

Baronian Xippas

Press release

Stephan Goldrajch

33 rue de la Concorde

4.02 - 03.04.2021

Opening

Thursday 4.02.2021

from 6 pm - 9 pm

Stephan Goldrajch

Porte-Bonheur

Albert Baronian and Renos Xippas are pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of Stephan Goldrajch at the Gallery.

Stephan Goldrajch was born in 1985 at Ramat-Gan in Israel and studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Brussels then at La Cambre in the sculpture department, as well as at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem.

Inspired by ancestral traditions, rites and techniques used by craftsmen, he is fascinated by human and social interactions. Using a crochet hook and different threads - his favourite medium - he draws on the codes of life and learning, magic, tales and legends; all the very real, often irrational elements that make up part of man's learning process and reinvents them all.

Long before it became a trend, Stephan Goldrajch chose a unique form of expression : participative textile performance in which social interaction is essential. When he organised *Broderies Participatives* (Participative Embroidery Sessions) in public places, it was an invitation to passers-by, local residents, refugees and even clergymen to come together around a communal piece of work. The instructions were simple: just follow the lines drawn on the fabric with red thread. This is how Goldrajch enabled unexpected connections between the different participants in a moment suspended in time just like the woven and interwoven threads. This unique timeless moment, during which words flowed as people sewed, was a time of sharing like a murmur, a secret and laughter.

The driving force behind his projects is the desire to weave interactions between the social world and that of contemporary art. In 2012, at the WIELS (Brussels), Stephan created *La Légende du Canal*, a story involving the residents of the two sides of the canal that separates the city. After several months of work, an exhibition made up of one hundred large flags that were hung at the junction of the Dansaert and Molenbeek districts highlighted the potential for creating a bridge between two very different socio-cultural realities.

In 2018, we showed his *Voodoos* at the Gallery – a series of humorous knitted, woven, crocheted masks and creatures that emerged from a fantasy world inhabited by dreams and animated by magical rituals. Stephan places a great deal of importance on the nomadic nature of the balls of wool with which he crochets and he enjoys being able to take his work with him wherever he goes. His crocheted masks have indeed already travelled from Brussels all over the world including places like Israel, Bulgaria and even Benin.

As these ritual voodoo masks illustrate, superstition has played a major role in the work of Stephan right from beginning of his career. As soon as he had graduated from La Cambre, he created a “talisman head”, intended to bring happiness and prosperity and he brought together friends and family that he dressed in masks in order to find a suitable place for this head. Since then, the collection of masked participants has formed a community that the artist calls the “Talismans” and that celebrates the Festival of Good Fortune every year on 22 February.

In this exhibition, entitled *Porte-Bonheur*, Stephan unveils a new series of eponymous works, in which he takes his fascination with the superstitious character of objects even further. Inspired by masks and remaining true to his penchant for crochet work, he weaves disparate elements on his canvas. Different types of wool and cotton, natural and synthetic threads are woven one at a time and then sewn onto the linen fabric. It is as though he is painting a canvas, but the paint is replaced by balls of wool.

For the artist, assembling these coloured threads offers him the chance to disconnect from external stimuli and enter his own private bubble. Creating by crocheting becomes a ritual in its own right. The result is a collection of talismans that are the fruit of a long ritualistic and meditative process during which he weaves threads in complex compositions that teem with colours and textures. The imaginary world into which Stephan Goldrajch plunges us is populated by small textile creatures and vegetation; it is rich in fantasy, it is joyful and even regressive taking us into a journey into the past and the games we played as children or the drawings we made.

And finally, these *Porte-Bonheurs* or talismans have the power to release a magnetic energy just like sacred objects which bring good fortune to those who keep them. The works are an invitation therefore to discover the multitude of secrets and mysteries concealed within them.

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Stephan Goldrajch’s work has been shown at and he has collaborated with: the WIELS in Brussels, Invisible Dog in New York, the Haifa Art Museum, the Maison des Arts de Saint-Herblain in France, the Ixelles Museum, Tanzmesse in Düsseldorf, the Iselp Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels, the Halles St Géry in Brussels, the Baronian-Francey, Dollinger and Hezi Cohen and David Castillo galleries, respectively in Brussels, Tel Aviv and Miami.