

TEMPLON



Press Release
May 5 2021

JEAN-MICHEL ALBEROLA

The King of Nothing, the Queen of England and the Others

20 May - 24 July 2021

Opening: Thursday 20 May, 10 am - 8 pm



Le Roi de Rien XXI, 2020

An unclassifiable artist, Jean-Michel Alberola has devised a multi-faceted exhibition for Galerie Templon: *The King of Nothing, the Queen of England and the Others*. Canvases, silkscreens, papers and a painted wall lay down the markers for an enigmatic and engrossing journey, where figurative fragments, abstract elements, literary and musical evocations intermingle.

The exhibition is named after the “*Rois de rien*” series, started about fifteen years ago, which sees the artist relentlessly creating a mysterious seated portrait with bare feet. As a counterpoint, subtle monochromes in the colours of Queen Elizabeth II seem to respond to them. In the manner of a philosophical puzzle, these paintings question the issue of power, the dichotomy between reality and appearance, function and representation.

Reflecting on the challenges facing painters, the role of the artist in society and the ends of art, Alberola's oeuvre builds on visual and semantic associations. The figure of Franz Kafka appears in a new series evoking the writer's many homes. Music is omnipresent and embodied in paintings paying

tribute to the artist's personal pantheon, from the mythical Californian band Grateful Dead to the Rolling Stones hit *Gimme Shelter*. Jean-Michel Alberola concludes with pieces echoing these musical revolutionaries in a nod to the masters of American art, from De Kooning to Robert Rauschenberg.

As always, the artist focuses on telling stories, recounting the necessary syncretism between a work and its intellectual filiations. As this secretive artist explained in 2019 in one of his rare interviews, "I tell stories all the time, in life, in my paintings. That is all I do, only stories. In any case, painting has always told stories, from Poussin and Velasquez to Mondrian, they all tell stories. Everything we do is autobiographical, so it is our own story. What we do is about the world, we recount the world as we see it. Art is no exception. "

Born in 1953 in Saida, Algeria, Jean-Michel Alberola lives and works in Paris. He made a name for himself in the early 1980s with the return of Figurative painting on the international art scene. He has been represented by Galerie Templon since 1982. His work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions, including at the Louvre (2005), Bibliothèque Nationale de France (2009), Maison Hermès de Tokyo (2009), Frac Picardie in Amiens (2012), Palais de Tokyo (2016) and the Louvre's Centre Dominique-Vivant Denon (2018). It was recently featured in several group exhibitions, such as *Light House* at the Fondation Boghossian in Brussels (2021) and *Ex Africa* at Paris' Musée du Quai Branly (2021). The Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC) has given the artist carte blanche and will be presenting a new show focusing on Franz Kafka, at the Abbaye d'Ardenne in Caen from 4 June to 18 September 2021.