

Muriel Rodolosse talks with Jeanne Quéheillard

*haaa... Dada !* Holding his leg a masked man on the back of a three-legged lamb strolls in a landscape in which various architectures are set up in a mental park. The man holds the lamb's ear as if it is a moped's accelerator, his attitude can also recall a horseman on a rodeo. The elements in the foreground, flowers and miniature architectures, are painted in bird's eye view, the subject is seen from high above. The viewpoint changes towards the top, the elements are represented at a low-angle, which allows a more kinaesthetic relation to the work. The perspective space is incoherent, scale relations form part of the confusion and the vertigo, like Dada of the DADA movement that equilibrates on the razor's edge to denounce the serious spectacle and the commonplace.

Jeanne Quéheillard - You've been offered the opportunity for an artist's book. You want it to be the history of this painting.

Muriel Rodolosse - It's the desire to make work of the research effort. The painting is the outcome of five months' work. I meant to orchestrate the drawings and put the questioning of my workmethod through this artist's book.

J. Q. - The painting's title is *haaa... Dada !*. We're confronted straight away with multiple evocations, that oscillate from the seen image to the heard words. What motives this will to direct our vision using a text. Should one see a reciprocal illustrative will in that.

M. R. - *haaa... Dada !* is a resounding title for this painting that has been executed for the "Caprice des jeux" exhibition at the Frac Aquitaine. I wanted this title as if it would be a work. I felt that, pronounced, the title could make work. The title has its proper sound. If hahaha creates the laugh, haaa sounds like an animal's cry. Actively pronouncing the title puts the spectator in a mobile situation that corresponds to the movement of the figure represented in the painting. Reading the title the spectator is invited to a performing action. Nothing to do with illustration but linking two movements between the watcher and the watched. The gesture accompanying the diction materialises itself as breathing in, halting, breathing out, which creates a movement of the head or the body from back to front recalling the figure's movement in the painting, that of the masked man riding a jolting lamb.

J. Q. - The used under perspex painting technique intensifies the particular character of the work, its questioning power. Can we talk of painting that, beyond its apparent subject, relates principally to a technique. What is its sense as regards your way of painting?

M. R. - I use this technique because it allows me to be the closest possible to the question of painting that I wish to emphasize. The choice of perspex is decisive. The execution process of a painting is reversed. I paint at the back of the painting, the image is reversed. I conceive the details and the finish of the work first and end with the background. Nothing to do with exhibiting matter, no drips, no scratches, it doesn't run. With this technique I show a possibility to put painting at a distance. This provokes other sensations. The physical relation that results for realizing the work puts me literally in the painting. I paint and watch what I do at the same time, my hands slip behind the perspex. I've become ambidextrous. The size of the perspex is related to my bodily spread that determines the painting's size. I am moreover limited by the angle of view. I must take into account in the realization that I'm not facing what I'm doing. I work in reverse. Which allowed me to conceive putting the medium at a distance.

J. Q. - This particular technique doesn't go unnoticed by the device it implies. It recalls the under-glass painting technique. Do such comparisons enlighten the articulation of the technique and the work? In other words, to what extent can one say that the technique makes the work?

M. R. - Painting on perspex is a precise technique in which you can have no pentimenti. You must conceive its genesis in total, imagine its various stages and anticipate those because they're reversed. What we see is, contrary to the usual painting on canvas, what has been put there first. That's on principle ineffaceable. It is some sort of countdown and I finish with the background. It's therefore difficult to work it all out. I work in parts, they're masses with several successive layers. Under-glass painting is on the other hand, apart from the transparent support, done in a different way. Painting begins with the outlines followed by brushing the drawn surfaces, some sort of colouring in. That's surely why there are no large under-glass paintings, in spite of its widely spread development, particularly as a popular decorative art. Ever since I paint my major concern has been to be as much as possible in the painting. To get rid of artifices and to think in what the painting is beyond the object. What counts for me is that this technique allows me to develop a critical dimension so I can position myself with my painting.

J. Q. - Does this mean that this way of painting under perspex, which you identify and which is very much your own, works in a contradictory, even paradoxal way?

M. R. - At first I painted on wood. I've always painted on rigid supports. During a residence at the John David Mooney Foundation in Chicago in 1996 I found perspex boxes for photographs. The idea came to me to include them in my wooden support. I was highly concerned with problems oppositioning the frontality and the depth in painting and

the perspex allowed me to include voluminous matter in the work. To see the painting not as a flat surface but as a container. After several paintings I painted on these boxes that had the form of a painting in perspex. Later, in Michigan, I acquired perspex sheets. At first I painted on, behind and on the inside with transparencies. Since I've radicalized my way of working and decided to paint no longer on the outer surface of the support. When you put the paint on the inner surface transparency no longer works. I work at its opacity.

J. Q. By turning the support inside out and inverting the process you make distancing the medium possible. Does this distancing present itself in the same way when you're concerned with asserting yourself as a painter?

M. R. - I don't think that facing my work you'll find yourself straight away in the painting. I feel that, beyond the visible image, our consciousness must look for the elaboration and emergence process of the work. One must ask oneself what one sees and how this image was conceived and realized. Arriving at a confusion of the medium is a good thing. So does the brilliant shine of the perspex recall photography. I don't try to reproduce a photograph. But I am, beyond any desire to imitate, pleased when my painting can enrich itself by what photography has to offer. Anyway anything that can contribute an extra to painting interests me. In 2002 I began working in a way that is diametrically opposed to painting, I created a provisional mobile workshop called *la Permissive (the Permissive)* and a workshop for customization of ordinary clothes called *Passe-moi ta manche, j'te fille mon col (Gimme your sleeve, I'll slip you my collar)*. I wished to experience different artistic practices and have them rub shoulders with painting. Indeed, when I start from an old method to consider painting today I do not proceed by a critical deconstruction of painting. I do not follow the track and continue avant-gardiste fringes such as Adorno could define them. The fringes aren't at the outside of the frame but intrinsic. I decided not to leave the painting but to stay in the given space that I take. Going beyond the limit is on the inside.

J.Q. - We're confronted with a permanent change of scale between the various painted objects, figure, animals, architectures, flowers... We experience incessant readjustments that blur the vision's stability. What meaning should one give to the scale relations you install?

M. R. - The scale relation depends on the importance given to each thing. A miniature or an architecture that rises from a flower are as important as the improbable limping animal. One thing is not superior to an other. The large size doesn't pretend to attain the spectacular. But as a result of its size the work can't be reduced to an immediate reading of an image. Up to now I've painted two very large works, one called *Ancora !* was realized for the eponymous exhibition at the Chapelle Saint Jacques art centre, and the second is this one for the *Caprice des jeux* exhibition. These two large works are the representation of a mental image. In *Ancora !* this crystallizes itself on the hybridation of the sexes. In *haaa... Dada !* this expresses itself by some sort of regredience, a secondary state of being proper to falling asleep in which we let things slip that we do not fully control. The representation of a mental image goes beyond all relation to human size. It relates to the expression of the force of the thought. And of the desire. It's the representation of a mental image as an unlimited mental force. It's a phantasm that, not being limited by measures or, to be more precise, measurements, can be gigantic. To seize this problem it's necessary to approach what's out of measure or rather the lack of measure. Indeed, I do not want to limit myself. When I feel like realizing a large size work I'll do it. I do not wish to restrict myself, nothing can go against that. The importance is given to the thing one looks at, and depends on the position taken by the spectator.

J. Q. - Yet it's the central figure on lamb-back that focalises and centralizes the look.

M. R. - It's a masked person but not carnival. Something like a human figure that seems a phantasm appears, an ambiguous, sexed figure, an image with a hard-on. It's an erotic figure without the insignia of virility. A horseman deprived of his horse. It's not an animal trainer. I want to offer a state of the body. This body is erotic but has no sexuality. The subject of desire is a subject that stays out of reach. Any eroticism there is surely aroused by the tactile construction of the work. There is a logic to the feeling. I paint with my hands. This tactility gives rise to the phantasm. Yet the desire is set off through a screen. As it is the perspex shields the painting. This technique creates a particular sensation. It contains an unusual irony. Irony about the concept. As if one could control the phantasm. It's the failure of a system, its breakdown. The phantasm goes beyond the concept.