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Press Release

Benoit Platéus **Telephone Poles**

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Albert Baronian is pleased to announce the fourth solo show of Benoit Platéus at the gallery untitled "TELEPHONE POLES".

Benoit Platéus presents a collection of images of a kind which is from the outset uncertain on more than one level. Images? Yes, despite the evanescence of the subject, the fragmentation of form, the unstructured texture and the all-over treatment of the surface of the canvas. Images where the referent is primordial, even if what they draw from it is a process of dissolution – one characteristic of the artist's methods, among a plurality of approaches. Two indices introduce the thesis, the title and the illustration on the invitation. On trips to the USA, over several years, Benoit Platéus has been creating drawings from rubbings; he takes rubbings of the wooden telephone poles that are still often used to carry cables in urban space where they double up as impromptu notice boards (lost cats, small ads for goods or services, and so on). The metal staples remain buried in the wood well after the notices have vanished; they are the last traces of texts and photographs which were displayed for the attention of passers-by. They mark an absence, but evoke images of memory, the lost messages resurfacing by sheer force of habit.

The rubbings record the accidental history of the surface, in an impressionistic way – just like the photographic process, as defined by Charles S. Peirce. Transposed onto transparencies, they are projected, in a far larger format, on canvas, white or already painted in a uniform colour, or sometimes with shaded values. The textural effects are then drawn on. The movements are mechanical, precise, but the touch of the human hand remains perceptible. The whole process carries within it a hybridity, an ambivalence about the result. It is difficult to give the images the technical label of a painting, a drawing, a rubbing or a print, and the idea of the photograph still lingers, through mental association. The abstract/figurative divide is clearly off the agenda in the art of Benoit Platéus. While the image still retains a certain prevalence,

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manipulations undercut its iconic fixity, bringing to it an oscillation between appearance and disappearance. In a paradoxical manner, the ambiguity seems to be the result of projecting of the rubbing as light. While such a process is generally used to ensure the most faithful of imitations, in Telephone Poles it provides the mechanical aspect of the action, accentuates the fragmentation of the surface, which resembles that of an image printed at low resolution. The altered scale, a recurring theme in the artist's work, plays a major role in the operation of transposition and rereading. Without removing the relationship with the referent, it imposes a change in both the whole and its details, implying a reformulation where the random stands in contention with the decisions of plastic art.

The various stages of the process, the maturing of the project, the layers of paint and black pastel give the pieces a unique time frame, made denser by the mnemonic associations of the viewer. The colour itself evokes relationships: oceanic, mineral... It contrasts a depth to the process on the surface, in a relationship of tension often explored by the artist.

The work has its origins in public space and, Benoit Platéus tells us, quite unexpectedly his activity aroused no response, undoubtedly because of the high frequency of spontaneous work on all types of surface in the city. It reminded him of what he had done when he was young: stencilled graffiti, wildcat collages... But now the action is quite reversed: removal has replaced addition. And, instead of adding to the proliferation of the image in the urban environment, he is now recording the traces of its disappearance. In the series presented at the Albert Baronian gallery, however, the image remained, physically, in the fabric of the pieces, or virtually in the memory of it or in its certain reappearance as new posters go up or fortuitous associations are evoked by the works. In my mental space, the Telephone Poles are connected with the photographs of Walker Evans.

Catherine Mayeur