

## Fabien Mérelle

### *Étreindre*

Edouard Malingue Gallery  
Hong Kong  
Dec 9, 2016 – Jan 14, 2017  
Caroline Ha Thuc

The setting for this exhibition, of 10 ink and watercolour drawings and three sculptures by French artist Fabien Mérelle, is very sober, and there is enough empty space between each piece to get the imagination working. The drawings are meticulous, while the pale pink sculptures made from acrylic resin look pretty rough. Yet an unlikely balance and an interesting dialogue lend harmony to the whole gallery, dominated by a feeling of floating and emptiness.

*Étreindre*, the title of the exhibition, means to embrace warmly. It also means to hold someone so tightly that there is precisely no space in between. The title comes from a drawing, at the end of the exhibition, of two almost nude men holding each other tightly. They are actually the models for the three sculptures, which represent them in a fragmented way, scattered all over the space: the legs to begin with, then the torsos and finally the heads, all life-size empty moulds. There is a strong contrast between these pieces, abandoned like ruins, and the realistic embrace of the drawing: they are only traces or dreams of that embrace.



*On the edge.* Installation view. Courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

The sculptures are the remains of a real embrace: the artist and his father posed for them. According to Mérelle, it was a painful, tiring performance. The pressure of time and the threat of death weighed on this hug between a man who is still a father but who is now marching

towards the end of his life, and a son who has become a father himself. The artist wished to capture this fragile, key instant when life switches and roles swap. The fragmentation comes from his desire to express the impossibility of two bodies being linked forever: a dream, then, but

its presence-absence occupies the whole space and produces a sensation of hollowness and transience.

Drawing, with its unimpeded access to the imagination and its fragility, is the perfect vehicle for uncertainty and perpetual suspension. In this way Mérelle's drawings respond perfectly to the sculptures: open, and looking like works in progress, they stand like promises on the edge of reality and time.

Mérelle is above all a draughtsman: from pencil to ink pen, he has been drawing since an early age. He conceives the paper as the stage of a theatre open to all sorts of possibilities. Starting from accurate, truthful details, and thanks to the precision afforded by ink, he gives birth to fantastical situations between realism and fiction: a man flying, following a bird in the sky, or seated with a little girl on the back of a crocodile; a woman welcoming a naked baby under a wooden hut; a man climbing a straight, thin tree full of tiny branches.

Mérelle's drawings convey the enchantment and fears of childlike universes, and have the power of embracing reality as a whole, including its mythological, hidden, imaginative parts. An important place is left for blank spaces to create a vacuum

around the characters, and for the mind to be able to float freely between the lines.

During a long residency in China, he discovered the void as an essential part of Chinese culture, and had to face the physical void of the place where he was working, an empty building that brought back all his childish nightmares. The artist constantly stages his own anxieties and fantasies, and creates narratives from his own life, transforming them into universal material. This time he expresses the urgency of protecting the ones he loves in a world overwhelmed with uncertainties and growing hostility. To embrace, then, could mean to hold tightly onto what we have, by accepting our own limits while exploring the infinite universe of the imaginary.

The marvellous drawings *Homme volant 1* and *2* (meaning 'flying man') resemble sketches of costumes for a surreal play. They embody all people's attempts to transform themselves into flying creatures, and thus to escape the human condition. Yet they are only costumes, and we know it: this is only a dream. The beauty of these drawings comes from this touch of humility and simplicity.

## 法比安·梅洛

擁抱

馬凌凌畫廊

香港

2016年12月9日至-2017年1月14日

Caroline Ha Thuc

此次展覽十分素淨，展出了法國藝術家法比安·梅洛（的十幅水墨、水彩畫和三個雕塑作品。每件作品之間都留出了足夠的空間讓參觀者發揮想像。繪畫作品謹慎而細緻，淺粉紅色的樹脂雕塑卻顯得粗糙。兩者之間恰似不可能的平衡以及浮現出的有趣對話為整間畫廊增添了和諧，籠罩在漂浮與虛無感之中。

展覽取名《Étreindre》，意為熱情擁抱，或緊緊抱住某人以至於不留下一絲空隙。此名取自放置在畫頭的一幅畫作。畫作中兩個近乎赤裸的男人緊緊擁抱在一起，而他們也是三座雕塑作品的模特兒。這三件作品支離破碎地散落在角角落落：先是腿，再是軀幹，最後是頭。空心的模具和真人實物一般大小。如廢物般被丟棄的肢體和畫作中真實的擁抱，這些作品間形成一種強烈對比：而它們只是擁抱的痕跡或夢境。

雕塑作品是一個真實擁抱的遺物：梅洛及其父親就是模特兒。據梅洛回憶，整個過程痛苦而令人疲乏。時間的壓力、死亡的威脅橫亘在兩個男人的擁抱間——一個仍是父親但生命已經走向盡頭的男人，一個已為人父的兒子。藝術家想要捕捉生命轉換、角色互換時脆弱而關鍵的瞬間。之所以支離破碎，是因他想表達兩個軀體永不可能結合在一起：而後那若隱若現的夢境佔領了整個空間，帶來一種空洞和轉瞬即逝的感官體驗。





*Flamant Rose* by Fabien Mérelle, Ink and watercolour on paper, 35 x 49.5 cm, 2016. Courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

繪畫所引導的想像空間和其自身脆弱感是表達不確定性和永恆停留的最佳載體。藉此梅洛的繪畫作品完美回應了雕塑作品：開放、循序漸進。它們像是矗立在現實和時間邊上的承諾。

梅洛首先是個製圖員：從鉛筆畫到墨筆畫，他從小就開始畫畫。他將畫紙想像成一個包含各種可能性的戲臺。從精確、真實的細節入手，並配合墨水的精度，梅洛在現實和虛構間創造出奇幻意境：一個飛翔的男人在空中追隨一隻鳥，或者和一個小女孩一起坐在鱈魚的背上；一個女人在小木屋裡迎接一個光著身子的嬰兒；一個男人爬上一棵又直又細、滿是小樹枝的樹。

梅洛的畫表達出孩童世界中的樂趣與恐懼，並擁有將現實全部納入其中的力量，包括那些神話、隱藏和想像的部分。他會在畫的重要位置留出一塊空間，為畫中人物創造一個真空地帶，也好讓思緒得以在線條間自由飄動。

在長期生活在中國的日子裡，梅洛發現留白是中國文化的重要組成部分。而他工作的地方也不得不面對實質上的留白——那間空空無人的建築讓他全然回憶起孩童時的噩夢。他時常在作品中展現出自己的焦慮和幻想，並取材於自己的生活，將之轉化為普世的素材。此次他表達了想要在充滿未知、敵意日漸增長的世界中保護心愛之人的急切之感。擁抱在這裡意味著緊緊抓牢我們所擁有的，這需要我們接受自身的極限，同時探索想像中的無限宇宙。

繪畫傑作《飛躍者》1和2就像是為超現實戲劇而作的戲裝草圖。這些服飾透露出所有人都想努力變成飛行動物以逃離人類世界，然而我們知道它們只是服飾：這只是個夢。也許這些畫作的曼妙正是源於這一點謙卑和天真。