

PHALÈNE

DJABRIL BOUKHENAÏSSI

The Moths ? or The Life of anybody. Life in general or Moments of Being or the Waves.
V. Woolf, Journal, 2 juillet 1929¹

All for a moment wavered and bent in uncertainty and ambiguity, as if a great moth sailing through the room had shadowed the immense solidity of chairs and tables with floating wings.
V. Woolf, The Waves

DJABRIL BOUKHENAÏSSI

Born in 1993 in France
Lives and works between
Paris and Le Perche

exhibition

from 3rd March to 20th April 2024

opening

Sunday, 3rd March
2pm-6pm

galerie Sator Komunuma

43 rue de la Commune de Paris
93230 Romainville

opening hours

wednesday — saturday
10 am - 6 pm

and by appointment

Lise Traino

+33 (0)6 89 46 02 84
lise@galeriesator.com

www.galeriesator.com

The moth as a pearl, the moth as a fragile and dense irruption - a dance - of life. Appearance, disappearance, a binary movement, like the flapping of its wings. Like the sack and surf of The Waves. What can we see in this beating? What do we hear in this "voice of the sea"? The repetition of the Same, or rather "the sea always beginning anew", spreading its waves, and to where?

As waves "gather, tumble and fall again", time flows, drop by drop, a regular flow, uniform, smooth, repetition without difference. But sometimes, all of a sudden, everything takes shape, that of an instant, a moment when "everything" seems to concentrate, when everything seems to come together. The intensity of a "moment of being" with other beings, like the intuition of a totality of joy that did not freeze the thousand and one movements of life, those gentle waves that gave the time of a stay in the Perche, for us who were Djabril Boukhenaïssi's guests, this memorable vibration without ever having wanted it to be so at the time we experienced it, in a light-hearted lightness, where nothing weighed or posed: to be welcomed, to come together, to find ourselves there, but above all to find ourselves well, to share a meal, to go about our business, to laugh, to read, to play, to lie in the sun, to stay up late, to roam the countryside for a stroll, to look at a landscape, to look at paintings. And, as we didn't know, to be looked at by Djabril. "Time drops its drop", but then it made a promise to us to hold on, to retain within itself this singular time, at the very moment the imminence of its dispersion trembles, its evanescence, on the verge of being and no longer being. Two, three days have passed, and it could have been just the ordinary drop by drop of the day that comes after the other, a faint scansion, as we most often experience them, without feeling them alive in us, an indifferent perpetuum mobile, us like it, and "crumbs of ourselves scatter." Two, three days of this spring, in Djabril Boukhenaïssi's house and studio, have passed, but a drop of time has formed, not to disappear: in it we have lived; it has made us more alive, perhaps enabled us to feel the "feeling of existence" in an effusion without effusions, simple, soft, dense. Moving form yet closed, closed yet moving, membrane, bubble, it embraced us, as we embraced it in its brevity. Then came departure, and silence closed in on our fleeting passage. But this drop of time will have been one of those that settles in us, and takes on the consistency of a pearl, immaterial, invisible in our moved interiority.

It is Djabril Boukhenaiïssi's paintings presented here that have taken it upon themselves to resurrect it, by rediscovering its absent nuances, now visible and even more present, in a word, its sensitive vibration, protean yet single, fused as a certain light, a certain color, a certain inflection or tone, without this felt unity ever reducing its multiplicity. "Fixing the moment in a final attempt"¹, says one of the voices in *Les Vagues*, just as Djabril Boukhenaiïssi's paintings do, striving to bring together the multiple, sensitive, shifting aspects of what has been in time and space, in the unity of an entirely different space, the limited space of the canvas, which must nonetheless de-limit itself so that everything it is not can reappear, the vibration of time and, perhaps even more so, of duration, its rustle, its tremor, its depth, its grain (the painter's singular use of pastel to define the contours of faded, open, moving, discontinuous, fugitive membrane-forms in the image of what "we" are, and which Bernard's words in *Les Vagues* seem to (in)define so well: "We are bordered by mist. We are a territory without substance"; things and beings tremble because they are not yet, and because they are no longer, in the process of being, in the process of no longer being) in short, the intensities of this duration, appeared, disappeared without being, but quite irrevocably reappeared on the painted canvas.

« The moth can enter »* ...

We wouldn't have said anything about the days we spent with Djabril Boukhenaiïssi at his home if we hadn't reported this... elective circumstance? On a spring evening, a large moth suddenly struck the window of the room where we were sitting. A scene almost identical to the one Vanessa Bell recounted to her sister Virginia in May 1927, and which made such a vivid impression on the latter that it permeated the entire writing of *Les Vagues*... The flight through the window of this moth, which Djabril placed in the hands of a little girl named Clarissa, captured by the solemnity of this fleeting moment, punctuated by the regular, serene beating of the wings, like that of a breath, seems to condense perhaps what he undertook to paint: to deposit in the open hand of the canvas the ephemeral flight of a moment, a moment in which the appearance of a Woolfian butterfly will have oscillated in our minds between purely haphazard dispersion, and troubling symbolic uncton. ... Like the fragile possibility, if not of making sense, at least of making a sign. A wave.

It flutters, it flies away. It flutters, it fades.

It flutters, it reappears.

*It settles. And then it no longer is. In a flutter, it vanished
into white space.*

*(...) But I remain in place, contemplating it, fascinated by its
appearance, fascinated by its disappearance.*

Henri Michaux, Life in the folds (1949)*

Rémi Manier

1_ « Before our eyes, if we look closely, we see nothing but moving things: the world is the moving. But how can we know the very movements of the moving? Bergson seems to be confronting us with a contradiction: on one hand, we must stop thinking of movement in discontinuous terms, stop reducing movement to «instantaneous» or «juxtaposed immobilities»; on the other hand, we can only grasp movement - intuition, image - in the mode of the «vague» and «above all the discontinuous». Our thinking, Bergson writes, only illuminates the phenomenon like «an almost extinguished lamp, which only comes back to life from afar, for a few moments at a time». Intuition captures the moving thing insofar as, like it - since it is immanent - it passes, like a butterfly, appearing and 'vanishing' almost immediately in the opaque sky of human intelligence»*. G. Didi-Huberman, *Phalènes, Essais sur l'apparition (Essay on apparition)**, 2, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 2013.

We might also think here of Henri Michaux's words in *Dessiner l'écoulement du temps (Drawing the passage of time)** in *Passages* (1950):

« Instead of one vision to the exclusion of the others, I wanted to draw the moments that, end to end, make up life, to show the inner sentence, the sentence without words, a string that indefinitely winds its way along, and, in the intimate, accompanies everything that presents itself from the outside as well as the inside.

I wanted to draw the awareness of existence and the passage of time. Like feeling your pulse. Or, in a more limited way, what appears when, in the evening, the impressed film that has endured the day is replayed (shorter and muted) »*.

2_ V. Woolf, *Journal*, June, 23, 1929

3_ On May 3, Vanessa had written a letter to Virginia from Cassis in which she reported the arrival of a gigantic moth banging on the window and the efforts of R. Fry and D. Grant to capture it. On May 8, Virginia replied: «By the way, your moth story fascinates me so much that I'm going to write something about it. I spent an hour thinking about you and moths after your letter. »*

* Our translation