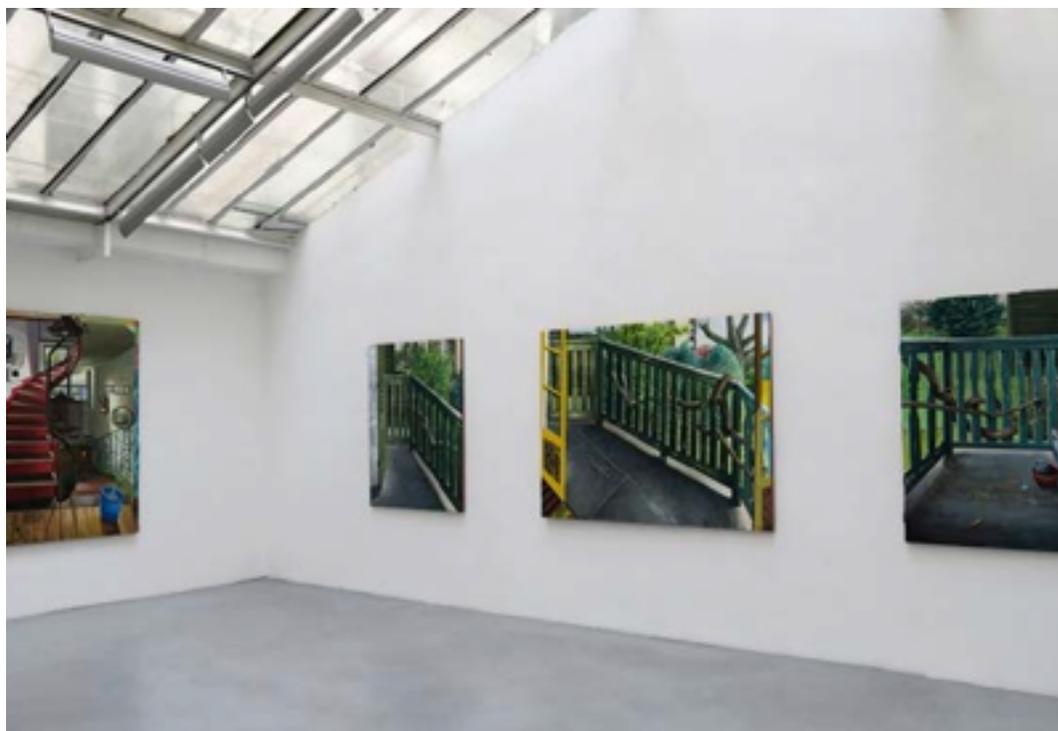


LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART

December 9, 2016

By Marion Vasseur Raluy



Installation shot of the exhibition "Mathieu Cherkit, The Balustrade," 2016. Galerie Jean Brolly, Paris.

Mathieu Cherkit paints the same interior at all times, the house in which he lives, using different tools and techniques and using the same medium over and over again. Cherkit is invited to exhibit at the "Gallerists," a show run by Stéphane Corréard at the Carreau du Temple in Paris this weekend (see page 9); the artist is represented by Galerie Jean Brolly. Passed twice by the Salon de Montrouge, in 2008 and in 2010, he knew there is a real springboard before integrating this Parisian gallery. Recently, his practice has matured, it has been freed from the weight of references. The work now embraces more serenely the subjects that obsess him, the shapes, the colors and the material.

It goes without saying that the current revival of interest among artists and curators in the issue of the staging of the domestic space is not without raising debates in the world of contemporary art. Recent exhibitions - such as "Domestic Life" at Parc Saint Léger in Pougues-les-Eaux in 2014 - opened a discussion between intimacy and otherness by associating issues of representation and social hierarchy. The exhibition questioned the place of life in its social and political issues. Many contemporary artists question themselves and take an interest in the private space - a place of comfort or adventure but also of inner conflict and withdrawal - as a source of fascination and inspiration. From the outset, the work of Mathieu Cherkit questions the close links to this problem.

He has been painting the family home for over seven years, often coming back at the same rooms, the stairs, the attic, the kitchen, the dining room. The subject is always linked to the place of life. The painter, within the four walls, is resolutely midway between the comfort zone and the medium economy. He seems to be more interested

in talking about painting than in constructing a political or sociological reflection on space. The place is only an excuse to paint. Yet the chosen subject underlines the ambivalence of his work. Between the narrative aspect of the paintings and the formal games to which they engage, the spectator cannot help but invent a story with his own memories and knowledge. For the painter, however, only the composition and the structure of the whole matter. The truncated perspective is linked to its production conditions, without recoil, it is almost glued to the place, the pattern being closer to his body, his palette and his brush. The objects enlarge and deform depending on the gaze. Everything is combed through, reorganized and reshaped. From the real world to the construction of a mental image, he reinvents the place to play with the material. He likes to move the objects to compose and to rhythm the whole: a scale will block the right part of the table when a plant will frame the left side. I want my paintings to be nice, enjoyable, and funny to watch. Tables are pattern games. Here and there the eye catches bits of information with reference to works or currents of abstraction: a black square on a white background in the fireplace of the living room, or geometric pattern on flower wallpaper from the seventies. References to art history intersect the representations of obsolete objects of everyday life and modern comfort. The ensemble discusses a painting that speaks for itself. It is as if the tools that are used, squeegee, brush, sponge, and techniques restored, thickness of the material, saturated color, truncated perspective, allow this dialogue. Even when Cherkit integrates the human figure into *Solar Garden*, he continues this discussion. He paints Holbein's recumbent lying between carrots and potatoes in the garden of his house. He suggests neither suffering nor morbidity, but matter decomposed in the pictorial sense of the term, through the yellowish and decrepit lying. The artist thus evokes his relationship to light: "I had the desire to paint the brass of the kitchen at night. Like armor in classical painting, I try to reproduce the specific reflection that is on the pans at night. In a game of back and forth between his projections of interior space and references to the history of art, he composes his paintings at the confluence of the mental image and the tangible. Basically, by analyzing the works of Mathieu Cherkit, he seems to portray the real as an abstract painter.

GALERISTES, stand de la Galerie Jean Brolly (Paris), ouvert au public les 10 et 11 décembre 2016, Carreau du temple, 4 Rue Eugène Spuller, 75003 Paris, <http://galeristes.fr/>

L'ŒIL DU COLLECTIONNEUR, du 10 décembre 2016 au 26 mars 2017, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, 1 place Jean Arp, 67000 Strasbourg, <http://www.musees.strasbourg.eu/>