

## FABRICE CROUX - THE TRANQUIL CHASE

Press release

It is told that Diogenes, the famous philosopher who, according to the Vulgate, lived in a barrel, died because a dog bit him in the throat, as he was fighting over a raw octopus with roaming dogs.

It is also told that he was not decent, that he didn't mind showing up naked in town, that he agreed to eat even from the ground, that he talked to the stone statues, that he refused the human values (love, pride, the graveyard for dead bodies...), as an extremist he believed in « recreational ability of the catastrophe »<sup>1</sup>, and he took all his characteristics from the dogs - from where comes the name of his cynical philosophy (« cynisme » comes from creek Kuôn, « dog »).

Fabrice Croux is not a cynical artist but nevertheless, he draws dogs. Some of them cry or are shown with the eyes red of emotion. Others (The Fantome dogs- les Chiens fantômes) appear, disappearing, on the surface of a squared paper, like memories at the point of vanishing. Fabrice Croux often draws the cocker spaniels and shows them in a touching manner – their fragility, gentleness and obeying nature, but also their foolishness in the never ending fidelity.

In fact, it seems as if we had a problem with the dogs. They are not independent as cats, on the contrary, they follow us everywhere, all the time; or they would wait for us, in a stupid way, at the entrance of a shop or a school. They don't have nine lives, but only one – ours. They don't always fall flexibly on four legs – instead, they break their bones. We have a problem with the dogs because we don't really love them, they are not perfect enough, and nevertheless, we know that we feel endlessly touched by them. After all, whatever is said, it is for them that we offer the best life: we feed them, we take care of them, we wash them, we take them out, too, sometimes very early in the morning, before being completely awake, and we take up their excrement, because it is their excrement and these are our dogs. Who would do all that for us? Nobody.

Diogenes, the cynic, had chosen to live as a dog because he considered this as a radical and efficient position (a point of view) to question the fixed truths of his time. Fabrice Croux may seem less offensive. One has to say that his chase dogs are tranquil, and oppositely to the starving dogs of cynisme, the ones of Croux are well-fed. One has to mention also that today, there is Royal Canin and Happy Dog Premium and not the leftovers of fishing or a market. The dogs don't hang around some old destroyed potteries anymore (the barrel of Diogenes was a jar made of clay to keep the cereals), but they pass their days in normal houses where they have their own basket, a roof to hide them from the nasty weather, even if it is in the garage for the car under the house. The dogs of Croux are domesticated, they are part of the softened, lined ambience of interiors, they bark a little, sleep a lot, play sometimes, and the chase that they take up seems very weak, careless, relaxed. They are almost ridiculous in it, aren't they? No. Because it is us who (eventually) have the problem with dogs – as for them, they have a beautiful life.

There are not only dogs, far from this, in the work of Fabrice Croux (there are all the beasts – elephant, Bengal tiger, polar bear etc. – chased in an unknown safari), but the presence of dogs is sufficiently notable to appear as a sign of central interest for domestication. During several years already (from his formation in Nice, then in Grenoble art school), the artist's work consists in going through the title of everyday activities by the codes that structure our contemporariness (clothes, food, music, means of transport...). And beginning with his own domestic space, he absorbs the ecosystems and digests their signs by replaying, manipulating them in one of his thousands of little domestic protocols – folding, coping, sampling, drawing, ... with a writing paper, a Stabylo, a Blanco etc. The exhibition that he presents in OUI gives an occasion to show the productions of this exemplary work – a work in which the question is to be as close as possible to the things, to accompany them, to feed oneself with them, to take care of oneself, to wait calmly for the next event... To have a beautiful life, like a dog, tranquil.

Stéphane Sauzedde, January 2008

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According to the expression of Vladimir Jankélévitch, L'ironie, Paris, Champs Flammarion, 2002, p. 105