



PAINTINGS

An exhibition by Harold Ancart
May 12 - July 12

One afternoon when I was about seventeen or so I got stoned and decided to draw my room. I wasn't trying to make a good drawing. I was just passing the time. I sat on my bed and began. I drew the furthest wall first. I drew the ripped Method Man poster and the air conditioner in the clenched grey jaws of my window. I drew the floor strewn with clothes and CD's and some stuff which was technically garbage. I drew the foot of the bed and then I drew my own foot and shin and knee and the contours of my crunchy duvet. I worked my way up to the spiral bound sketchbook on my lap and then I drew it too. Finally I drew my own hand and the pen as well. It was a BIC ballpoint pen, the cheap white plastic kind which seemed to sprout like geodes from the insides of coffee mugs all over the world. As I drew the nib onto my page, the nib of the actual pen released a little tacky smudge of pearlescent ink. I had a legit ontological "moment" trying to understand this globule whose symbolic and physical coordinates were temporarily coterminous. Suffice to say in my state I found it really funny.

Many years later I was at the Musée d'Orsay. There were a whole bunch of masterpieces on offer but the one that really made an impression was a painting by Felix Vallaton of a black landscape under a blue night sky. In the center of the painting is a full moon and directly below is its unbroken reflection in a serendipitously wide river. Vallaton painted them nice and thick like two identical yellow pads of margarine. Looking at those circles I was struck by the thought that this was the only place in the world where the moon and its reflection were really made of the same stuff.

Harold Ancart's new landscape paintings are paintings, that is for sure. This is to say that whatever is going on in them, in terms of an idea, is going on in paint, in shapes, and in colors. Here is something that they know: In a landscape painting a tree that represents something or means something is a horrible tree and will always be super pitiful when compared to an actual tree which means nothing and is great. However, a tree in a landscape painting that doesn't try to do much but be something new in terms of shapes and colors can be great and maybe can be as great as a tree anyway. What I mean is that these paintings seem to know that their mimetic magic is only important to the extent that it creates analogies. An analogy is a relationship between terms like a metaphor but without any substitutions or hierarchies and these paintings are on equal footing with the world. This is a kind of convoluted way of saying that they are not abstract but also that they joyfully resist the imperatives of interpretation. Harold's new works don't have to mean, because they are.

Sebastian Black
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