

## Patrice Killoffer, *Nourrir le Monstre*, Galerie Anne Barrault, Paris

Galerie Anne Barrault

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Patrice Killoffer, *Lit*, 2016. Photo : Courtesy of Galerie Anne Barrault

### Patrice Killoffer, *Nourrir le Monstre* Galerie Anne Barrault, Paris, May 21–June 18, 2016

Patrice Killoffer, one of the founders of the French comic publisher *L'Association*, has produced some of the most impressive and groundbreaking graphic novels of the past few decades. Killoffer's work transcends the confessional mode of autobiography that characterizes the work of many of his peers, instead holding a lens up to everyday life—a microscope turned so hard against the specimen slide that it pulverizes both the glass and the tissue, releasing its truth.

Killoffer's drawings vacillate between images executed with agonizing detail and the light, primitive lines of pre-war illustration; he is a jazzman who chooses the form that best suits the sensibility of his subject matter. And his subjects, while at first appearing expansive, are in fact limited to a tight cosmology of anonymous strangers, shapely female forms, private failures, feces, bad dreams, poor hygiene, and decay. The recent exhibition at Galerie Ann Barrault, *Nourrir le Monstre*, presents a mix of these themes in large and small format. Most impressive is a large roll of paper that stretches between two of the gallery's rooms, hugging the wall. The large format work contains the tangled bodies and lines—legs, arms, and shoes—of figures from his smaller line drawings, now on a scale that matches the space. Whereas small, meditative pencil drawings like *Lit* (2016) cause viewers to stop and dwell on the obsessive detail of his work—in the case of *Lit*, a hand-like figure lying on its side, thumb tucked under the pointer and middle fingers as the form turns from wrinkled skin to the smooth lines of a woman's bended knees, ending in high heeled shoes that are indistinguishable from flesh—Killoffer's large wall-size drawing allows viewers to become lost in the knot-like rhythm.

Still, it is impossible not to become consumed by the small works. A carnival of adolescent fixations and the half-hearted sexual ambitions of an older man are depicted. We are drawn in as much by their texture as by their content. Fingers, phalluses, high heels, testicles, bulbous folds of skin, and buttocks are never more important than the surface quality of their rendering: the fine lines of aging human skin, the deep ridges of bare animal hide, the flat elastic membranes that produce mocking contrasts. In several works, the smooth surface of bones is essential to their double role as headless female figures. In one drawing, smoke bellows through a round sphere floating in space, but it is the visual rhyming of textures that moves us beyond the story of the image, into something haptic and primordial, or at least satisfyingly ambiguous. In *Mouches* (2016), a sallow face rests under a sea of flies. Is it a visage with wrinkles rendered with infinitesimal detail, a pile of dried shit, or ill-fitting flesh-mask? Each small drawing is more than one thing, and each image makes one altogether forget that these are drawings. They are pictures generated elsewhere, transmitted from another world to ours.

In his more autobiographical moments, Killoffer uses white lines on a black ground. He offers small insights into his daily life that reveal a sense of claustrophobia, a blackness that feeds on the light of our collective gaze. And as in all of his works, humour is quickly replaced by embarrassment, chagrin by a sense of menace. It would be a mistake to think Killoffer feeds his own monster. His affect is unshakable, and his storytelling is crushing. We are the meal. The force of much of this work resides not in the impressive technical execution of each drawing, but in the ability to erase technique altogether, to transform the act of drawing into an X-ray of the character of its content, to catalyze the wild transference and amateur psychoanalysis of its creator. Killoffer draws us in but is wholly resistant to intimacy. His drawings appear welcoming, but they are recalcitrant, dark, and wise. Goodbye youth. Hello monsters.