



ART-PRESENTATION: Philippe Cognée-Crowds

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Philippe Cognée in his paintings uses wax that is heated and crushed, producing a blurred effect and raising questions such as the thinning away of the image and the human condition in the light of humans' relationship to their urban environment. The artist draws inspiration from photos and videos of elements such as motorways, buildings and aerial shots. His work questions the role of art in a society where new digital technologies have ushered in the era of the image, both omnipresent and diminished.

Philippe Cognée returns to Paris with "Crowds," an exhibition devoted to his new series of paintings. With these works, he continues to explore the individual and the collective, the visible and invisible, the place of the real and the place of art. Figures emerge then dissolve into compact, hazy throngs within compositions that at first sight



appear abstract. The blurred crowds are redolent of visions provided by new technologies and satellites, at once implacable yet imprecise. In the face of this proliferation of degraded images, Cognée responds with the power of painting, unique in its ability to transcend the movement of swarming humanity within a landscape that is at times dreamlike. In the early '90s, Philippe Cognée, an artist with an already marked fondness for materiality, developed an unusual pictorial technique using photographic composition and wax rendering, which is his personal style these days. His technique is demanding. **"It works better with highly structured images with rhythmic elements, when there are lines, like in motorways, building perspectives and supermarket shelves, for example."** Philippe Cognée's visual sources are real images subjected to the filter of the photograph, the digital screen or the photocopy. This photographic sketch is transferred to the canvas and coloured with encaustic, before being re-covered by a rhodoïd film, which the artist heats with an iron, then rips from the painted surface. Cognée's method stems from a balance between de- and con-struction, the blurring of the image by immediately summoning up another. The subject, which is absorbed by the acrylic ground, is simultaneously renewed on its surface. It is memory, a memory fashioned by the erosion of oblivion, the way the shore is by the sea.