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Press release

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PHILIPPE COGNÉE

Insomniac Landscapes

3 September – 29 October 2022



Champ de coquelicots, 2022, Wax painting on canvas, 47 × 141 in.

With his new *Insomniac Landscapes*, Philippe Cognée once again demonstrates the power of his practice: a combination between his unconditional love of figurative painting, its rich history and unlimited formal potential, with the unwavering gaze of a contemporary man facing a world more disenchanting than ever.

For many years, Philippe Cognée has been tackling subjects often associated with the banality and ugliness of our civilization - supermarkets, highways, impersonal architecture - magnifying them through his technique of wax paint, which, once melted and crushed, creates a striking and unique effect of blur. In a nod to video, digital technology and the hypervigilance of Google Earth, his paintings offer a deconstruction of the contemporary gaze. They explore the notion of "recognizable", of memory and oblivion, in an existential questioning on the "exhaustion of images".

Philippe Cognée has now chosen to unfurl rural landscapes on the gallery walls. While his fields of poppies and sunflowers inescapably evoke the outdoors so cherished by the Impressionists, from Monet to Van Gogh, the scenery shapes a far more stifling reality. Cut into diptychs or triptychs, strangely deserted, frozen in an ambiguous light, these pieces of familiar countryside are as fascinating as they are disturbing. Their apparent immutability, criss-crossed by vivid or even incongruous colours, their dripping or scratched surfaces, suggest a resistance; resistance against realism, resistance against superficiality in the literal and figurative sense. Farmlands go back to nature and turn wild, forests seem haunted. Their majesty contrasts with a feeling of imminent disappearance, each landscape bearing witness to an irreconcilable misunderstanding between nature and humanity.

A subtle commentary on the changes affecting the rural world as well as our relationship with the environment, this series mirrors the climate anxiety that has now gripped our societies. There is no possibility of rest in these sleepless landscapes, neither for nature nor the viewer nor the painter.

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Nature, obeying its own laws, seems to be slipping away and the artist, stunned by so much beauty about to perish, leaves viewers to grapple with their own dilemma: to contemplate the apocalypse or to act.

Born in 1957, Philippe Cognée works in Nantes and Paris. A Villa Medici's laureate in 1990 and nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp in 2004, Philippe Cognée spent many years teaching at the Paris Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, where he trained a new generation of young figurative painters.

His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including at Geneva's MAMCO (2006), the Haute-Normandie FRAC (2007), Musée de Grenoble (2013), Château de Chambord (2014), Fondation Fernet-Branca in Saint Louis (2016) and Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire (2020). It also features in a great many museum collections, such as at the Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou, Fondation Cartier and Collection Louis Vuitton in Paris as well as the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne and Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris, which has recently commissioned two large-scale landscapes.

His work is currently on display at Thonon-les-Bains-Chapelle de la Visitation until 24 September 2022, and will be exhibited as part of *De la Nature* at the Musée de Grenoble from 21 October 2022 to 14 March 2023 alongside work by Cristina Iglesias, Wolfgang Laib and Giuseppe Penone.

For spring 2023, he has been invited for a major solo exhibition at the newly renovated Musée Bourdelle followed by a show at the Musée de L'Orangerie, both in Paris. The Musée des Beaux-Arts in Le Mans will be holding a solo exhibition of his work from May to October 2023.

Philippe Cognée has been represented by Galerie Templon since 2002.