



## **MONSTRES MARINS**

A presentation of new works by **Loïc Raguénès**  
C L E A R I N G, Beverly Hills  
February 15 - April 16, 2022

Loïc Raguénès consistently paints to a fixed degree of knowing, tasking the viewer with connecting the final dots. The universal is thus opened up by way of the artist's specifications.

Raguénès absorbs and extracts from the world then encodes his own poetics within profoundly auratic canvases. He empathizes with Roland Barthes's pronouncement that there is a "new form of the sacred," one that is "religious without theology and awe-inspiring without sumptuousness." The canvases are sparse, clearly worked to a specific point but no further. They transmit measured clues, never an answer in full. Overwhelmed by the potential contained in these works, one is challenged to ingratiate the self into Raguénès's conception of what is possible on the imaginal level and how it coincides with the passions. The distillation of a scene or an object yields brutalism measured against a private tenderness. The artist's restrained mark-making instills a sense of longing which happens by way of that which is not present. Per Alain de Botton, "There are no greater romantics than those who don't have anyone to be romantic with." The viewer desires resolution, but is only given Raguénès's sparse discretions.

From afar the picture plane is concrete- lines appear solid, fields of paint opaque. As one approaches the canvas, however, it is revealed that those same lines are cracked and frayed at the edges while the pools of color are actually scabrous- the painter's brush leaves discernable markings on the canvas. The surface quality is imperative to the success of these compositions. Every minor breach contributes to the resolution of a whole. Raguénès waxes and wanes between micro and macro concerns, allowing chemistries to coalesce with his formal concerns. Sinuous waves are thus set against what could be considered fractured backgrounds, though with Raguénès's hand there is a marked frustration of the foreground and its opposite.

Three distinct series commingle in C L E A R I N G's Beverly Hills outpost: planets, seascapes, and corridors. The latter paintings are particularly striking, taking Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* as the point of departure. This German expressionist film is wrought with violence and a severe concern for brutal aesthetics. Raguénès references the gallery's proximity to Tinseltown by bringing European cinema to Hollywood. This reference point also situates the work in alliance with Deleuze by implicating expressionism and lyrical abstraction within the confines of painting and cinema. In a 1982 lecture, Deleuze asserted that both parties were preoccupied by lightness, either in relation to white space or the principle of darkness. This concern for the interplay of luminosity and opacity becomes poetic when leveraged by Raguénès in his austere compositions.

Beyond the series, a discrete Bauhaus-inspired painting figures into the exhibition. The bedroom appears as a grim ode to desolation or else a hat tip to its context within the gallery's domestic space. Green and blue are confronted by ivory and gray, with the nightstand's orange knob punctuating the scene. The objective lack underscores Raguénès's concern for the elemental, each aspect of the painting is justified by its complicity to the whole. Negotiation with space is paramount, whether on the canvas or off. The painting almost precedes its subject, thus determining how one should approach objects and landscapes from the inside out. One must not be mistaken, though, for these canvases bear no ornament. While these paintings do engage with form to some extent, they err more closely toward lyrical abstraction.

There is a true strangeness in the combination of the works on view- their relationally is purely contingent upon the painter. The show's title, *Monstres Marins*, alludes to a carnival of sorts, perhaps making the case for unexpected contingencies. If taken for granted, the presentation may appear random, however, an occultist sensibility persists. Raguénès is an alchemist of the mundane and cinematic at once, inscribing his unequivocal purview within each canvas.

It's been said that Raguénès paints as a pianist plays, with a perpetual vacillation between frenetic expression and poignant spareness. He meanders down his own steady course with ease. There is pleasure in the consistent stillness of his paintings. He works by extracting a certain essence from the thing in order to penetrate a vital node. He labors against about-ness. Dictated only by emotion and materiality, he leverages his impervious understanding of the-way-things-are or how they appear to be. Raguénès's project exceeds what is manifest on an aesthetic level. He resolves himself to the standardization of his very own visual language, one that generates a new conception of what should be demanded from structures and the world at large.

– Reilly Davidson

**Loïc Raguénès** (born 1968 in Besançon, FR) lives and works in Douarnenez, FR.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Musée des Beaux Arts, Dole, FR; Musée François Pompon, Saulieu, FR; Circuit, Lausanne, CH; Galeria Zero, Milan; Patrick de Brock, Knokke, and  
C L E A R I N G New York / Brussels.

His work has been featured in group exhibitions at Le Consortium, Dijon; de Appel, Amsterdam; Musée des Beaux Arts de Rennes; Villa Arson, Nice; Casino Luxembourg; FRAC Ile de France, Paris and FRAC Aquitaine, Bordeaux; and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, and David Zwirner.

Loïc Raguénès's work is part of the collections of Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris; FRAC Ile de France; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne; and FRAC Bourgogne.