

Cène, Anthropocène: perspective

The time has come. For whom? For what? And to move in which direction? These are the questions that arise when visiting *Momentum*, a new exhibition by Pauline Bazignan in which the Italian Renaissance and the invention of perspective gives us the keys to understanding the Anthropocene. This term, used to describe the period we are living in, points to how the actions of humankind are responsible for the destruction of their own biotope. The last syllable of Anthropocene resembles the French and Italian titles of *The Last Supper*¹, which was painted by Leonardo da Vinci in Milan between 1495 and 1498. And yet the meaning of the two words couldn't be more different. "Cène" denotes a recent geological period, whereas *La Cène*, the painting's French title, comes from cenare, which is Latin for to dine. However, in the ample tapestry, the fourteen new paintings and six sculptures produced by Bazignan, these two separate meanings come together in a key idea of which she was not aware at the time. As such, her act of painting is akin to a vision. And as Marcel Duchamp once said: "I believe very strongly in the 'medium' aspect of the artist"².

Using the means that painting puts at her disposal, Bazignan addresses humankind's urgent need to escape from the viewpoint created by commensuratio (perspective). The Renaissance brought into being a world that could be measured, a world of which humankind was the master. Man began to measure this world, both in painting and in real life. Maps were made and time's passing was measured thanks to the invention of the mechanical clock. But if Man measured the world, it was with an eye to possessing and exploiting it. In *Ultima 2* (2024) and *Centre* (2024), Bazignan undermines this viewpoint by bringing the furthest areas and the landscape into the foreground and placing them in front of Christ. Other examples include giving the stream the central role in her canvases *Tempête 6, 8, 9* (after Giorgione) and revisiting the panels that comprise *The Battle of San Romano* (1455-1460) by Paolo Uccello, in which she replaced the knights with girandoles seemingly allowing the organic world to supplant history.

The "girandole" motif, a firework-like blossoming or a circular spray of water that resembles two open fans placed in a circle, has been at the heart of Bazignan's practice for several years. And indeed, water is her medium of predilection. "My paintings appear with water", she says. Water is colourless and yet the painter identifies it as the most essential element on her palette, a substance devoid of pigment that pulls colour along, caught up as it is in a wake of forms, signs and paint runs. Water gives life to her paintings as it gives life to the world and Pauline Bazignan puts water centre stage. Water becomes the founding moment of a world to come, a world in which mankind will take its rightful place – no more, no less.

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1. "La Cène" in French and "L'Ultima Cena" in Italian.

2. Marcel Duchamp in 1957 in a talk at the American Federation of the Arts Convention in Houston.

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