

Baronian Xippas

Press release

John Phillip Abbott

Wishing Like a Mountain

2 rue Isidore Verheyden

4.02 - 03.04.2021

Opening

Thursday 4.02.2021

6 pm - 9 pm

(in the respect of sanitary measures)

John Phillip Abbott

Wishing Like a Mountain

Albert Baronian and Renos Xippas are proud to present John Phillip Abbott's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

Born in 1975 in Wausau, Wisconsin, John Phillip Abbott now works and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In his paintings he explores the complex relationship between words and images and blurs the lines that separate them. Words and short phrases form the structure of his compositions minimalist grids and act as images rather than simple concepts. These primarily spray-painted words explore various semantic fields with a calligraphic vocabulary composed of geometric elements. Inspired by his personal experiences and souvenirs, the choice of these words is like an intimate diary, presented so that that audiences can see them as images and universal notions.

The artist paints these emotion-laden words not only to capture his own memories, but also to detach them from their original connotation and give them a different meaning entirely. Some words, for example, become a tribute to people who have inspired him (from baseball player Freddy Lynn to the singer Odetta) or assume a poetic value, whereas others are sociopolitical in nature, such as the series of paintings called *Holy*, associated with American Beat Generation poet Allen Ginsburg.

John Phillipp Abbott never stops experimenting with a variety of techniques. By combining brushstroke and spray painting, stencils and masking tape, pre-prepared and blank canvases, he continuously re-invents conventional painting methods, introducing unexpected shifts between his graphic intentions and accidents that occur during the painting process.

Coincidences and unexpected traces that these media offer have an important role to play in Abbott's work. He sees the painting process as an experience in its own right rather than an end result. In that sense, his intentions are closely related to those of Jackson Pollock and the American abstract painters as well as performance art, where the moment of creation takes precedence over the finished product.

Fellow artist Robert Delford Brown introduced Abbott to performance art 22 years ago. He participated in particular in one of Brown's performances and discovered Allan Kaprow and his happenings.

Following this encounter, he moved to New Mexico, where he studied performance, sculpture and painting. Although he mainly focuses on painting, Abbott considers the use of spray paint is like a performance. “I think spray paint as a medium innately has performative tendencies because of the quickness of the application and, for me at least, my inability to control it. It’s a very physical activity”.

Abbott finds inspiration in poetry, which his mother encouraged him to read from a very young age. He is particularly moved by the poems of Shel Silverstein – illustrated, humorous texts, hints of which we see in his own works – as well as by 19th century poets such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was poetry that fuelled his interest in combining words and painting.

His series of paintings called *Holy* pays tribute to the poem *Howl* by the American author Allen Ginsberg, a leading figure of the Beat Generation in the 1960s. The poem promotes personal freedom by breaking rules and social norms. “*The world is Holy! Everything is Holy!*”

The title of the exhibition, *Wishing Like a Mountain*, refers to an album released in 1990 by the Texan band Poi Dog Pondering. All songs on this album are characterised by insouciance, freedom and openness to the world.

This is perfectly mirrored in the exhibition, which aims to offer a ray of hope and optimism in these uncertain times.

In the words of the artist: “I am wishing for healing. Wishing like a mountain”.

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John Phillip Abbott (born 1975) lives and works in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. Abbott’s work has been exhibited internationally, most recently at Xippas Paris, Gleichapel (Paris, France), COUNTY Gallery (Palm Beach, USA), Bertrand Gallery (Geneva, Switzerland), Pierogi (New York, USA) and Devening Projects (Chicago, USA). His work has been shown in institutional exhibitions such as *This One’s Optimistic: Pincusion* at the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain (curated by Cary Smith). In January 2020, his work figures in *artpress* in a review written by French art critic Catherine Millet.