

TEMPLON



Press release
25 November 2019

JAN FABRE

L'HEURE SAUVAGE

9 January – 22 February

Opening: Thursday 9 January from 5.30 to 8.30 pm



Berlin/Tornado's - (I), 1988

Jan Fabre – visual artist, author and theatre artist – is back in the capital of his homeland to offer an immersion into the depths of *L'Heure Sauvage* [The Fierce Hour] and present-day vanities.

Jan Fabre is considered as one of the most important and innovative figures on the international contemporary art scene. A radical artist whose works have often unleashed passionate responses, Jan Fabre had his own “Blue Period” during the 1980’s, centring on the ballpoint pen, his then favourite material, with which he meticulously covered large expanses of paper to create his metaphorical and tormented drawings. In 1988, at the age of 30, Fabre found himself in Berlin, spending sleepless nights obsessively drawing, colouring and rubbing out an entire cosmogony featuring tornados, cyclones, giant waves and storms. The highly distinctive metallic blue of his disposable pen form mesmerizing landscapes, their details so dense and intense they almost seem to tear the paper. Each drawing thus emerges as the peak of a one-man performance, a powerful act on the verge of hallucination and exhaustion.

The young artist, penniless at the time, sold the whole series to a generous patron. The drawings remained rolled-up, untouched and forgotten for 30 years. Recently unearthed, they are now on public display for the first time, taking the viewer on a disconcerting journey through the genesis of Jan Fabre's imagination.

In recent years, Jan Fabre has returned to blue ballpoint ink. Fans of this artistic technique can also see *Le regard en dedans (L'Heure Bleue)*, a permanent installation created in 2011-2013 for the Oldmasters Museum's royal staircase at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, walking distance from Galerie Templon's Brussels space.

The exhibition title, *L'Heure Sauvage*, refers to The Hour Blue defined by entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre. It conjures up that brief moment of silence when Nature awaits the dawn with bated breath; a fundamental yet fleeting moment when life is suspended between two worlds, night and day, in an enthralling near darkness echoed in the artist's metallic works with their subtle suggestion of curves.

The blue ink becomes a skin, which both conceals and reveals, either reflecting the light like a mirror or shrouding the viewpoint. With his new sculptures in Murano glass, Fabre covers human skulls with ink-stained handprints. The skulls act as a mirror, giving us an unsettling vision of our own mortality. Like strange fetishes - vanities or self-portraits? - they are trapped under skeletons of animals: birds, rodents, and an entire fauna we imagine surviving the human race yet already decimated.

By bringing together these 1988 drawings with his 2018 sculptures, Jan Fabre has created – possibly unintentionally – a troubling collision between his artistic concerns, fascinated as he is by the limits of human nature and catharsis, and our contemporary preoccupations with environmental threats and mass extinction. The Berlin drawings are thus premonitory, giving Jan Fabre's works a yet more apocalyptic dimension as they explore the animal world – with his beetles and stuffed animals – as well as the human condition.

Born in 1958, Jan Fabre lives and works in Antwerp. He is an inveterate night-time writer and draftsman, creating sculptures and installations that tackle recurring topics, including metamorphosis, the dialogue between art and science, humankind's relationship to nature, and the artist as a warrior of beauty. Recent notable exhibitions of his work include a retrospective at the Louvre (2008) and solo shows at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Musée d'Art Moderne in St Etienne and the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands (2011), MAXXI in Rome, Palazzo Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria, Forte Belvedere in Florence, Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg (2016) and Fondation Maeght in Saint Paul de Vence (2018). The Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Arras will be presenting an exhibition of his work from 2 March to 4 May 2020. Four of the artist's permanent works will be officially inaugurated at the Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples on 21 December 2019, and his site-specific work *Hommage à un esprit libre* will be inaugurated at the Fondation HELENIS GGL in Montpellier on 13 March 2020. For the latest news on Jan Fabre: [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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