

Like pieced-together memories or dreams, Éric Roux-Fontaine's paintings have a superficial resemblance to LSD hallucinations, a sensual beauty verging on a rapturous fusion with Nature. People defying gravity, swirls of multi-coloured whirling butterflies, and plants soaring out of sight: the painter's aesthetic world is totally permeated by an unequivocal commitment to life.

Furthermore, it is rooted in a vital energy which blends nostalgia with rebellion. Éric Roux-Fontaine is obviously not insulated from the anxieties of an early 21<sup>st</sup> century bent on devastating life itself – chance, savagery and absence of control. Of course, like so many people, he is also intuitively aware that nothing will ever curb the hubris of the hallowed tenets of growth which reduce the world and nature to mere "resources". But although his *painted visions* present a nature which has buried promethean civilisation and all its showiness, there is no hint of the morbid as he turns instead to a magical world which unfailingly conjures up an Edenesque or Arcadian harmony between man, animals and plants. His imaginary vision does not aspire to offer a typically platitude-laden pseudo-engaged "commentary on the world", or a gloomy fantasy of a world in the wake of a great postmodern collapse. Refusing to submit to the current pervasive trend for the destructive, his painting dreams up a world where man, freed from the grasp of what Jacques Ellul called the "technological system", can rediscover the meaning of beauty, nature, and life – which are tragic, precious and fragile.

This is a painting of *hope*, inspired not by naivety and ignorance of the widespread disaster evolving on every front as capital wages war on living things – and particularly on the tropical forests he loves so dearly and which permeate his art – but anchored in *a firm grasp of the facts, against all odds*. Operating counter to the mirage of "innovation" which constricts the world and inhibits sensitivity, he patiently paints appealing liquid bottomless forests, lit up as if by fireflies, a peaceful green alternative world of surreally beautiful colours, streaked with rays of light falling on shady vegetation, of tree trunks soaring sinuously skyward – a torrent of endless beauty in which even strange elements appear hospitable. By contrast to the deadly complex of omnipotence sweeping through the world and the countless ravages of technocapitalism – speed, instantaneousness, and easy worthless pleasures – Éric Roux-Fontaine's visions not only signal his rejection of this path, but conjure up those uniquely humanising things which have apparently been rejected by the contemporary

art world: imagination, slow contemplation, silence, self-awareness and, above all, beauty. These priceless treasures are being progressively corroded every day by technological totalitarianism.

Not posturing or flashiness, but rebellion and nostalgia underpin this personal cult of beauty which can be traced from painting to painting. "*Nostalgia [...] cherishes the idea that horror, injustice and disaster are not the last word as far as what happens in this world is concerned; there exists what Horkheimer calls an 'Other',*" writes the philosopher Renaud Garcia. "*Against a backdrop of affecting images stored in the memory, it challenges us to denounce and correct injustices and aberrations closest to us, in everyday life itself. But also, to try to remain steadfast and to do what we believe to be true and good.*" To remain human and dignified even in times of disaster and clear-sighted pessimism.

This is a poetic plea to rediscover the meaning of time, to restore our sensitivity which is being eroded by the constant demands made on us, even in in our private lives, to love the world, *to observe it and feel it*. In the words of Albert Camus, Éric Roux-Fontaine's art restores "a little of that which constitutes the dignity of life and death".

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