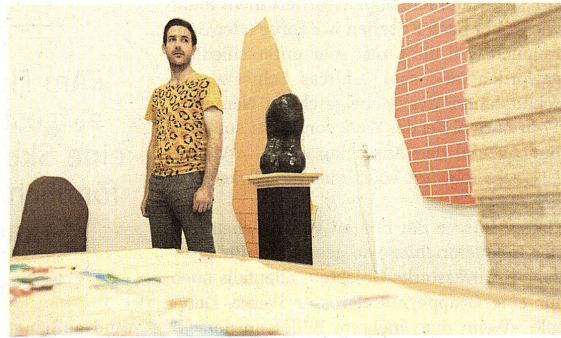
(geb. 1984 in Payerne, Ausbildung: ECAL, Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne)

*DvB.* Guillaume Pilet ist ein ziemlich frühreifes Talent: Kaum hatte er 2007 in Lausanne seinen Master in Bildender Kunst abgeschlossen, installierte er auch schon eine Einzelausstellung im Centre Culturel Suisse in Paris. Seither hat er an zahlreichen internationalen Gruppenausstellungen teilgenommen und seine Werke in Einzelausstellungen in der Schweiz, Deutschland, Frankreich und Belgien gezeigt. Neben weiteren Auszeichnungen erhielt er 2009 den Swiss Art Award des Bundesamtes für Kultur (BAK).

Guillaume Pilet sucht nicht das Neue, im Gegenteil, er findet für sich das bereits Vorhandene. Er arrangiert Gegebenes spielerisch und hierarchielos zusammen, dies aber beileibe nicht unreflek-

tiert. Virtuos jongliert er mit High und Low und gestaltet damit eine ganz persönliche Mythologie. So begegnen sich Kunst und Kunsthandwerk, Hoch- und Populärkultur, Professionalität und Amateurhaftigkeit, die Kunst indigener Völker und akademische Präsentationsformen auf gleicher Ebene. Entsprechend vielgestaltig sieht dann sein Oeuvre auch aus. Es reicht von der Skulptur aus Salzteig bis zur klassischen Bronze, von der Ölmalerei zu Batik-Prints, von kunsthandwerklichen Holzobjekten zu pseudofunktionellen Gegenständen, von der Fotografie bis zum Video, von der Linoleum-Gravur zur Ausgabe von Zeitungen. Pilet lässt sich sowohl von einem Bazarobjekt wie auch von einem Leopardenfell inspi-





rieren, dessen Motiv in etlichen seiner neuen Gemälde auftaucht. Gerne schafft Guillaume Pilet bald drollige, bald archaisch anmutende Fantasietiere und hybride Wesen aus Keramik. So hat er einen Affen modelliert, der sich an einer Kokosnuss-Pyramide festhält, oder den aus dem Wasser ragenden Kopf einer Seekuh sowie üppig sprossende Pflanzen. Seine geometrischen ‚shaped canvas‘

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Virtuos jongliert er mit High  
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erinnern punktuell an Werke von Olivier Mosset, John Armleder, Jean-Luc Manz oder die russische Avantgarde. Der Künstler versteht sich keineswegs als Missionar, da ihm die Kunst ist nicht etwa wichtiger ist als der Rest der Welt. Pilets künstlerische Methode ist die reflektierte Lässigkeit oder wie er es nennt die Haltung des interessierten Amateurs.

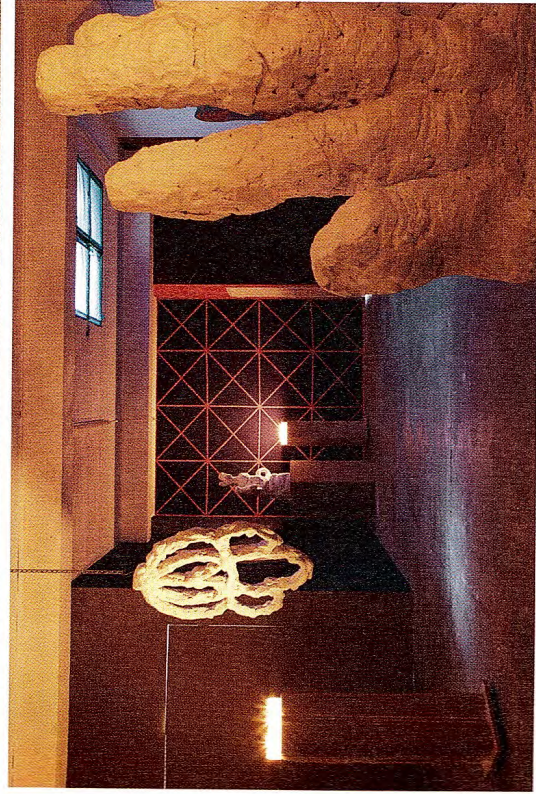
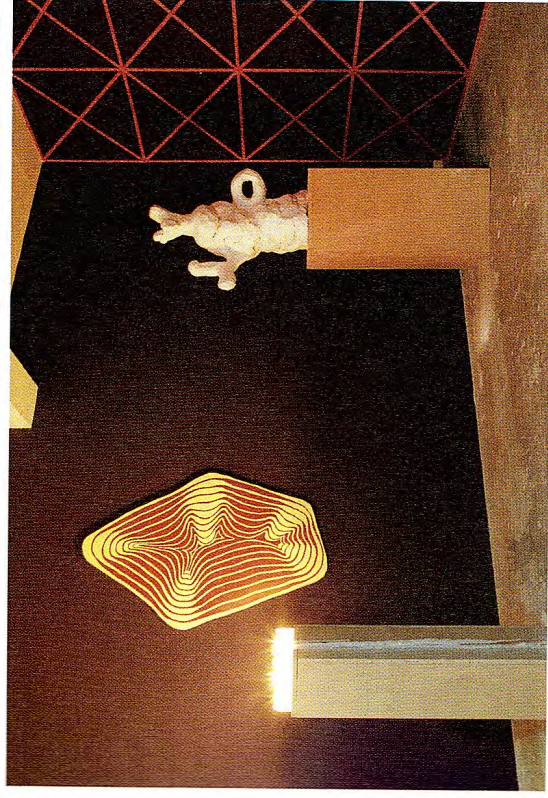


*Char Tuning*, 2011  
Installation view at Art en plein air, Môtiers, Switzerland, 2011



*Excuse Me While I Disappear*, 2010  
Solo exhibition at 1m<sup>3</sup>, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2010  
Installation view

## Guillaume Pilet — Entre crypte païenne et théâtre baroque



Vue de l'exposition «Guillaume Pilet. Excuse Me While I Disappear», 1m<sup>3</sup>, Lausanne, 2010.  
Photo: Adrien Missika

L'artiste lausannois Guillaume Pilet a investi 1m<sup>3</sup> avec une œuvre d'art totale, performative et en référence au théâtre. Plongée dans l'obscurité, l'exposition «Excuse Me While I Disappear» est uniquement éclairée à la bougie et immerge le visiteur dans un univers fascinant. Denis Pernet

1m<sup>3</sup> n'a été une vitrine d'un mètre cube que le temps de sa première exposition, par ailleurs également une performance et un accrochage dans la rue. Un groupe de «Hell's Angels» avait été invité à brûler des plaques de pavatex avec la rotation du pneu arrière de leur moto. Puis l'espace s'est agrandi, les artistes à l'initiative de ce projet ayant converti leur lieu de vie en lieu d'art. Regroupés sous le nom de Josef Hannibal, curateur imaginaire qui signe les expositions d'1m<sup>3</sup>, on retrouve le designer Stéphane Barbier-Bouvet, la commissaire d'exposition Jeanne Graff, et les artistes Adrien Missika et Benjamin Valenza.

Guillaume Pilet a vu toutes les expositions d'1m<sup>3</sup> depuis son ouverture à Ouchy en 2006 et c'est en étant conscient de cette histoire qu'il a pensé un projet site-specific à plus d'un titre. Pour l'exposition «Excuse Me While I Disappear» le lieu est entièrement obscurci, et les œuvres sont partout. Chaque cimaise est peinte, de grandes sculptures en plâtre blanc sont posées sur des socles en bois, des miroirs couvrent les vitres, un filtre bleu masque le puits de lumière, et le tout est éclairé à la bougie. Sur trois socles mobiles, des chandelles luisent et rendent visible, selon la position des supports, telle ou telle partie de l'ensemble. Entre crypte païenne et théâtre du dix-huitième siècle «à la Barry Lyndon», l'installation résonne d'une altérité à la fois archaïque et familière. Tel un théâtre de marionnettes, un rideau peint reproduisant un motif de mur en brique cache et dévoile les murs d'1m<sup>3</sup> en catelles jaunes caractéristiques de l'ancien laboratoire de boulangerie.

### Un environnement total

L'artiste emploie plusieurs systèmes pour développer sa recherche. L'imitation d'éléments existant à la limite de l'abstraction donne aux sculptures en plâtre leur ligne étrange. Un buisson taillé de manière incongrue et photographié lors d'un voyage en Asie offre une forme organique à peine domestiquée. À l'entrée, le visiteur est accueilli par un personnage zoomorphe avec un aspect qui pourrait évoquer la mythologie. Plus loin, une main géante et ouverte propose un archétype troublant au milieu des figures plus abstraites. Enfin, une sorte de grille molle est suspendue à un crochet de boucher et semble figurer un masque. Elle se superpose à une grille peinte à même le mur.

Le système géométrique qui régit trois peintures murales est très simple: l'artiste divise la surface en seize parts égales, mais les murs étant de taille très diverse, les rectangles ainsi formés accentuent les étranges proportions du lieu. Le contraste des tons sombres et très vifs est perceptible dans la pénombre. Seules deux peintures

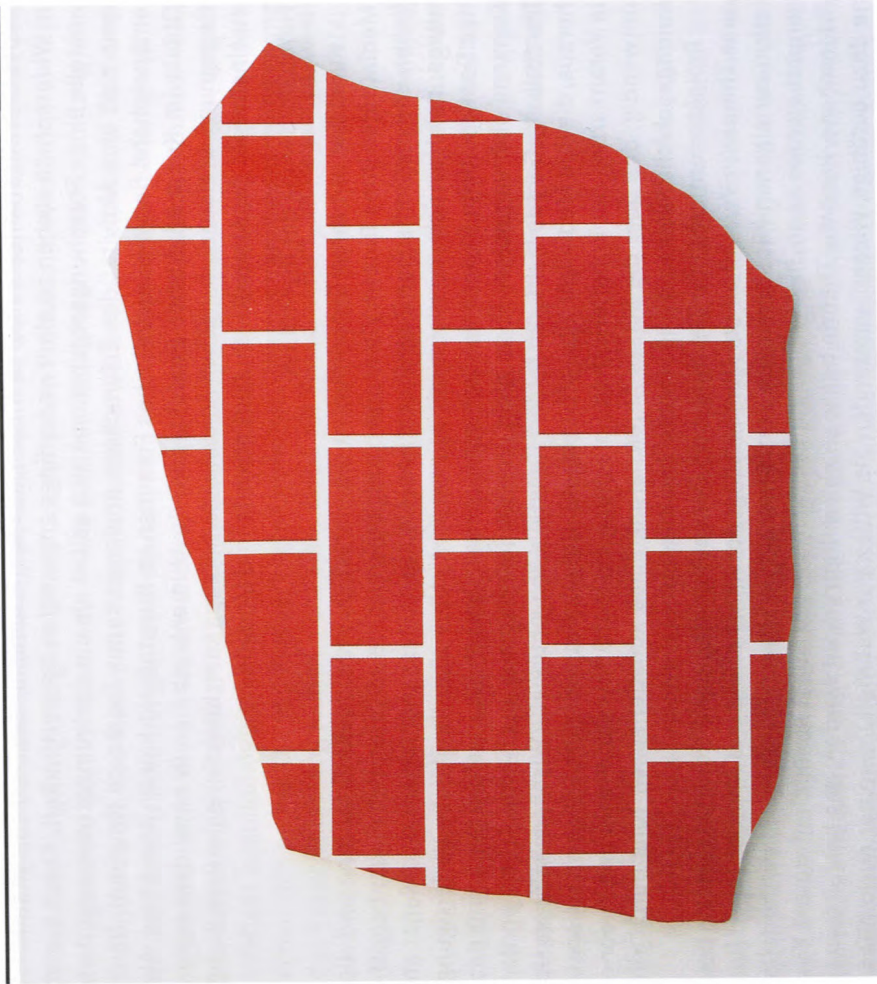


Solo exhibition with Rotwand at ZKB Zurich Art Prize, Zurich, Switzerland, 2010  
Installation view



*Pursuit of Happiness*, 2009  
Installation view at Swiss Art Award, Basel, Switzerland, 2009

## Guillaume Pilet — Seconde nature



Bricks n°1, 2006, Acrylique sur shaped canvas, Courtesy Blancpain art contemporain, Genève

L'artiste lausannois expose ses toutes nouvelles pièces à la galerie Blancpain Art Contemporain. Un bestiaire exotique de terre cuite et une vingtaine de toiles, parfois sauvages, regroupés sous l'intitulé «Pixuresque» – un titre qui mélange les idiomes entre français et anglais. *Emmanuel Grandjean*

Sur son carton d'invitation à la galerie Blancpain Art Contemporain, Guillaume Pilet s'est enfermé dans une carcasse de polystyrène. Une sorte de «Merzbau» minimum à l'intérieur duquel l'artiste, embastillé volontaire ne dévoile que sa tête. «Comme une manière d'accomplir un fantasme de créateur en me transformant en abstraction». Une rupture de l'anonymat plutôt singulière dans le champ de l'art contemporain mais que le Lausannois pratique depuis sa toute première exposition.

Sur l'invitation de «Baby I Swear It's Deja Vu» à l'espace Bellevaux à Lausanne en 2007, il reprenait la pose de Louise Bourgeois prise en photo par Robert Mapplethorpe. Image célèbre en noir et blanc où la vieille dame de l'art se trimballe un gigantesque phallus de terre cuite sous le bras.

Guillaume Pilet, artiste mimétique? Forcément, on s'interroge. «Je le fais systématiquement pour des raisons très littérales et un peu narcissiques. C'est une habitude qu'on trouve plutôt chez les artistes amateurs. Et chez Martin Kippenberger. Mais lui affectait une posture très romantique de l'artiste qui se place au centre de son œuvre. Ce qui n'est pas mon cas. En imitant Louise Bourgeois ou Pablo Picasso sur mes cartons d'exposition, l'idée serait de dire que, dans le fond, je ne propose rien de très nouveau.»

### Idée baroque

C'est peut-être un peu vite dit. En tout cas à la galerie Blancpain, Guillaume Pilet innove. Pour la première fois, il a conçu ses nouvelles pièces comme appartenant à une vraie série. Comprenez qu'il a levé le pied sur la mise en scène de son travail. Pas de tenture en batik suspendu à travers l'espace, ni de mur spécialement peint pour l'occasion. Mais onze céramiques posées sur des socles couleur anthracite et une vingtaine de tableaux dont une bonne moitié habillée en panthère. En clair, il est passablement question d'animalité dans Pixuresque, intitulé valise qui joue sur le langage. «J'aime les titres qui mélangent les idiomes. Je m'inspire souvent de film ou de chanson de Nat King Cole et d'Ella Fitzgerald pour qui j'ai beaucoup d'admiration. Dans le cas de «Pixuresque» c'est ni vraiment du français ni vraiment de l'anglais. On hésite entre pittoresque et picturesque qui sont dans le fond très proche mais ne veulent pas dire la même chose. Le premier reste strictement lié à la peinture. Le second qualifie un rapport général à l'image. Ce qui, en soi, m'intéresse davantage.» L'image baroque en l'occurrence à laquelle «Pixuresque» renvoie. «Pour autant, ce n'est pas l'époque qui m'interpelle, mais ce moment où les formes deviennent généreuses et qu'avec elles l'art se débride.»





Solo exhibition at 20qm, Berlin, Germany, 2008  
Installation view



*A certain je ne sais pas quoi*, 2008  
Solo exhibition at Centre culturel suisse, Paris, France, 2008  
Installation view



*You call it, 2008*

Solo exhibition at Prix Mobilère Young Art, Berne, Switzerland, 2008

Installation view