

**IRÈNE LAUB**

**GALLERY**

**CHARLES LAIB BITTON**

**I TOLD YOU WHEN I CAME I WAS A STRANGER**

09.06.17 > 17.06.17



**I TOLD  
YOU WHEN  
I CAME  
I WAS A  
STRANGER.  
CHARLES  
LAIB  
BITTON  
OPENING  
8 JUNE 2017  
6 TO 9 PM  
MUSIC  
BY JACOB  
BILLS,  
DARRYL  
SPECHT AND  
CHARLES  
LAIB  
BITTON**

EXHIBITION FROM 9 TO 17 JUNE 2017. OPENING TIMES: TUE. TO SAT. 2 PM TO 6 PM AND BY APPOINTMENT. IRÈNE LAUB GALLERY. *HORS LES MURS*. CHAUSSEE DE VLEURGAT 80 BRUSSELS. +32 2 647 55 16. INFO@IRENELAUBGALLERY.COM. IRENELAUBGALLERY.COM

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

In the same way as the 40 art pieces presented, this individual, unprecedented exhibition points to a personal as well as artistic evolution. Charles Laib Bitton proposes a new, abstract, hybrid and genuine pictorialism on paper or on wood.

The artist explores his North African roots from which he seeks inspiration, as well as his western influences, through the relentless experimentation of materials, structure and density. He achieves this by using one, or a combination, of oils, coloured crayons or gravures. The pattern recurrence is fascinating, the colours are warm and natural, bringing to mind the texture of Middle Eastern fabrics – similar to Paul Klee's shimmering colours – but also the texture of wood and sun-blazed lands. The exhibition "I Told You When I Came I Was A Stranger" also provides the artist with the opportunity of tackling darker, observed or experienced, socio-cultural themes: feelings of exclusion, racist confrontations, even anti-Semitism, now deeply permeate his most recent artworks.

In the way of a lyrical introspection, Charles Laib Bitton's eloquent and mesmerizing artworks, with their enhanced volume and density, provide a sensitive, memorable experience.

### «I Told You When I Came I Was A Stranger» par Béatrice Van Schendel

*Charles Laib Bitton's mixed media artworks are of variable paper or wood formats involving oils, coloured crayons, collage, charcoals, pastels and acrylics. These artworks, were for the most part produced in 2016 and reflect the research work undertaken in Vienna in 2015. They are the commencement of the artist's initiatory process. They carry the marks of a transformation, of a cut-off or divergence in favour of a new technique, a new language containing a deeper, richer chromatic range magnified by oils that merge perfectly on wood. For some artworks, this pictorial approach with coloured crayons and charcoals on wood or paper, is reminiscent of Munch or Spilliaert. Others, of an abstract, grainy nature, favour more rounded curves that gradually point to a split from the perfectly constructed, rectilinear or well defined form.*

*The artist pursues his three dimensional work, decomposing, recomposing, adding and subtracting matter. He finds his inspiration from the work of German expressionists, such as the Die Brücke artists who instill a new purpose to earlier gravure art on wood, and to primitivism. In Charles Laib Bitton's work, the groove engraved in wood suggests 3D while in reality, this has more to do with relief painting. Here, oils merge with the coloured crayons to flow into the wood slits, enhancing or dulling the tones. Sets of lines, of extended tribal forms, of primitive vegetable patterns as seen on textiles and endlessly replicated ; here are there, arrow-like or scented undergrowth leaf patterns, may also evoke a minimalist human figure cut out in the depths of the wood. Marks aligned very closely to one another look united in their apparent similarities. While very different, taken together, they nevertheless form a part of the same whole.*

[...]

# IRÈNE LAUB

## GALLERY

[...]

*A sort of musicality is perceivable from these falsely recurrent patterns of random intuitive shapes that dig up the secret chants from the depths of the soul, like furrows and scratches engraved in one's memory. Everything is rhythm, measure, matter and division, similar to the shimmering notes of a dense and mysterious personal hymn.*

*More brightly coloured intertwining lines, similar to basement floor markings, suggest root-reaching slits conducive to reinvention and a rebirth.*

*Behind these random-like abstractions, there is an urge to revert to nature, to become part and parcel of matter and to salute mankind. The artist slowly relinquishes straight lines and pure geometry, those he celebrated precisely for their restrained ardours in the « Romantic Imagism » exhibition. He chooses to break away from this, favouring the unpredictable and working beyond the frame. He does this 'matter of fact', humbly and discreetly, aiming to experiment with haphazard order and disorder.*

*Charles Laib Bitton's current exhibition, while still dwelling on humility and geometric abstractions, parts from a certain formal stiffness and restriction to favour openness and the exploration of other pictorial avenues : instinct, intuition, gestual freedom and the return to origins, especially his gushing, organic African roots, bringing new life to his art, balancing the reds, earth-scorched browns, blue indigos, ocre yellows, and the less evident tones that, buried in matter, better release their power while containing their secrecy.*

*In collaboration with Irène Laub, the forty-odd artworks exhibited in a vast extra mural space, are of particular importance to this inward search, to the artist's metaphysical and formal interrogation : A reflexion especially on a disenchanting, xenophobic world, prey to incessant cultural shocks to which the impenitent artist opposes his quest of identity and humanity. « Who am I, me the stranger, where do I leave my mark ? » refer to abruptions, obstructions, scars and other marks derived from the excavation of matter, from wood and Mother Earth, the crucible of all rootings and the site of singular or universal chronicles nourished by ancestral memories. Memories of Africa and his Moroccan-born father or of a maternal disorientated Europe, whose history continues to hiccup, finding it hard to rid itself of its demons. Testament to this, a more sombre pictorial expression illustrated by thousands of layers of colder tones : green kakis covered in different blacks, deep blues with flaky purples, or muted tones struck by bursts of light suggesting a ray of hope.*

*The cracks and streaks, sometimes discreet and almost inexistent, reveal an intense, almost monochromal sobriety to describe the essence of a coded language. One speaks of a contained exuberance, of controlled passion, of subdued revolt. To grasp the quintessence and richness of this work, one must pause over it and be rocked by the persistent musicality of the chromatic tones and stray between the gaps.*

*Charles Laib Bitton's work requires one to read between the lines to track down the emotion deep within the layers of paint, and to grasp the concrete sense or the metaphor : the relationship with each other, with the stranger, like a mirror effect and a sham, as illustrated by the words sung by Leonard Cohen in « The Stranger Song » out of which the painter chose to express his state of mind :*

« I told you when I came I was a stranger » ...

Béatrice van SCHENDEL

**Béatrice van Schendel.** Former Belgian cultural reporter and political representative, Béatrice Van Schendel had written for several artistic magazines, as the Danish AF.ART Magazine.





Untitled, 2016, Oil on carved wood, 28 x 36 cm



# IRÈNE LAUB

GALLERY

## CHARLES LAIB BITTON

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1985 in Brussels (BE)  
Lives and works in Vienna (AT)

Charles Laib Bitton started his career as an interior, furniture designer, a practice that enabled him to grasp the issue of space - from scientific and artistic standpoints alike - as he sought to achieve the combination of linear aspects and proportions. A rigorous and meticulous artist, he experiments on drawing as a means of creating other linear spaces, in this case on plane surfaces, paper or wood. Using simple materials – like inks, charcoal, adhesive tape or even paint – the artist's imagination transports him, leading him to construct intricate as well as minimalistic drawings.

Charles Laib Bitton's artistic process never stops reinventing and refining itself in accordance with his inspiration, as he moves from town to town: New York, Berlin, Brussels, London, Copenhagen, and now Vienna. By exploring the material possibilities of oils, collages and gravures, the artist moves towards a new aesthetic based on density, materials and texture, increasing or decreasing the relief on a surface, breaking the rigours of the straight line, and seeking a new balance between shape, colour and Nature.

The apparently simple composition encourages onlookers to accustom themselves to the works of the artist. Such a personal freedom is essential for Charles Laib Bitton who restrains from using text, thus preserving an atypical relationship between the onlooker and the artwork's composition.

### SOLO SHOWS (SELECTED)

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- 2017 *I Told You When I Came I Was A Stranger*, Hors les murs, Irène Laub Gallery, Brussels (BE)
- 2015 *Romantic Imagism*, Galerie Virginie Louvet, Paris (FR)
- 2014 *L'Eveil Passager*, ASFAP Gallery, Brussels (BE)  
*Abstract Memories of a Belgian Mind*, PS Greta Marta, Brussels (BE)
- 2013 *50 Works on Paper*, BOS 2013, Brooklyn (USA)

### EDUCATION

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- 2016 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (AT)
- 2008 Chelsea College of Art and Design, Spatial Design, London (UK)

### RESIDENCIES

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- 2014 Amager Strand, Copenhagen (DK)  
ASFAP Gallery, Brussels (BE)

### GROUP SHOWS (SELECTED)

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- 2017 *Abstrakte Malerei - Rundgang*, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (AT)
- 2016 *The Collection*, Irène Laub Gallery (Feizi), Brussels (BE)
- 2015 *Obscur Clarté*, cur. David Rosenberg, Bastille Design Center, Paris (FR)
- 2013 *Beast and Bodies*, Schema Projects, Brooklyn (USA)  
*Portraits of Fern*, Norte Maar, Brooklyn (USA)
- 2012 *Color*, cur. Brooke Kamin Rapaport, BWAC, Brooklyn (USA)

### COLLECTION

Bic Collection (FR),  
Private Collections





Untitled, 2016, Collage and Color pencil on paper, 14 x 18 cm



# IRÈNE LAUB

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## GALLERY

### THE GALLERY

### CURRENTLY

PASCAL HAUDRESSY et Guest LAURENT BOLOGNINI

In Between

19.04.17 > 20.07.17

### UPCOMING

RUI CALÇADA BASTOS

Spectateur éternel

07.09.17 > 05.11.17

BRUSSELS GALLERY WEEKEND

07.09.17 > 10.09.17

Brussels  
Gallery  
Weekend 

ART ON PAPER, Brussels (BE)

Booth 25

Eirene Efstathiou

07.09.17 > 10.09.17



### CONTACT

IRÈNE LAUB GALLERY

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Tue. Wed. Thu .Sat. from 11am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6:30pm

Fri. from 2pm to 6:30pm

or by appointment

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