

PHILIPPE LABAUNE GALLERY



FRANÇOIS AVRIL VERTICAL SILENCE

Thursday, April 20 to Saturday, May 27, 2023
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 20 from 6-8 PM

Philippe Labaune Gallery is pleased to present *Vertical Silence*, a solo exhibition of paintings and drawings by French artist François Avril. The artist's first presentation with the gallery marks his debut showcase in the United States. A storyteller influenced by comics and bandes dessinées, he deconstructs the “clear line style” popularized by Hergé to create something novel that walks the edge between fine art and illustration.

On view is a selection of works created by Avril between 2018 and 2023, including several large-scale paintings made exclusively for his inaugural exhibition in New York City. With a rhythm decided purely by the observer, the artist oscillates between the worlds of narrative and contemporary art. Avril's architectural renderings of Paris, New York, Tokyo, and Brittany are spotlighted, allowing the viewer to travel at their leisure while being steered by the narrator's dependable and steady black ink. As the Parisian artist is galvanized by the continual changes of modern metropolises, the dynamic spirit of each place remains omnipresent. The poetic and subtle hues used for his series *La Seine* present a graceful and romantic view of the City of Lights—its pale colors dramatically contrast with the force of the red saturation used in the drawings of New York portraying an upbeat energy. *Tokyo* sees Avril turning the focus on its inhabitants with the architecture fading to the background and the focal point switching to the small profiles of people evolving in the urban environment.

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Avril works on paper and canvas to create the balanced structure of his compositions. His designs can be as simple or as intricate as needed while emphasizing the ensemble's stillness and solitude. The line remains simple, reminiscent of traditional Franco-Belgian comic styles, depicting weightless shapes in discreet hues fluctuating from fragile to bold. At times, his aesthetic purity leans toward abstraction all-the-while retaining a sense of detail. A meticulous draftsman lies beneath his minimalist technique—Avril's delicate strokes and sensitive observations creates a visual that emulates the simple beauty of the modern world. With the purity of light and the absence of shadows, he showcases the subtle graphic harmony that ties fine art and illustration together.

François Avril was born in 1961 in Paris, France. After attending college at the Académie Röderer, he graduated Valedictorian of the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d'art d'Olivier de Serres. At the age of 23, he published his first work in the magazine Je Bouquine and the fanzine Bande à part. He founded the so-called "Ecole de Pigalle" with artists such as Jacques de Loustal, Charles Berberian and Ted Benoit. The group sought to push the boundaries between graphic art, comics and advertising and shared a common taste for the Hergé-like clear line style. In 1986, he collaborated with Yves Chaland, also known as the master of the atomic style, with whom he published two graphic novels. In 1993, he inaugurated his first solo exhibition at Galerie Christian Desbois in Paris. His illustrations have appeared in the columns of Liberation, The New Yorker, and The Figaro, amongst others. In advertising, Avril has been commissioned for campaigns by prestigious houses such as Hermès, Chanel and John Lobb.

About Philippe Labaune Gallery

Founded in 2021, Philippe Labaune Gallery is devoted to championing and presenting original 20th and 21st century comic art and illustrations by emerging and established artists from around the world.

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