

karpettland
GAUTHIER HUBERT

OPENING 10.09.26
11.09.26 > 17.10.26



Gauthier Hubert, *Les véritables Adam et Eve aux Bahamas*, 2026, oil on canvas, 61 x 47 cm

Painting Hygiene According to Gauthier Hubert

It is undeniable, when you encounter Gauthier Hubert's painting for the first time, that you are dealing with a painter that knows what he's doing and, if I may say so, one that has a perfect mastery of his trade. The closer you look at his painstakingly and almost lovingly painted works, the more you appreciate and enjoy the subtle construction of his almost abstract backgrounds, with atmospheres and micro-chromatic asperities from which figures appear from seemingly nowhere. Their gripping presence is indifferent and staggering at the same time – be it infinite galactic perspectives (such that the artist ends up successively adding stars over time, unlike Bonnard touching up on a painting already hanging in a museum, but as a deliberate intent of unfinishedness ascribed to specific works), narrative landscapes operating as visual traps, or of course particularly uneasy portraits that seemingly claim a form of aestheticization of ugliness as an impediment to the beauty of painting.

For his painting has this particularity of producing narrative systems in which titles, often inscribed into the skin of the canvas itself, play a crucial role without veering into the realm of narrative painting (even though the painter does not shy away from storytelling, much like the viewer): there is no anecdotal genre paintings or historical scenes, but rather allusions, references, nods, and puns (sometimes understandable by the author only). In his work, each painting is a game played with the viewer and it must be earned. Make no mistake, his pieces are not riddles or enigmas needing to be solved, but a pleasure multiplied tenfold by the multiple meanings and pitfalls of his visual compositions. They are not conceptual either, despite their titles used by him like itineraries and by the public like clues (even if those keys don't necessarily open the expected doors). In fact, everything in Gauthier Hubert's work has a double meaning, sprinkled with a healthy dose of absurd humour—and at times even schoolboy humour—that echoes the satirical spirit of Alphonse Allais.

It might come as a surprise to discover, in hindsight, his early works which earned him the Belgian Prix de la Jeune Peinture and were taking a distinctly more conceptual and speculative turn, almost veering toward Land Art as they sought to analyse, in a quasi-scientific manner, the consequences of melting ice and rising sea levels on our landscapes. The fact is that Gauthier Hubert, who—as one might expect—is adverse to the notion of inspiration, has devised a logic of assisted creative generation based on a hypothetical inductive system similar to the hypothetico-deductive logic of scientists, but also to the mechanics of Oulipian creation, which relies on the use of deliberate formal constraints and argues that constraints allow one both to think outside the box and to unleash creativity, in accordance with the Oulipian principle that states that the author is “a rat that builds the very labyrinth from which it intends to escape.” And when he felt the urge to paint portraits in the late 2000s, it was out of a curiosity to discover what the transposition of a pre-existing statement into a painting might yield. The idea came to him while reading a detailed description in a novel, when he realised that everyone visualises the object of such a premise differently. He then decided to paint only under the guidance of titles (often quite offbeat or absurd ones, to spice things up) that he had come up with sometimes many years earlier (unlike Magritte, who would gather his friends to come up with titles for his finished paintings). From there ensues the conviction that all of his paintings are linked by genealogical relationships in a rhizomatic manner—a sort of spontaneous procreation, or even a form of parthenogenesis, facilitated by the painter. One might say that only the author is capable of reconstructing the intimate genealogy of his works. It is undoubtedly wiser and healthier for the enthusiast to simply regard the titles as pretexts or subtitles of his works rather than as interpretive keys that would dictate what we should see in them—incidentally, this would make any attempt at exegesis of these paintings impossible—and to see the “family tree” of these portraits as a map of the artist's own psyche rather than as an inventory in the vein of Family of Man or a classification of human types.

These portraits are, after all, fictional—and as such, they challenge the very notion of a “portrait,” which implies a representation that is at least faithful, if not idealised, of a living model: the subject of the painting. Gauthier Hubert's portrait gallery does not aim to depict society, nor does it seek to paint a picture of human types or establish a taxonomy of physical features. His hypothetical characters make no physiognomic claims nor do they express any psychology. They are therefore a far cry from classical portraitists (despite the recurring evocation of Caspar David Friedrich's Romantic painting and a fascination with the old masters, similar to that of the father of metaphysical painting, Giorgio De Chirico) and naturalists (even if one cannot help but think of the series of “monomaniacs” painted by Géricault) as they are from Bacon or Freud. On the other hand, one can imagine a lineage stretching from Pieter Brueghel, Franz Hals, and Quentin Metsys all the way to Gustave Van de Woestijne or Michaël Borremans, to stay within our region, but that could also include Otto Dix and the Neue Sachlichkeit, or even Paula Rego, for whom painting is organic, with that touch of cruelty and taste for the grotesque that draws on Daumier...

Remains the hygiene of painting, which drives Gauthier Hubert to relentlessly refine his backgrounds and figures—somewhere between crypto-monochromatic abstraction and pataphysical painting, which prioritizes exceptions over rules—to continue sowing confusion in the viewer's mind and always encourage them to look more closely and see what they had not seen before, just as one practices yoga or works on one's scales—all for our greatest pleasure.

Daniel Vander Gucht, 2026

Daniel Vander Gucht is a sociologist,
lecturer at the ULB and co-founder and chairman
of the publishing house La Lettre Volée, based in Brussels.



Gauthier Hubert, *Un SDF sur son carton volant*, 2026, Oil on canvas, 24,5 x 34,5 cm



Gauthier Hubert, exhibition view of «...Fils de...» (les retrouvailles), Le Botanique, Brussels (BE), 2020

Born in 1967 in Brussels (BE)

Lives and works in Brussels (BE)

Gauthier Hubert's painting is enigmatic in many respects – while his technique itself is characterized by a timeless and meticulous quality, the rest of his approach has a resolutely contemporary style. It shows solid swathes of vibrant colours, combined with shapes characterized by an unsettling strangeness and a steady fascination with ugliness, which immediately draws the eye.

Language is essential in Gauthier Hubert's works; the title frames the pictorial subject or precedes it, in a constant back and forth between text and image. The title is a primary element of the work, and creates a constant back and forth between word and image. Situated in a satirical dialogue with art and history, Gauthier Hubert's paintings are extremely referenced, interspersing their composition with clues, jokes and visual puns. The treatment and choice of subject often lead to a deeper examination of the pictorial discipline – for Gauthier Hubert, painting is a pretext to talk about painting.

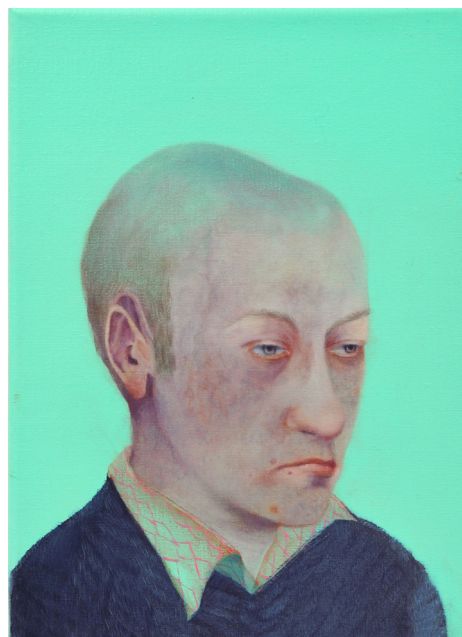
Born in 1967 in Brussels, Gauthier Hubert won the « Prix de la jeune peinture belge » in 1999 and has since shown his work in international group and solo shows. We can mention several exhibitions in the Musée d'Ixelles and La Maison Particulière in Brussels (BE), the National Portrait Gallery of London and of Edinburgh (UK), and a solo show at the National Gallery of Iceland in Reykjavík (IS). In 2020, the Botanique museum (BE) presented a large-scale retrospective exhibition of his work and he published a monograph entitled « Viral – Portraits ».

SHOWS (SELECTED)

- 2026 *tvírit (the danger zone of sharing)*, MARSHALLHÚSIÐ, Reykjavik (IS)
Trois collectionneurs, Été 78, Brussels (BE)
La mémoire du geste, Maison Pelgrims, Brussels (BE)
- 2024 *menteur en scène*, Project Room, Galerie Suzanne Tarasieve, Paris (FR)
SQUAT (avec Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir), Bruxelles (BE)
- 2023 *TAGELDIMDE / MIDDLEGATE*, cur. Pierre Muylle and Philippe Van Cauteren, Geel (BE)
je dois vous dire que Tarzan n'a pas écrit le Livre de la jungle et Mowgli n'a pas couché avec Jane., Irène Laub Gallery, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2022 *Portrait of a Lady*, cur. Louma Salamé, Villa Empain - Fondation Boghossian, Bruxelles (BE)
Dialogue de sourds, Titanikas Art Center, Vilnius (LT)
- 2021 *The intimate consciousness of time*, Irène Laub Gallery, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2020 «...Fils de...» (*les retrouvailles*), Le Botanique, Bruxelles (BE)
«Réunions familiales» (*un goût de liberté*), Le Botanique, Bruxelles (BE)
Tempête dans un verre d'eau, Irène Laub Gallery, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2019 *ACHROME*, Irène Laub Gallery, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2018 *Nothing like a little levity*, Molière Project 4#, Bruxelles (BE)
Faces, Psychiatrisch Centrum Sint Amandus, Beernem (BE)
- 2016 *Monographies d'artistes - Arte 10+6*, La Mediatine, Bruxelles (BE)
Notre ami Yves, Bruxelles (BE)
Kwartett, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (IS)
- 2015 *Maison à vendre*, (avec Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir) Bruxelles (BE)
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (UK)
- 2014 *Résonnance(s)*, la Maison Particulière, Bruxelles (BE)
Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Tyne and Wear (UK)
National Portrait Gallery, Londres (UK)
- 2013 *Treasures around E. Munch*, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (IS)
- 2012 *Pop Up – les dernières acquisitions*, Museum of Ixelles, Bruxelles (BE)

GAUTHIER HUBERT

- 2011 *c'est la peinture qui nous regarde*, WEproject, Brussels (BE)
Origines, la Maison Particulière, Brussels (BE)
- 2009 *Fading*, Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels (BE)
Een schilderij van Sint-Lukas, Sint-Lukasgalerie, Bruxelles (BE)
Skafffell – Center for Visual Arts, Seydisfjörður (IS)
- 2006 *U.S.A. U.S.E. U.S.*, Living Art Museum, Reykjavik (IS)



Gauthier Hubert, *Un jeune homme déçu d'avoir deux oreilles*, 2024,
Oil on canvas, 35,5 x 25 cm

PRIZES

- 2016 Prix Royal Académique 'Jos Albert', Palais des Académies Sciences & Lettres
- 1999 Lauréat du Prix de la Jeune Peinture Belge, Palais des Beaux-Arts
- 1998 Prix Royal Académique 'Gustave Camus', Palais des Académies sciences & lettres

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (IS)
Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (BE)
Musée d'Ixelles (BE)
Maison Particulière (BE)
Axia Collection (BE)

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