

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: François-Marie Banier
Writings & Pictures

Location: 36 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

Dates: January 25 – March 19, 2023

Reception: Wednesday, January 25, 6–8 pm

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening, on Wednesday, January 25, of François-Marie Banier's *Writings & Pictures*. The exhibition, comprised of paintings, drawings, photographs, along with various notebooks and ephemera, will be held at our 36 Orchard Street space.

Situated somewhere between the acts of writing, drawing, and painting, François-Marie Banier's relentless output is also that of a prolific photographer. He has a propensity for spontaneously and effortlessly accosting people from all walks of life, forming a connection on the spot, striking up a mutually engaging conversation, taking pictures in the moment, and moving on at the speed of light, or perhaps at what might be the fundamental rhythm of urban life. On a recent Lower East Side stroll, for instance, I witnessed Banier suddenly hoist himself up into a fire truck parked on Canal Street and plop down next to the driver for a chat that lasted a few long minutes. Continuing on, he entered a Buddhist temple through a cracked street door and disappeared for what felt like a suspenseful eternity. He finally reemerged – no comment; life goes on, next! How far are we from the effects of social media and detached digital communications, I soon wondered? What kind of a counterforce is here palpably at work? More to the point, how can this person's voice, physical proximity and general presence be so mysteriously infectious as to function quasi-irresistibly with almost every being that crosses his path, almost everyone he interpellates?

"I don't know if I have any talent, and I won't be able to know it," Banier declared in a youthful manifesto handwritten on a large sheet of paper in 1966, "neither will you, nor your children, history wins (will it be capable of knowing it?) but I'm 18 years old and nurture ambitions, too many perhaps [...] I very much like to paint, to write, to sleep; that is to say that I like being myself and being others all at once, because when I sleep, write, paint, it is never all me but also those I like, hate, in the end those who interest me."

When approaching the vast continuum of Banier's production, it is the uninhibited energy that traverses every sentence written, every picture drawn and every photograph taken that is to be phenomenologically considered. It constitutes the true and underlying subject of his work. How are we to look at and assess these drawings and paintings that seemingly could not care less about their material construction or the sanctity of their pictorial inner logic? What are we to make of the relaxed graphic and painterly gestures that comprise the images at hand – what looks like a letter or a word here, a horizontal green stripe there, and below a generalized ovaloid made up of yellow dots, etc.? An expanse of paper or a piece of canvas provide the support for the eruption of a phrase or a stroke of color in the articulation of a pictogram, that is what mostly matters. The apparent ease and quickness with which Banier's works come into being are breathtaking, almost suspicious in nature. Might they be realizing the long abandoned adult fantasy of l'Art Brut, that is to manifest the unconstrained human disposition to create pictures without Dubuffet's contrived self-consciousness? Has the artist finally achieved the nirvana of child's play as a privileged, yet self-taught grown-up practitioner? Banier projects his thoughts and feelings out into the world incessantly and manages to exact specific encounters devoid of the degree of repression built into conventional behavior. In so doing, he invites his friend the viewer to set aside the potent, modern mirror of self-reflection and paralysis. Here words and images are simply generated through collision and the tumultuous give and take of forward thinking and action.

– Miguel Abreu

François-Marie Banier lives and works in Paris and in the Gard department of southern France. He has published seven novels and three plays, as well as appeared in films by such directors as Robert Bresson, Éric Rohmer, and Olivier Assayas. Dialogues Interrompus, the first volume of his memoirs, is forthcoming from Gallimard in 2023. Solo exhibitions of his photographs and paintings were held at Centre Pompidou, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris (1991 and 2003), Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart (1998), Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo (2000), Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro (2000), Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires (2000), Triennale di Milano & Fondazione Mudima, Milan (2000), Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo (2000) Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2001), Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2004), Villa Médicis, Rome (2005), Istanbul Modern (2006), Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles (2007), Helmut Newton Foundation, Berlin (2012), and Villa Noailles, Hyères (2020), among others.

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery.

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New hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 10AM to 6PM or by appointment
Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street