

HALLE SAINT PIERRE

Anselme Boix-Vives,

March 23 – August 21, 2009.

Michel Macréau, March 23 – August 28, 2009.

Halle Saint Pierre, Paris.

Simultaneous exhibitions of Anselme Boix-Vives (1899-1969) and Michel Macréau (1935-1995) offer an exceptional opportunity to explore the worlds of two singular talents.

Boix-Vives, the immigrant greengrocer who was obsessed with creating a Utopian society, ultimately realized his vision through more than 2,000 paintings produced in the last seven years of his life. He populated his imagined universe with bug-eyed, toothy creatures set against boldly patterned backgrounds of dots, dashes, squiggles, and stripes, often in lush, flourishing landscapes. An exuberant colourist, Boix-Vives' lunary beings, amorous couples, religious figures and political personalities share centre stage with vibrant flowers, birds, and sacred spaces that form a harmonious blending of myth, parable, and events drawn from the 1960s.

Enhanced by director Martine Lusardy's deft thematic arrangement, the visitor wanders through Boix-Vives' dazzling paradise with considerable wonderment.

Macréau's portraiture offers a more challenging experience, both visually and psychologically, addressing human existence as it is, not as the painter would refashion it. With so much to see, larger works in particular attract the eye. *C'est Loin d'ici (It's Far from Here)* 1963, and *La Guerre Sainte (The Holy War)* 1987, surge with confrontational urgency in raw and bloody battles of faith, flesh, and identity. *La Mère et l'Enfant (Mother and Child)*, 1972, is a tour de force, a stark and wrenching portrayal of parent-child relationship.

The sheer number, variety, and power of Macréau's works – on cloth, canvas, paper, wood and board – is a revelation. Likewise, his extensive lexicon of eyes, lips, thorn-like pins, tears, crosses, arrows and text all offer keys to

deciphering the struggles he sought to exorcise. Scattered throughout his portraits (in all sizes), these stylistic elements highlight themes of connection, isolation, love, sexuality, and religion. Influences of Picasso, Dubuffet, and Corneille (among others) are clearly present, showing Macréau as firmly rooted in 20th century modernism.

Though Macréau is considered the pioneer of a new figuration and graffiti style (two decades before Jean-Michel Basquiat), this exhibition suggests that to classify Macréau's oeuvre too quickly is to underestimate its potency, and its sophistication. Better to linger awhile, left to experience the echoes of human emotion – without judgment, escape, or easy resolution.

Debra Wolf



Michel Macréau



Anselme Boix-Vives