

When you think about it, it is not that difficult to spot real work of art. True enough, the visitors of museums and galleries can be wrong and end up enjoying easy works that are just fashionable at given time. But some objective criteria (yes !) can be used and if one pays a little attention it is possible to not fall into the trap laid for you by the art market. These criteria are Shock and Awe !

Let's talk about Shock first and start With a piece of advice : "Always take some time when you are in front of work by Eric Bourguignon ". If some people only pass by, just looking for booze and friends at the opening of Bourguignon's shows, well, their loss. Because if they leave without having really looked at anything, they'll quickly forget the little they've seen in the haze of wine and impending hangover and will just barely remember bright colors, abstract landscapes and chaotic skies.

Idiots !

If you happen, dear reader, to meet some of these peopole, please, help them. Make them take some time to pay attention to the works for at least as long as it would take them to pour themselves a drink. For Bourguignon's works, alas for him and his dealers, cannot suffer passers by. They're not lurid and in fashion, they're not trying to please everybody like a cheap TV show or collectors just interested in the signature of the works. However, Bourguignon's paintings are not difficult - far from it- but they sometimes, require more than half a second to appreciate. I should know, it happened to me.

When I visited his studio, a tidy little room where canvases are neatly stacked along the walls, Eric Bourguignon let me take a look at any work I wanted to and then put them one after the other on a large easel in middle of the room. But the same little drama happened every single time to the point where it became embarrassing. For every painting I picked I first had the same impression of slight disappointment, the feeling that the work was not as good as the one I had seen just before, that this new one might be a little bit too gestural and almost botched. I feel a bit ashamed just telling you this. Because the idiot I was telling you about ,well, that's me too. Because when I took some time in front of the easel, less than half a minute maybe, then it all changed. Like a riddle one can solve without figuring out how but whose answer sheds light on the confusion and the darkness of a thought, the painting suddenly takes over , and becomes so present that one can barely ignore it. It closes like a trap of color from which one cannot escape unscathed.

If you really understand what happens at that time, when then, you're smarter than me. Awe, anyhow, is complete. And the works are even more surprising because understanding how they work is so hard. Think of it that way. What Bourguignon does should be a recipe for disaster: bright pinks meddling on turquoise skies, above ocher lands where you also find greys and blacks and a tiny character hidden at the bottom of a tree.

But this is where you figure out how great a colorist the artist is. With no proper detail there are still so many layers and things to discover. And every brush stroke seems both accidental and so necessary that it's almost frightening to think that the wole balance of the canvas can rest on something so little. But it is precisely because Bourguignon pays attention to these little things that his landscapes, with their large skylines, are so lyrical and seem to outgrow the canvas they are painted on. What seems to have been made rapidly shows the depth of the painter and the precise tension of strokes that are free, loose, and almost calligraphic.

One thing is certain : once you really look at these paintings, you can't escape them.

What happened ?

A painting that is deep, vibrant, and sensual. A painting that calls for one thing : Awe.

Nature designed carnivorous plants that attract insects with their bright colors; Bourguignon's paintings can also qualify as such colored stratagems. Looking harmless, they wait till someone finally looks for more than a second and trap the poor (or should I say lucky?) slob once and for all.

The trap is closed, end of story.

Eric Bourguignon is not a painter. He's a trap maker.

Jean Daniel Mohier