

The illusionism in painting is a device which the artist has employed since the Renaissance in order that he might give the imagination credence. Exploiting this timeless tradition with a virtuosity and brio unsurpassed, Jean Arcelin commands the illusions of depth and distance. He allows the beholder an intimate look into a very personal world, where ambiguous secrets are confided not by a mere fleeting glance but by patient study. Jean Arcelin is a true Troubadour of the brush. He recounts a poly faceted tale, which, though mindful of reality, establishes provokingly contact with an enchanting feast for the eyes. An eerie solitude of space here reigns, where each nuance recalls the specter of human presence. He entraps an improbable and indiscernible truth, which he transposes upon the canvas like a virtual and fantastic theatrical scene. These unconscious murmurs of landscapes, urbanscapes, haunting corridors, and grand museum halls invoke Arcelin's legacy as successor of bygone masters. He cunningly compels you to follow his fleeting lines into a deep, shadowy, uncertain space and then abruptly plunges you into a world of mirrors where the clear and lucid which you once took for granted is obscured in an extraordinary marriage of the real and ethereal. It is here that concealed abstractions unveil themselves arising from an imagination which has forged ahead upon a path less travelled. We are thus invited to likewise break our shackles from reality and follow him faithfully to the limits of the strange and dynamic.

Arcelin's painting is made up of an intricate framework of fragmented memories nostalgically conserved. In the course of time these guarded recollections have been strengthened in hallucinatory perception of far off places and bygone days and then reminiscently unleashed upon the canvas. These phantom visions are well represented by the likes of *Mer et Piscine*, *Vue Cavalière*, and of course *L'escalier jaune*. Every one of these interpretations distances itself profoundly from our visual certitudes, pressuring us to abandon all notions as to what is real and what is fictive. Certain works may well appear to technically evoke a similitude with cinematography. Such is the case of the panoramic view *Front de mer* or exceptionally *Tramway de Lisbonne*, in which the onlooker is compelled to fix his regard upon a solitary trolley making its way up a narrow railway enveloped amply by tertiary surroundings. The breadth of space coupled with the conscientious observation of the trolley and its trek allude to both speed and urgency. Nothing more is needed to be said, the stakes are high and the painting has the last word.

The surprising ease by which he masters his canvas is likewise evidence of the pleasure he must take with its rendering. Jean Arcelin shatters the tired and tried conventions of painting giving us an alluring glance at a long awaited castle in the sky. What a great story teller is to words, Arcelin is to pictorial narrative, as he charmingly provokes our imaginations to stray off the beaten path chasing a mirage both fictive and real. Simply put, he is a painter, a painter who finds joy in the use of vibrant tones of pastel like color. He dares challenge the limits of chromatic harmony in order that he might find that undiscovered country of form and plasticity. Thus upon viewing that wet, grey asphalt in *Le Camion jaune* juxtaposed by a potently placed orange –yellow stroke, one remarks that it is his command of color that serves him in rendering this otherworldly fantasia tangible and true.

Paradoxically it is only by the observance of the classic rules of painting that Jean Arcelin realizes his liberty of the brush. He toys and flirts with his subject. Whether it be his agile, bountifully rich strokes forcefully applied or subtle, delicate touches, elusively fading out of our perception, he is a master of space. Caught somewhere between the lucidly real and unrestrained flights of fancy, we have lost our capacity to trust our own eyes and senses. One harbors the naïve aspiration that meticulous examination will take you to some hidden truth, but don't be fooled by that which you think you see, seeing is never believing.

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