

HUBERTY
& BREYNE

UNE PROGRAMMATION
MYCÉLIUM

Matthias LEHMANN

Chumbo



2.02.2023
> 16.03.2024

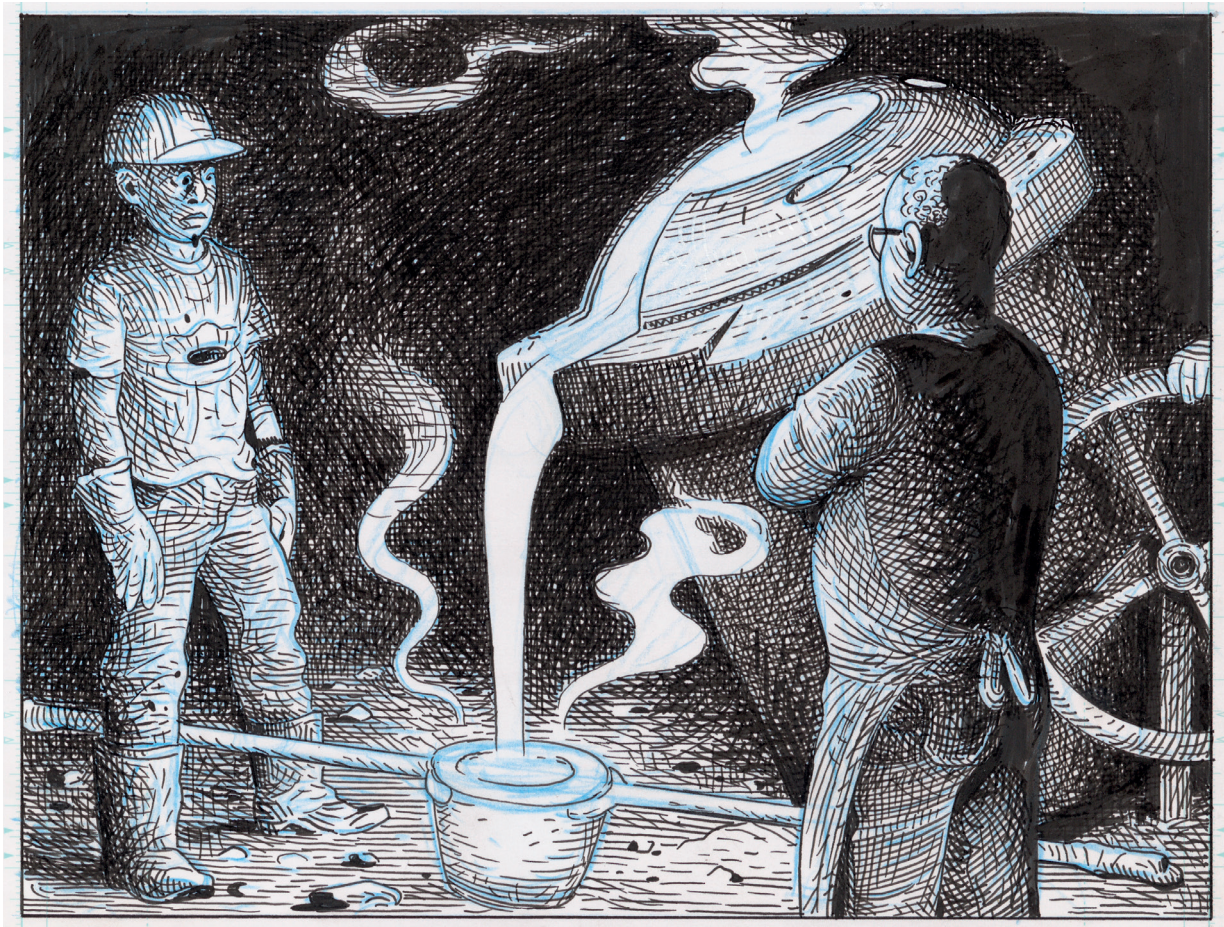
PARIS | Chapon

19 rue Chapon,
Paris 3^e

Following *La Favorite* (Éditions Actes Sud BD), published to great acclaim in 2015, Matthias Lehmann's new long graphic novel, *Chumbo* (Éditions Casterman), is not an easy work to pigeonhole. Neither wholly realistic, factual or autobiographical, nor entirely fictional, it is perhaps best described as multi-dimensional, like Matthias Lehmann himself – author and illustrator, French and Brazilian. Here, Lehmann – a master of the art of textual and visual narration – has gone in search of material that can accurately reflect the other facet of his nationality – his Brazilian connection, on his mother's side, which sees him weaving familial links with the South American country. When the family fell apart, Lehmann felt the need to reinforce that connection and used elements of history – both with and without a capital H – to compose two parallel chronological friezes that offer up a narrative which straddles them both, questioning the notion of heritage, whether filial, cultural, social or political.

Since its publication in August 2023, *Chumbo* has been acclaimed by the critics for both its graphic and its narrative power and has been nominated for several prizes, including the Prix des Libraires de Bande Dessinée and the awards at the Angoulême International Comics Festival (where it is an official selection). With more than 60 original drawings on show, in addition to several new scratchboard drawings, we are delighted to be offering – through the exhibition – another approach to reading this fantastic book.

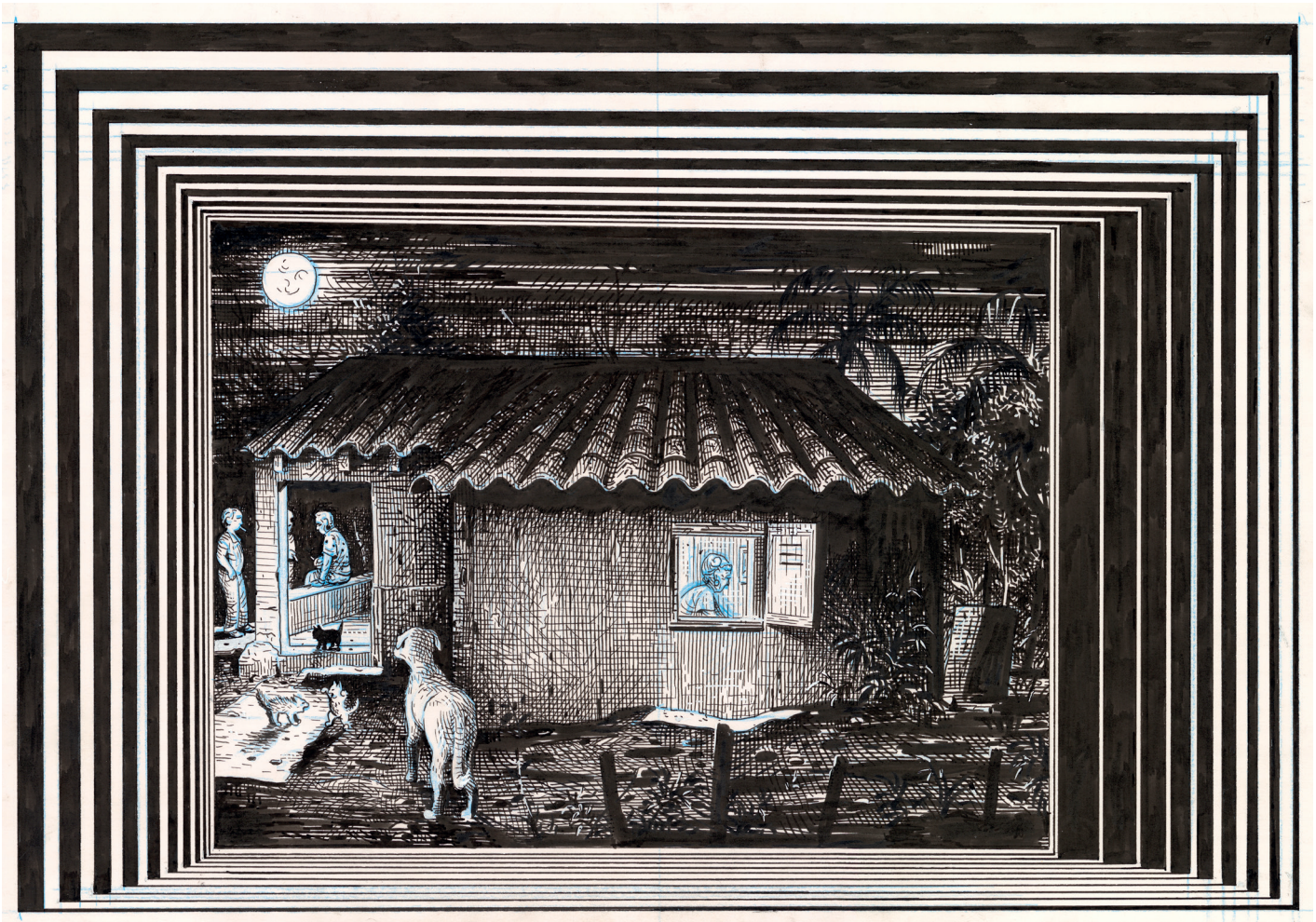
"Chumbo" means lead in Portuguese. In different regions of the globe, this toxic element has been used in a metaphorical sense to refer to a period marked by political violence – the so-called "years of lead". "Chumbo" is the leaden cloak that engulfs and muffles a period of historical disquiet. It is the metal that is both heavy and malleable, the metal that can be polished, and that can be exposed to the oxidation of political revisionism, the re-smelting of History. The metal that is hammered on the book's cover and at the head of each of its nine chapters.



Chumbo - Page 346 (detail)

Matthias Lehmann begins his story in the 1930s, returning to the source of Brazil's problems the better to understand how this "lead" of the dictatorship years continued to be mined right up until the 2000s. And it is with minerals that the story starts. In Belo Horizonte, what is being extracted, however, is manganese – less toxic than lead but the source of conflict, nevertheless, between two rival clans. On the one side, we have the Wallace family, and its patriarch Oswaldo, with whom the story begins. Harsh in his dealings with his family, remorseless in business, Oswaldo watches from on high, attentive to the mutterings among his mine workers, whom "red" Rebendoleng, from the other clan, incites to rebellion. Two families reflecting two facets of society: the middle class and the poor, city and country. A game of football between the sons and heirs of the two clans soon upsets the apple cart. This is the first clash between two parallel worlds destined to remain that way while repeatedly colliding, clashing and

coming together. *Chumbo* is a story of subtle, sometimes complex, shifts. Nothing happens suddenly or in an obvious fashion, and that is where the threat lies. It is through the prism of the family that Matthias Lehmann observes these shifts. Emotional hub but also hotbed of tension, the family is where we observe the first fissures that will widen into ideological divides on a grander scale. The Wallace family's social standing is negatively impacted by the death of Oswaldo. The two brothers, Severino and Ramires, the story's principal protagonists and sworn enemies, embark on political paths that are diametrically opposed, while on the Rebendoleng side Lara sets about emancipating herself politically and intellectually. In each family, sons and daughters carve out a path for themselves while laden with social, cultural and political baggage, within a society that is tearing itself apart. In Matthias Lehmann's hands, the family becomes the epicentre of the destruction wreaked by Brazil's dictators.



Chumbo - Pages 322 and 323

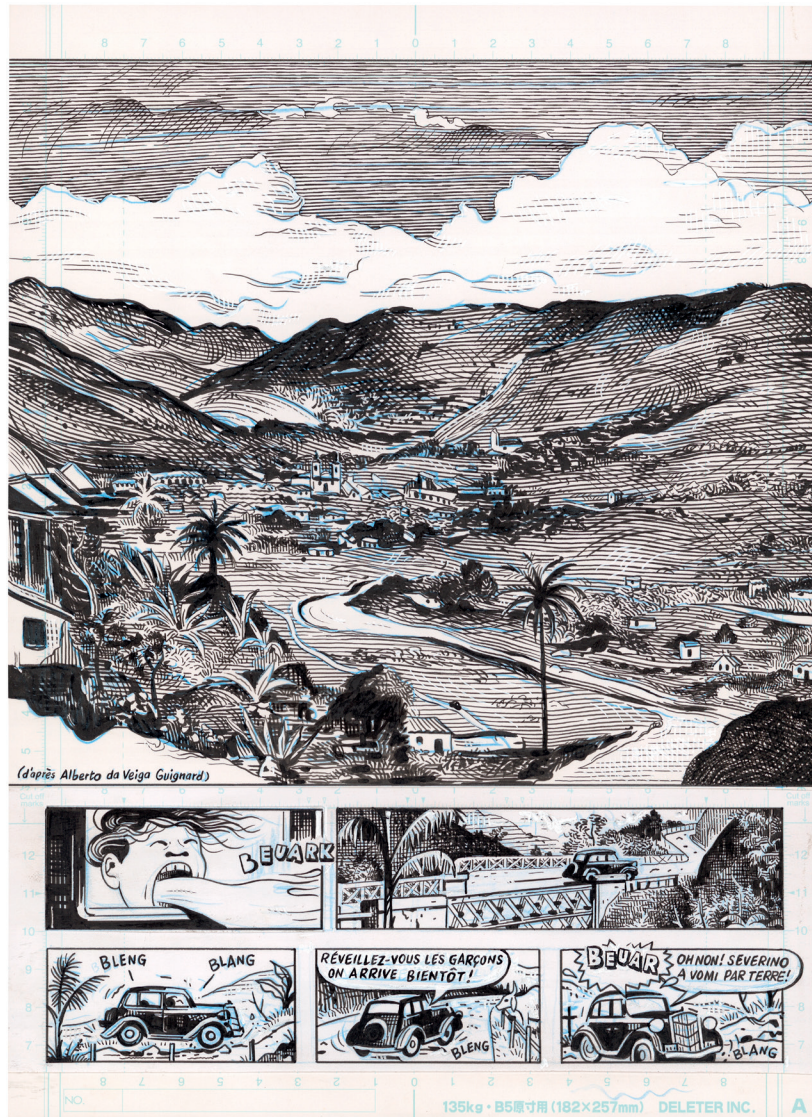
Chumbo was originally intended to run to 150 pages. However, that was without counting the discoveries the author would make during his extensive research, all the historical and cultural data he would glean. Press cuttings, articles, TV freeze frames, lottery games, political leaflets, cartoons, etc – all these were pictorial sources and narrative building blocks, either real or fictional, that enabled Matthias Lehmann to anchor his story visually in the times to which it relates. Lehmann was interested in everything that makes up society, from culture to food, sport and architecture, and even went so far as to redesign a telephone box so that it would conform to the times. The purpose of his research was to get as clear an idea as possible of what a particular place or time looked and felt like, so providing a precise framework within which his artist's and writer's imagination would be free to roam.

Matthias Lehmann was exposed to comics from an early age, bottle-fed, as he puts it, on the "3 Fs" – Fmur, Franquin and Fred. Later, he was to discover the US underground comics scene (Doucet, Burns, Clowes...) and the

graphzines of the 1980s and 1990s (Clavel, Doury, Bolino). And terms like "onomatopoeia", "comics grids", "speech bubbles" and "emanata" became part of a vocabulary that would simply slip off his tongue. He knows the rules of comic book creation like the back of his hand and is just as ready to break as to respect them. An open door disrupts the right angles of a panel, which becomes a spy hole or a screen, and we as viewers are stealing a look at an intimate scene nestling within the confines of a heart. The page may be full page or divided, full-bleed or otherwise, teeming with detail or simple and austere, chaotic or geometric... Thanks to his bold formal choices, every one of Matthias Lehmann's pages is dynamic. The architecture of his plates – whether using a traditional or a Z-shape grid, a single panel or a series of panels – provides multiple ways of reading and understanding his images. As in the lives of the two Wallace brothers, nothing is linear or pre-planned. Matthias Lehmann uses structure to give his narrative a particular rhythm: panoramic double-page spreads are an invitation to stop and look, while a succession of small close-up panels serves to increase tension.



Chumbo - Pages 200 and 201



Chumbo - Page 6

Everything is designed to convey the specific point in time, location and angle of the story, while technique – Indian ink on paper – provides the one constant. A great fan of wood engraving, Matthias Lehmann discovered he could produce similarly delicate engravings using scratchboard and a scalpel, and over the years he developed his own unique scratchboard style, creating several series of drawings that are executed with surgical precision. When he reverts to using ink for *Chumbo*, we find the same hatching and grids of fine lines, with the potential, seemingly, for infinite graphical variations. Black and white contrasts, either sharply delineated or in rhythmic gradations, drawn by hand or digitally created, establish a striking dialogue between free-standing

drawings and panels of all sizes. The original plates display the artist's pencil marks in blue – the very architecture of his compositions – and line spaces are marked up for the insertion of careful lettering using a typographical style appropriate to the times. Here and there, a word forms part of the drawing itself, contributing to the structure of the image. Vanishing lines, structure, composition, all these elements are carefully considered and planned in the service of the ink drawing, so that as the drawing fills out the characters burst into life. Whatever Lehmann's approach – realistic, cartoonesque, caricatural – there is an overall coherence to his work that combines graphic brilliance with a narrative brimming with emotional intensity.

Biography

Matthias Lehmann lives and works in the Paris region, where he was born in 1978.

Focusing heavily on the scratchboard technique (while also drawing in pen and ink and in biro), he began publishing drawings and comics in the 1990s, at a time when fanzines and graphzines – such as Lehmann’s own fanzine *Rancune Comix* (published from 1995), *Strip Burger*, *Thank God It’s Ugly* and *Le Martien* – were enjoying growing popularity in France and abroad.

He also contributed to a number of standout anthologies such as the famous *Comix 2000*, *Lapin*, *Hopital Brut* and *Dirty Stories* in the United States, and played his part in bringing comics magazines to the newsstands with his contributions to *Jade*, *Ferraille*, *Le Psikopat* and *Capsule Cosmique* and, more recently, *Pandora* and *Fluide Glacial*, in collaboration with Nicolas Moog.

His drawings have also appeared in the pages of *Libération* (for which he illustrated “Les controverses du progrès”), *Le Monde*, *Siné Mensuel*, *Le 1* and *Zadig*, among other press publications.

Lehmann is a great fan of both American folk music and heavy metal and in addition to working as a graphic artist he is a member of the band Raw Death (whose first vinyl album came out from Les Disques de La Face Cachée).

He is widely published and has three books with Actes Sud BD, most notably *LA FAVORITE*, which appeared in April

2015, was translated into three languages and garnered several prizes, including the Prix Littéraire des Lycéens et Apprentis de la Région PACA.

Lehmann’s new graphic novel, *Chumbo*, was published by Éditions Casterman at the end of August 2023 and is one of the official selections at the 51st Angoulême International Comics Festival.

Between 2020 and 2022, he worked on the novel as writer in residence at the Maison des Auteurs in Angoulême, the Villa Medici in Rome and the Drawing Factory in Paris.

TRUE STORIES OF NIC AND MATT, a collection of short stories written and illustrated in collaboration with Nicolas Moog, is due from Éditions Six Pieds Sous Terre in February 2024.

In December 2023, Lehmann collaborated with the pianist Shani Diluka on “Métamorphoses” – two concerts based on Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* that paired the artist’s drawings with minimalist music by Philip Glass, John Cage and Meredith Monk.

In 2022, he was selected to create the Line 14 platform murals at the future Villejuif – Institut Gustave Roussy metro station (designed by Dominique Perrault) as part of the “Illustrer le Grand Paris” project. Some of these murals are on display at the “Métro, le Grand Paris en Mouvement” exhibition at the Cité de l’Architecture, in Paris, until 2 June 2024.



Matthias Lehmann - © Blaise Harrison

Bibliography

TRUE STORIES OF NIC AND MATT

In collaboration with Nicolas Moog, Six Pieds Sous Terre, 2024

CHUMBO

Éditions Casterman, 2023

Angoulême 2024 official selection

AGORA

Six Pieds Sous Terre, 2019

LA VENGEANCE DE CROC-EN-JAMBE

In collaboration with Nicolas Moog, Éditions Fluide Glacial, 2019

QU'IMPORTE LA MITRAILLE

In collaboration with Nicolas Moog, Éditions Six Pieds Sous Terre, 2016

PERSONNE NE SAIT QUE JE VAIS MOURIR

Éditions L'Association, January 2016

LA FAVORITE

Éditions Actes Sud BD, 2015

(translated into German, Spanish and Italian in 2016)

- Prix Littéraire des Lycéens et Apprentis de la Région PACA, 2016-2017

- Angoulême 2016 official selection

- Prize for best script, Prix Lycéen de la BD Midi-Pyrénées, 2016

- Prize for best album, Darnétal Comics Festival, 2015

LA RUCHE ET LE MEMORIAL

Éditions ION, 2014

LES LARMES D'EZECHIEL

Éditions Actes Sud BD, 2009

EZEKIELOVE SOLZE

Slovenian edition, Strip Core (Ljubljana), 2011

L'ETOUFFEUR DE LA RN 115

Éditions Actes Sud BD, 2006

(HWY 115, American edition, Fantagraphics Books, 2007)

- Prix de la Bulle de Verre, FIBDA festival, Algiers, 2008

GRANDMA'S PAINTING

Strip Core (Ljubljana), 2006

LE GUMBO DE L'ANNEE

Éditions Les Requins Marteaux, 2003

ISOLACITY

Éditions L'Association, 2001

O PESADELO DE GUSTAVO NINGUEM

Éditions Le Dernier Cri, 2000

Solo exhibitions (non-exhaustive list)

2021 Atelier 27, Drawing Factory, Paris

2020 Libreria Stendhal, Rome

2019 AGORA, Huberty & Breyne gallery, Paris

2018 Festival Ratata, Macerata

2016 BilBolBul – Festival Internazionale Del Fumetto, Bologna

2016 Librairie Contrebandes, Toulon, with Nicolas Moog

2016 Institut Français, Bremen

2016 La Halle Saint Pierre, Paris, with Angela Dalinger

2015 Maison de L'Université, Rouen

2015 Librairie La Dimension Fantastique, Paris

2015 Librairie Super Héros, Paris

2013 "Topor/Lehmann – Conversation", Les Abattoirs, Riom

2013 Lollipop, Marseille, with Nicolas Moog

2012 Exhibition of press drawings, Festival International du Roman Noir, Frontignan

2012 "La Tentation de Saint Antoine", "cuBDes" installation, Rencontres du 9ème Art, Aix-en-Provence

UNE PROGRAMMATION MYCÉLIUM

Matthias LEHMANN
Chumbo

OPENING

Thursday 8 February 2024, from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm,
in the presence of the artist

RECEPTION AND BOOK SIGNING

Saturday 24 February 2024, 3.00 pm

EXHIBITION

From Friday 9 February to Saturday 9 March 2024

PARIS | Chapon

19 - 21 Rue Chapon 75003 Paris
Wednesday > Saturday 1.30 pm - 7.00 pm

CONTACT

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HD visuals available on request
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MYCÉLIUM

The Mycélium project is a new Huberty & Breyne initiative intended, in the first instance, to occupy the mezzanine-level exhibition space at the gallery's avenue Matignon venue. Conceived as a novel approach to the graphic arts, exploring the point at which these arts (in all their ramifications) intersect with one another, Mycélium aims – through a mixture of collective and solo exhibitions – to establish an artistic identity that is both coherent and eclectic.

Amélie Payan, who devised the project, is passionate about literature and the visual arts and eager to explore what happens when the two come together – the tenuous relationship between words and drawing, narrative and emotion, reading and looking.

Seen from this perspective, the hybrid art of comic strip offers an ideal medium for the artist who is simultaneously the writer – or vice versa – to keep coming up with new ideas and breaking formal rules, and so invent a potent sensory writing that mediates an artis-

tic dialogue where the mark drawn can become a word, and the word can become a mark. In this "amphigraphic" art, drawing and narration come together to create a new visual language.

The idea behind the Mycélium project is to be present at this crossover point and explore just what the drawn line can do – to go beyond drawing as a utilitarian or transitional concept and treat the medium as an experimental "vocabulary", explore different artistic "ways of writing" and thereby consolidate the continuum of the arts.

The artists involved in this project – both established and emerging – explore multiple graphic forms that enable them to keep extending the expressive power of drawing. Drawing is affirmed as a creative, organic and living act, a vibrant thing that resonates with other art forms, in the same way that, for the poet Charles Baudelaire, "perfumes, colours and sounds correspond". The idea is to explore the porousness of artistic boundaries, allow drawing to vibrate, like a living language, and so provoke thought.

Represented artists:

Donatien Mary - Sabien Clement - Margaux Meissonnier - Lisa Blumen - Florent Chavouet - Louise Duneton - Vahram Muratyan...

HUBERTY & BREYNE

Huberty & Breyne is a contemporary art gallery specialising in original cartoon work. Operating out of Brussels and Paris under the direction of Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne, the gallery – which has been in existence for almost 30 years – represents both established and up-and-coming artists linked to, or inspired by, the 9th art.

Its exhibitions of original plates, paintings and sculptures champion contemporary art in all its guises and provide a platform for the crossover of different disciplines. A key reference point in the world of comic art, the Huberty & Breyne gallery offers collectors a rigorous selection of works by both household names and promising newcomers.

The gallery is closely involved with the contemporary art market scene and a contributor at major international fairs such as Brafa (Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair), 1 – 54 London, Art Paris and Drawing Now. It occupies a 1,000m² exhibition space in Brussels, in place du Châtelain, and two further exhibition spaces in Paris, in avenue Matignon and rue Chapon.

Aside from running the gallery, Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne also advise auction houses regarding the sale of works of comic art.

BRUXELLES | Châtelain

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1050 Bruxelles
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PARIS | Chapon

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Wednesday > Saturday
1.30 pm - 7.00 pm

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