

ZÜRCHER GALLERY

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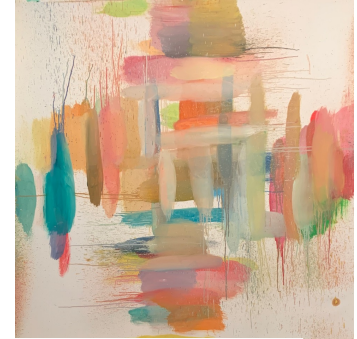
Alix Le Méléder

PAINTINGS 1998 - 2011

January 16 - February 28, 2024



Alix Le Méléder, *Untitled*,
Sept 17, 2009, oil on canvas,
74.8 x 74.8 in



Alix Le Méléder, *July 1998*,
oil on paper, 59 x 59 in

Zürcher Gallery is thrilled to present the third solo-exhibition in New York of **Alix Le Méléder** (born 1956 in Boulogne sur Seine, France). Alix graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Paris (from the Sculpture department where she studied with the sculptor Cesar Baldaccini). After graduating, she resumed painting in 1985 and moved to La Villette into a warehouse which burnt in 1990. She lost all her work. When she emerged from this big trauma, her work developed in an impressive way. The City of Paris then gave her a large studio she occupied until she stopped painting in 2011. In the early 90's she met Shirley Jaffe who introduced her to Jean Fournier gallery, the gallery of Joan Mitchell, Sam Francis and Kimber Smith in Paris. Alix showed there until 2004 before entering Zürcher Gallery, New York/Paris who now represents her work.

This new solo-show of paintings by Alix le Méléder shows the split between her oils on paper from 1998 and her very last paintings on canvas from 2009/2011. The expressionistic paintings were already featured in her first solo-show at Zürcher gallery (2021) and in a solo-show at FIAF, NY (2021). In 2022, Zürcher gallery then presented *Les Grandes Rouges (The Big Reds)*. This group of commanding paintings from 2009-2011 currently exhibited have never been shown in NY except for one of them which was included in *REVERIE*, a group-show curated by Stephen Westfall (May 23-July 20, 2011). They derive from the cycle of *The Big Reds* but one will notice that the paint marks emigrated to the 4 corners of the canvas and are more reduced in size. They are less gestural, yet still layered. This progressive reduction of means tends to emphasize the blank center. At that point, through her idiosyncratic protocol, she seems to be emptying the individual will from her painting process. In Alix le Méléder's work, for every action

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there appears a requisite result of restraint or a negation. *Untitled, April 28, 2011* is one of the ultimate paintings she made. Alix stopped painting in July 2011. She had completed her work. The ethical and philosophical nature of her decision to stop painting comes from her work's internal logic. Alix could typically go on working but it would be meaningless. She felt she had nothing else to say, so echoing Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, she says "I'd prefer not to".

Alix Le Méléder comments : « I realized one day that there was a desire for expression in my paintings and I wanted to free myself from it. I had to erase myself and paint again with color. I felt the need to blow out the space even more, that's why I came to the square format. And then to escape a kind of horizontal face to face with the canvas, I decided to rotate it."

The painting turns but not the artist. This is even the path of this centrifugal painting: gradually deporting the color and painting towards the edge until it is expelled. The space thus exploded oscillates between the centrifugal and the centripetal, like a target. The white is not empty, it is the center of the target. The paint is deposited on the canvas with such evidence and there, the painting presents itself, it is very simple. Painting is no longer a matter of composition, it is no longer a projection space, painting now means letting go in order to be only pure presence, in silence « I sometimes think I'm like Sisyphus, relying neither on imagination nor on a story, a narrative. Nothing but the canvas and the four marks. I work constantly to reach this state of emptiness, but a vacuum traversed by a great tension, a bit like a force field. Sisyphus is also the road to becoming, the death cycle – rebirth of Hinduism or Buddhism. In daily life in India, Hindu gestures of offering reveal their relationship to the world. I have always thought that my work was an offering like the Hindus, a "puja", a puja in the very process of creation. I have made many stays in India since 1976 until the last one in 2017 where I stayed several months in a rest-house on the Ghats and the Ganges. I most often returned to the same places in northern India, Benares, Rajasthan and Bengal. My journey goes in the direction of simplicity and truth, towards the "global" and the universal, also and above all towards decentering; and is it not this decentering that specifies my work with this centripetal thrust that leaves the central void of my paintings more and more gaping. All these elements are present and recurrent in my work: decentering and simplification, simplicity. Expression of the global immanence and Spirit. A work like a quest or a journey. . It seems to me that in my work, death is present, as much as life, forming a single whole. Presence of life and death; a vision that comes back to me of the bonfires of Benares with the children who wave their kite among grieving dogs and families. By observing life there on the banks of the Ganges, one can have the impression that everything is

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reborn every day, almost in the same way since always, it is the beginning of the "same" again, the eternal return: Life goes towards the death that regenerates life again... It's like circular to the point of evoking infinity. The act of painting one day in July 2011 stopped... In fact, I made a long initiatory journey thanks to PAINTING as a medium, and these trips to India surely helped me in this journey by the healing that they allowed me. I felt all along the way a great closeness to India in my relationship to the world, to life and to nature; Painting took me on a kind of initiatory journey with its experiences and obstacles, with its phenomena that brought me to awareness. Each step of this journey had to be based on knowledge and not on a simple intuition. These paintings are the manifestations of a phenomenon of shifting consciousness between death or non-being and birth or re-birth. To reach this state, I had to work on a negation of myself, a kind of annihilation, a necessary passage to go towards the unknown. «
Alix Le Meleder, May 18/ August 27, 2022.