

HUBERTY  
& BREYNE

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# François AVRIL

*BRETAGNE*

18.06.21

> 28.08.21

**PARIS**



*January III, 2020*  
Acrylic on canvas, 81 x 130 cm

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# Exhibition

The last time that François Avril exhibited in Paris was in 2017. From 18 June to 28 August 2021, Avril will be back at the Huberty & Breyne Gallery with a selection of works - pencil and pen & ink drawings, works on canvas, lithographs and tree sculptures - that have never been shown in the capital.

Since March 2020, the artist's movements have been confined to Brittany. Avril has been immersing himself in all the wild grandeur and moody beauty of the Breton landscape, exploring its wide-open spaces - its marshes and moorlands, those rugged coastlines that seem to go on for ever ("Penn ar Bed", *head of the world*, the Bretons call "Finistère", *the end of the earth* according to the French). François Avril has been to the big cities - to Paris and New York and Tokyo - and now he has settled for Brittany.

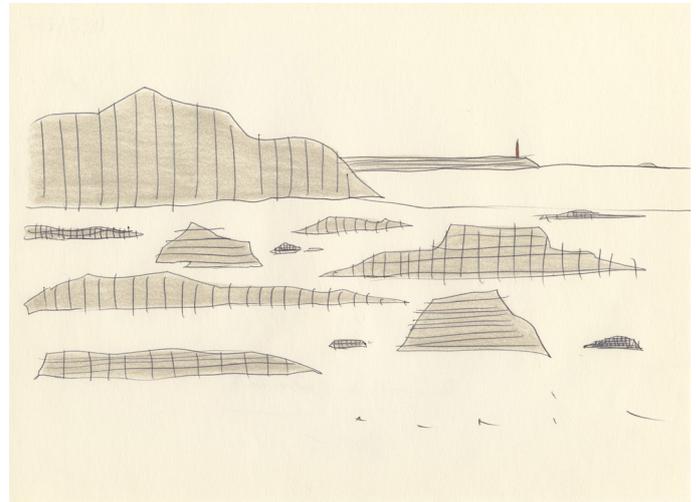
In this new exhibition, Avril invites viewers to discover, or rediscover, for themselves this region so dear to his heart. With great subtlety and elegance, the marks of his pencil or pen and the strokes of his brush compose a series of imaginary landscapes that are reduced to essentials and stripped of "chatter": expanses of sand and sea, the odd scattering of rocks, cliffs, a lighthouse, kelp beds... These works suggest a back story and evoke memories of a world of simple pleasures.



*Isolated Houses, 33, 2019*  
Indian ink and pencil on paper, 41 x 70.5 cm

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Whether he is working in black and white or in colour, François Avril takes the viewer on a journey that is all about nuance. Interview with the artist in his Port Blanc sanctuary.



Rochers et goémons, 2017  
Ballpoint pen and colour crayon on paper, 12 x 27 cm

**You've got three studios - one in Brussels, one in Paris, and one in Brittany. Is it your default choice to escape to Brittany or something you actively choose to do?**

*I've just been using my Paris studio as a base for the last year or so; it's more of an ideas lab than somewhere to work. But my big, light Brussels studio and the studio in Brittany - which I'm in the process of enlarging - are places where I work a lot. I shall be basing myself semi-permanently in Brittany as it happens.*

**Is the process the same whether you're working on a seascape or drawing an isolated house or a big city?**

*Yes, it is. I always approach my subject in more or less the same way. The process involves examining, stylising, and stripping away, prior to adding and reconstructing.*

**Your "Breton" works seem very tranquil: the sea is calm and there's very little in terms of a human presence. Is this a way of suggesting that nature is enough in and of itself?**

*Making calm drawings and paintings is certainly my intention. It's true that the seas are still and the skies often overcast. The human presence is reduced to its simplest expression, symbolised by frail silhouettes on a beach or a light shining from a house. I like to think that living, day to day, with a work that is full of a sense of peace can instil a kind of calm in its owner.*

**Now that you have produced "Onze", "Isolated Houses", "324 dessins" and - today - "Bretagne", what new projects do you have in the pipeline?**

*I've really enjoyed spending lockdown in Brittany: I've got a lot of work done there and spent time in the fresh air. While out walking, I've been so struck by the beauty of certain spots that I'm wondering if I should draw these places by sticking more closely to the reality rather than recreating them. I can draw them as they are and for me that would be a new challenge of sorts because I never really confront reality in fact. For over a year now, I have been thinking about becoming more realist, "truer". I expect it will happen gradually.*

*Incidentally, I've distanced myself from Paris, although it's the place where I was born. It's changed too much. But I'd like to draw the Paris I loved, not touristy Paris but Paris the capital city, with all that's rich and fascinating about it. I certainly plan to do another city project, and focus on Paris in particular. I might be living in Brittany but that doesn't mean I'll only be making Breton landscapes...*

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# François Avril, the art of purity

For more than thirty years now, François Avril (born in Paris, in 1961) has been flitting back and forth between the worlds of comic strip and contemporary art, and over the course of a career that has led from magazine and children's publishing in the 1980s to ultimately exhibiting his paintings in galleries the artist has developed a highly expressive graphic style. Although he has only produced a small handful of comic albums, Avril's compositional rigour, strong black lines and stylised approach are all throwbacks to the comics medium. While his work demonstrates the clear influence of the 9th Art, and in particular of Hergé, Ever Meulen and Yves Chaland, Avril's interest also extends to the works of Saul Steinberg, Giorgio Morandi, Serge Poliakoff, Lionel Feininger, Bram van Velde and Ellsworth Kelly.

Inspired by his observation of cities and landscapes, François Avril's paintings and drawings offer a fresh, poetic vision of reality and their graphic approach and compositional rigour set him apart as an artist.

The city is one of Avril's favourite subjects, whether he is drawing or painting. And rather than a specific city it is the idea of the city that he likes to represent; structural elements, perspectives and vanishing points that he likes to assemble. As if he were a solitary walker pacing its streets, he recreates the trappings of an imaginary city where time seems to have stopped and sounds have been silenced. Whether in Tokyo, Brussels or New York, it is the same magic that he conjures up, merely a different variant. The identity of the city hardly matters because Avril's city, the one he draws or paints, does not actually exist.



*White Cliff V, 2020*  
Acrylic on canvas, 81 x 130 cm

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The Breton coastline is another source of inspiration. Like the cities he reduces to essentials, Avril's landscapes are reinvented in the interests of creating a composition that is pleasing in terms of both volumes and lines. The sea is controlled, the cliffs are sculpted and the trees structured. Memory and imagination occupy as important a place in the artist's approach as the actual places he is drawing and painting. One and the same landscape might be Brittany or it might as easily be Ireland, say, or Scotland, Greece, Italy or the coastline of the United States.

Landscape of the mind or soul-city? Avril's universe hovers between realism and abstraction, volume and line, monochrome and colour. A subtle graphic harmony with shifting borders. *"Whether it's a city or a landscape, I always start with something real which I then rework to create utopian versions of that reality. I observe and it's my memory that does the job of filtering. Back in my studio, all I'm left with is a residue of what I've seen. What remains is simply a strong composition, and the details disappear. It's because of all these liberties I take with my - real - subject that I could be described as bordering on abstraction."* François Avril.



*White Cliff IV, 2020*  
Acrylic on canvas, 81 x 130 cm

## François AVRIL

*BRETAGNE*

### EXHIBITION

Friday 18 June to Saturday 28 August 2021

Virtual tour available for the duration of the exhibition

36 avenue Matignon  
75008 Paris

Monday > Saturday 11.00 am - 7.00 pm

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### PRESS CONTACT

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HD Visuals available on request

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# HUBERTY & BREYNE

The Huberty & Breyne Gallery is a key reference point in the world of Comic Art and has been specialising in original cartoon work for almost 30 years now. Operating out of Brussels and Paris, Huberty & Breyne offers collectors a choice selection of original works by the greatest comic book illustrators of all time - the likes of Hergé, Franquin, Martin, Hubinon and Schuiten. It is the only gallery to represent the work of Milo Manara and also collaborates with contemporary artists such as Philippe Geluck, François Avril, Jean-Claude Götting, Loustal, Miles Hyman and Christophe Chabouté.

The Gallery is closely involved with the international art market scene and a contributor at major art fairs such as Brafa (Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair), 1 – 54 London, Art Paris Art Fair and Drawing Now.

Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne are also advisors to Christie's regarding the sale of works of Comic Art.

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