



**Jérôme
Zonder
Fatum**

la maison rouge

Exhibition
February 19 –
May 10, 2015

Press Release

Jérôme Zonder

*Fatum**

Exhibition: February 19 – May 10, 2015

Opening preview: Wednesday, February 18 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Press Preview from 4 to 6 p.m.

La maison rouge is proud to present the first monographic exhibition featuring Jérôme Zonder's work to be held in Paris. The show will run from February 19 to May 10, 2015.

For more than ten years, Jérôme Zonder (b. 1974 in Paris) has been developing a body of work of great virtuosity, centered on drawings. Primarily executed in lead pencil and charcoal, often in large formats, his works elicit admiration yet contain elements of fright.

References to Albrecht Dürer, Robert Crumb, Rembrandt, Charles Burns, Otto Dix and Walt Disney appear cheek by jowl in narrative compositions that are often cruel: «Narrative draws us into a drawing – the only thing holding us back is our physicality. When I draw, I am poised between distance and proximity, figuration and abstraction, attraction and repulsion.»

Jérôme Zonder has conceived his exhibition at la maison rouge as a perambulation, inviting visitors to step inside a world of drawings. They cover the floors and walls, creating a spatial and mental pathway that reflects the artist's preoccupations.

«In 2009, I thought I'd detected a palpable increase in violence. I began a series featuring invented millennial nine-year-olds. I explored the theme of the birthday party and had my children play out recent news events marked by violence, childhood, cruelty and love.» Today, his millennials are teens. After childhood, with its terrors and nightmares, comes adolescence, an age of internal upheaval, metamorphosis, realizations and

uncertainties. Poetic and dark, the scenes in this series highlight the violence and tragedy erupting in individual lives and on the grand scale of history. They also have the stylistic immediacy of a child's drawing and demonstrate the prowess of his technique. Many questions arise: How should we interpret these images? What is our relationship with the everyday violence around us and what kind of witnesses do we make?

* *Fate* (from the Latin):
A chain of events deemed to be inevitable.

Jeu d'enfants #4,
2011 Graphite and charcoal on paper, 200x150cm,
collection O. Malingue, France



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Conversation between Antoine de Galbert and Jérôme Zonder

Interview by Yamina Benaï
L'OFFICIEL ART, Sept. - Oct. - Nov. 2014

Yamina Benaï: Jérôme Zonder's work is powerful and complex. At first glance, it is difficult to apprehend. Then the viewer becomes fascinated with the form (his obsession with detail) and substance (the inscription of archaic themes in universal history). Antoine de Galbert, how did you come to discover his work?

Antoine De Galbert: I first saw his work in a group show at the Galerie Eva Hober about ten years ago. A decade seems short to a collector like me, engaged in a slow process of learning about an artist's work, but must seem long to a young artist! Since 2004, I have acquired five of Zonder's works for my collection.

YB: Zonder took up his art seriously in 2001 after graduating from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. When you first met him, early in his career, you saw some of his early large-format works. What about them got your attention?

AG: I really liked his tone, conveyed in a comic book mode, at once funny and somber, in the manner of Crumb. I used to love that particular medium, so that was a big factor. It paved the way for me to appreciate the rest of his work.

YB: Jérôme Zonder, your art covers a broad stylistic spectrum. What's your take on how your practices have changed?

Jérôme Zonder: I first set out to convey the world's complexity and heterogeneous nature, and conceived of a polygraphic approach with cellular drawings a personal narrative line and a more conventional style of representation, recalling my self-portraits of 2003. I concentrated on these three aspects and on a key underlying issue in

my work – that of pushing the limits – that evolves, goes dormant and reappears at intervals, each time in a different way.

YB: While retaining your original focus, you gave it different forms and added signs over time. You invented a new world that is dense and terrifying, a never-ending source of questions for viewers.

JZ: My approach traces the development of thought in connection with what's happening at a given instant T. It's a back-and-forth kind of process: my personal intuitions interact with my topic of reflection as well as the end result on paper, which sends my thoughts in another direction. My working principle operates by capillarity. I start with an initial postulate, then pursue the ramifications to explore new territories.

AG to Zonder: This converges with my initial impression of your work. I've already mentioned your comic-book approach. But the organic, abstract quality of your drawings also gave me the impression of being inside a brain packed with characters and figures and of gradually seeing a path open up to a representation of something unspeakable. I didn't understand it right away.

AG to YB: Jérôme Zonder has addressed the issue of violence first as it relates to children, then via the Shoah theme, explicitly represented in his drawings of 2014, especially *Chair grise #7*, a large-format work measuring 150 x 200 cm.

Over time, his work has developed and leaves no room for others. When I bought the first abstract drawings by Zonder, I could imagine whatever I liked. I thought they expressed deep anxieties, exorcised through drawing, like recovering from a nightmare by talking about it. Subsequently, Zonder engaged in art that viewers love or hate, because he leaves no room for the observer. How can art reviewers or intellectuals write about concentration camps or about a child that kills another child? There's nothing more to be said.



The more Jérôme Zonder narrows the focus of his obsessions, the more he pushes others away. Zonder's works demand a much higher level of commitment on the part of their acquirer, who lives among them, than other artists' works. That's another reason why Zonder interests me.

JZ: (...) When I graduated from the Beaux-Arts, the conceptual field occupying the art scene seemed to draw on thought from the 1970s. I wanted to find my own sphere of expression and ground it in behaviors, not topics of engagement, which interested me, but were not enough in themselves. Nor was I satisfied with total immersion in a theme and drawing my own story from it. Pushing the limits was my way of linking two sources of inspiration that, individually, did not suit me well enough.

YB: Following your intuition, you used cellular drawings. From there, you developed a more complex relationship with the narrative form, using stories from individual lives and history. In 2009, you invented personified figures of children (Pierre-François, Baptiste and Garance), then had them «grow up» over time. In 2014, your millennials were 14 years old. Even if, on the surface, the subjects of your drawings seem different, they all come from the same root, like the root node of a data tree structure. The Shoah is clearly present in the 2014 series *Chair grise*, but also perceptible in the violence, inflicted or suffered, portrayed in your drawings of the children. This ties in with another of your characteristics, i.e. the density of your output, as well as the consistency of its artistic quality and its technical virtuosity. In the world of Jérôme Zonder, drawing is ubiquitous!

JZ: In an intuitive way, violence has always oriented my choice of topic and shaped the relationship that I wanted to have with its materialization. I'm talking about violence that we have inherited and violence in today's world. The radicality of the drawings ensure the high level of intensity

needed to make people receptive to what I want to show. Realizing this, I quickly adopted a strategy of pushing the limits. The horizon became the field of investigation as well as its objective. It's something that defines and opens up at the same time, like a line opening up to become a space. This idea is what gives drawings their «wide angle» magnitude and thus, in my view, their character. The art of drawing covers everything from Lascaux to Ingres or, among my own works, from *Chair grise #1* to the portrait of Pierre-François. A drawing takes on meaning because it can transcend self-imposed limits. In fact, that's the reason for drawing: it invades reality while evoking a symbolic narrative. I'm reminded of the main character in Fred's wonderful comic album *Philémon*, who takes a journey on the letters that spell «Atlantic Ocean.»

AG: To the point where the drawing comes off the page! It's very interesting! That's what we want to show in the exhibition at la maison rouge. Jérôme Zonder extends drawing until it becomes something else, invading the space from floor to ceiling. It's hard to imagine him holding a paint brush or camera! He has redefined drawing so that it explodes. And, yes, his technical mastery is impressive. I was stunned by the quality of his drawings and by the way they can transcend their own art form. Zonder knows full well that if he goes too far technically, he'll have nothing left to say. As for the power of his work, he's producing on a colossal scale without losing focus. That's unusual. On today's contemporary art scene, it's obvious that the concept of work ethic is on the decline.

YB: Jérôme Zonder, you give the impressing of being constantly focused. It's as if your thinking has been infiltrated by your obsession with drawing. Your work shows a deep sense of humanity, along with an implacable, steely resolve. You dare explore avenues that other artists have already taken and you aren't afraid to face or confront history.



AG: I think Jérôme Zonder belongs to a generation of artists that have revived the work ethic. That's also what one hears from European pop artist Martial Raysse, whose strokes are magnificent, who gets into and stays with the story, and whose heavily criticized paintings are the fruit of a studio artist's labors.

JZ: There's the time for the work required and the time frame of the story. A long, regular effort that cannot be compressed. It's hard for me not to work 12 hours a day. The density of the material is a function of the time spent accumulating minuscule portions of space. It's as if I wanted to feel the immensity of molecular reality and thus introduce, at least potentially, all of the stories that have come before me. After all, one can't produce anything alone. It's a dialogue, uninterrupted through the generations since the Paleolithic Age. (...)

YB: You explore avenues that have already frequently been the object of exploration and (often brilliant) interpretation. In doing so, you take a big risk which is what artists, writers and musicians do. However, when you appropriate these signs of universal (in)humanity, you make them your own. Expressing one's own suffering by drawing it – or writing about it – is a way of understanding or even exorcising it, but this is a process that takes time. In your case, one notes a certain precocity.

JZ: Yes, I start by selecting and deciphering elements from the past and my focus might be more intense due to the direct link with «my» family history. But I think it's because I belong to a generation that has inherited this characteristic. What's important in my work is to define the problem, i.e. determine how to represent the body in relation to history. This has been challenged and loaded with taboos owing to feelings of guilt over the Shoah. It's urgent to frame this issue properly, because we've been sold a pack of lies about the end of history. Naturally, it's a scam. How do

you regain the initiative after that? We find ourselves in a continuum of individual and intrasocietal tensions and rivalries, with a death wish that leads to the principle of never-ending war. It's coded into the DNA of our species. Political games make these narratives more complex – and make them necessary – but manipulation can only go so far. I'm talking about the period during which I was raised. Born in 1974, I grew up in a world that was about to end, but didn't know it... This world kept telling me that everything was going to be fine, even though history told a different story. Nobody with any sense can fail to see such blatant contradictions. Fairly early, I realized that something was wrong and that my feeling of unease was related to the past that I inherited. All of these parameters taken together are what prompted me to explore these particular avenues. I also felt a need for figuration: feeling the weight of history causes you to ponder how to represent it.

AG: Zoran Music spent forty years drawing the camps. Stéphane Mandelbaum did, too, very early on, but he experienced what he drew, à la Nan Goldin. I think that you – having reached age 40 and using your cerebral approach – have carried out the work of appropriation with a view to building something.

YB: It's almost inevitable that the descendants of Shoah survivors, like those of people from colonized countries, bear the inner marks of a trauma that they only know by ricochet and feel deeply involved. For the living, the biggest challenge is to distance themselves from the suffering. They shouldn't have to carry a burden that isn't theirs.

JZ: That's one of the big issues that, in many countries, remain to be resolved. If a society adopts a strategy of avoidance or quasi-denial in the face of the principle of responsibility, i.e. culpability, it will end up being oblivious to the true tenor of things, which will ultimately cause its structure



to break down. While the discourse of monothink is intolerable, the combat against racism is a real responsibility.

AG: In and through your work, Jérôme, you've managed to get to the stage where your drawing «takes off» as if you were on the verge of taking it to 3D. There's really a sculptural dimension, as if the drawing had stepped off the page into real life.

YB: The subject is very dark, but your drawings show tremendous vitality. It's almost as if they were alive, with a pulse and a heartbeat! Isn't that another reason why drawings can migrate anywhere and everywhere, one example being their so-called invasion of painting? That implies premeditation... that your current works are based on ideas that have matured over the years. When you were still at the Beaux-Arts, you went to the Louvre and methodically copied paintings by great masters like Bosch, Durer, Ingres and Degas and ancient statues by anonymous Greek sculptors. In this way, you learned your art and appropriated the technical aspects of form and distance in order to – as you put it – «acquire new skills of representation.»

JZ: Here again, I'm talking about the historical relationship. Yes, everything fell into place at the Beaux-Arts. I wasn't working in the comic book style at that point. I was doing self-portraits, treating them like a catalogue raisonné of the human body or anatomical plates done with a surgeon's precision. I looked obsessively at the parts of my body. For one life-sized portrait, I spent six months doing things like counting and reproducing the hairs on my forearms. (...)

JZ: Before I make a drawing, I spend a lot of time studying records and photographs related to my chosen subject. Then I put all of these materials away and slowly process my insights until I am ready to draw. I look for a way to structure the space and try to enter it. I don't use an eraser, which would damage the paper and contravene my basic principle of construction, which is to rely on white space, not the drawing. «Real» drawing rules out

undoing or redoing. A drawing will only be worthwhile if it's what the artist wants it to be. That's why I chose drawing: it doesn't allow for second thoughts! (...)

YB: In 2013, you moved into a new phase, using your fingers to draw with. It's like as if the artist and the drawing become one.

JZ: I was looking for a «primitive art» effect. Men used to draw combat scenes on cave walls to establish their space. Gradually, men became sedentary, which made natural resources a bone of contention between individuals. Over time, their space took on a mythological dimension that has permeated all of the spaces that we now occupy. Yes, the theme of the Shoah is there, but it's present as part of universal history. The history of the world.... inside us, we carry the instinct for survival, terror and massacre. As you know, one of my recurrent themes is to focus on three characters who «grow up» over time and have now reached their teens. I see the concept of adolescence as an opportunity, allowing me to bring about a metamorphosis in the subject and in the style of drawing. At the same time, I think teens have a more thoughtful relationship to history, which I'd previously treated from the angle of blind, raging violence reproduced by children. Again, I asked myself how I should represent it, how to create images inspired by history's most terrible pages. I decided to switch from a narrative with detailed drawings to finger-drawing, which is like capturing history live.

AG: I share the despairing gaze that Jérôme Zonder fixes on humanity. I maintain a certain reserve, being wary of others. That's why I'm a collector. I shun humans and gravitate towards art works, which are like friends.

JZ: Everyday life is easy. It's everything else that gives me a sense of deep despair. The good news is the creative impulse.



Jérôme Zonder

Born in 1974, lives and works in Paris, France
Represented by Eva Hober Gallery, Paris
www.evahober.com

Solo Exhibitions

- 2014** *Zone grise*,
Le Parvis, Tarbes, France
Au village,
Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France
- 2013** *Chairs grises*,
Eva Hober Gallery, Paris, France
- 2011** *Les enfants du paradis*,
Eva Hober Gallery, Paris, France
- 2010** *Poussière de guignol*,
Eva Hober Gallery, Paris, France
- 2009** *Puppet show dust*,
One and J Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
- 2008** *Matières narratives*,
Eva Hober Gallery, Paris, France
- 2006** *Khaos*,
Gana Art Foundation, Seoul, North Korea
- 2004** *Mise au point*,
Eva Hober Gallery, Paris, France
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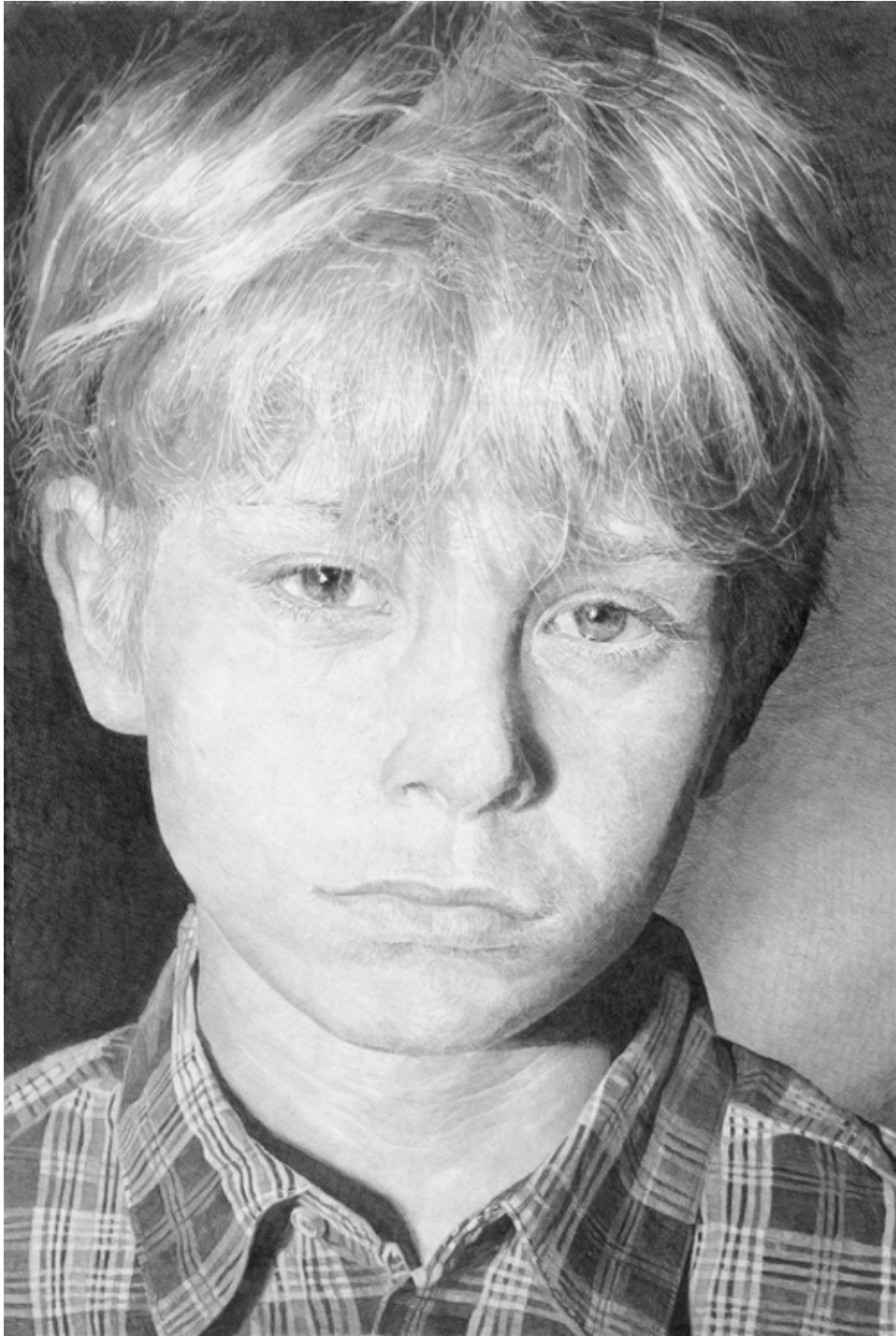
Group Exhibitions

- 2015** *Genre humain* -
Curator : Claude Levêque -
Palais Jacques Cœur de Bourges,
Bourges, France (upcomming)
- 2014** *Le Mur - Collection Antoine de Galbert*,
La maison rouge, Paris, France
Prendre le temps d'un morceau d'odalisque,
Aeroplastics, Brussels, Belgium
Château sauvage,

- Saardanlische Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2013** *De leur temps 4*,
Hangar à bananes,
Nantes Museum of Fine Arts, France
Voyages intérieurs,
La Maison Particulière, Brussels, Belgium
La belle peinture 2,
Phoenix Les Halles, Maurice
Château sauvage, Merzig, Germany
La belle peinture 2,
Palais Pistori, Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2012** *Gromiam*,
Musée International des Arts Modestes,
Sète, France
La belle peinture est derrière nous,
Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France
Maribor, Slovenia
- 2011** *L'apocalypse de Dürer 500 ans*,
Museum of Drawings and Original Prints,
Gravelines, France
Tous cannibales,
La maison rouge, Paris, France
ME Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany
Der schlaf der vernunft
(a proposition of D. Deroubaix),
Galerie de l'Ecole des Arts Décoratifs,
Strasbourg, France
- 2010** *Qui es-tu Peter?*
Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, France
Les maîtres fous,
Freies Museum, Berlin, Germany
La belle peinture est derrière nous,
Sanat Limani, Istanbul, Turkey
Cankaya Art Center, Ankara, Turkey
Vice @ Lu,
Le Lieu Unique, Nantes, France



Jérôme Zonder, *Fatum*
Exhibition: February 19 – May 10, 2015



Pierre-François,
2011, Graphite and charcoal on paper, 100 x 70 cm, private collection, France



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Pierre-Francois et le chat qui rit,
Graphite and charcoal on paper, 200 x 150 cm, private collection, France



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Jérôme Zonder, *Fatum*
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Jeu d'enfants #1,
2010, Graphite and charcoal on paper, 160 x 160, private collection, France



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Vues de l'atelier
Marc Damage



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medias partners



annual partners



la maison rouge est membre du réseau Tram



And also

Mathieu Briand

Et In Libertalia Ego

February 19 – May 10, 2015.

Starting in 2008, Mathieu Briand set up a temporary studio on a small island in the Channel of Mozambique (Madagascar). This is a sacred place, inhabited for generations by a Malgache family that agreed to allow Mathieu Briand to invite a number of artists to create works in situ or send instructions for others to do so.

Since 2012, la maison rouge has supported Mathieu Briand's initiative and will present it in an exhibition running from February to May, 2015.

* Francis Alÿs, frères Chapuisat, Dejode & Lacombe, Jacin Giordano, Thomas Hirschhorn, Koo Jeong-A, Pierre Huyghe, Gabriel Kuri, Prue Lang & Richard Siegal, Juan Pablo Macias, Mike Nelson, Damián Ortega, Rudy Riccioti, Yvan Salomone/Gilles Mahé.

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Visitor information

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Getting here

Metro: Quai de la Rapée (line 5)
or Bastille (lines 1, 5, 8)
RER : Gare de Lyon
Bus : 20, 29, 91

Access

The galleries are accessible to the disabled and mobility impaired visitors

Opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday from 11am to 7pm
Late nights Thursday until 9pm
January 1st and May 1st

Admission

Full price: € 9
Concessions: € 6 (13-18, students, full-time artists, over 65s)
Free for under 13s, job-seekers, companions to disabled visitors, members of ICOM and Amis de la maison rouge
Annual pass: full price € 24
Annual pass: concessions € 16,50
Free and unlimited access to the exhibitions
Free access or reduced rates to related events.



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