

Pierre Aghaikian, *Burn The Witch*, 2019  
Oil on canvas, foam insulation, 250 x 420 cm

# Burn The Witch

**Pierre AGHAIKIAN**

31. 08. - 24. 09. 2019

Opening on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2019 from 3pm to 10pm

*Vernissage le 31 août 2019 de 15h à 22h*

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**PASSAGE PAS SAGE #8**, an artistic event initiated by CHRISTIAN BERST ART BRUT, SATOR, ISABELLE GOUNOD and PAPIILLON galleries

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Like *Burn the Witch*, a song by the English rock band Radiohead that gave its title to Pierre Aghaikian's third solo show at Isabelle Gounod and one of the paintings on display, the young French artist's resolutely expressionist style is as spacey as it is tense. Aghaikian, who has recently graduated from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, has developed for the past two years a series of paintings, which vertiginously blows what Erró radically introduced into surrealism at the turn of the 1960s: a hurricane of pop culture! Yet the analogy stops here. The master of Figuration Narrative has travelled the world to gather bottomless archives of mass consumer images – notably comics – and thus keep completing his kaleidoscopic yet flat, collage-like portrait of our times. As for Aghaikian, he has dug the motifs of his latest pictorial ensemble out of the fictitious abysses of cinema and video games, before diverting and thrusting them further into his distinctively thick, craggy impastos.

Following a recipe of his own, a mixture of oil paint and marble powder, Aghaikian has given an Earth-like crust, if not a dark matter, to the large all-over paintings and smaller compositions that punctuate the show. The mineral quality of these new works is all the more manifest that they actually stage a cultural quake, as if the Far East had crashed into the Far West, sweeping Hollywood on the way. Bringing to mind the universe of the *Kingdom Hearts* video game franchise, after which another painting was titled, the artist's hallucinatory visions embark beloved cartoon and manga characters into a crepuscular Western scenery, whose graphic asperities are sharpened by the polystyrene cutouts that frame the majority of the larger works, resembling volcanic plugs, stalagmites or stalactites. While the attractions of Disneyland directly inspired the fantastic rides, into which the painter has thrown all the protagonists of his tableaux, the strange, almost subterranean, apocalyptic atmosphere that transpires through the overall ensemble is also a nod to the Cohen Brothers' movies and *Red Dead Redemption*, yet another video game franchise that gave its title to a work on display.

Among Aghaikian's overloaded pictorial fields, one character appears more ubiquitous than others. He is a naively rendered, child-like cowboy, whose ambivalent smiley smirk ironically seems to say everything and its opposite about our contemporary world that both praises and fears the technological void, human extinction, and the mineral power of nature taking over. There is an epic dimension to the artist's works, especially at this turning point in history, while great heroes, if not in the least lacking, mostly evolve across an overkill of platforms and screens, leaving us the sole responsibility and addictive pleasure to vainly project ourselves into their digital feats. Echoing the logo of the film studio Paramount and shooting throughout the entire series, showers of bright stars finally point this great work towards higher spheres. After all, what could better signify here a dantesque paradise beyond the dark purgatory, into which Aghaikian engulfs us? Virtual realms may not be set in stone, but painting is certainly more likely to defy time.

**Violaine BOUTET de MONVEL**, July 2019  
Art writer, translator and editor. Member of AICA-France



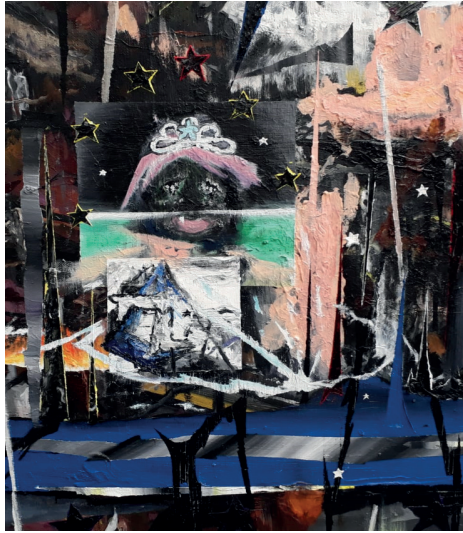
Pierre Aghaikian  
*God sold me another life and he made a prophet*  
2019  
Oil on canvas, polystyrene  
230 x 334 cm

On the right : detail





Pierre Aghaikian  
*RedDeadRedemption*, 2018  
Oil on canvas, polystyrene  
275 x 230 cm



Pierre Aghaikian  
*RedDeadRedemption*, 2018 (details)



Pierre Aghaikian  
*KingdomHearts2850xmph*, 2018  
Oil on canvas  
230 x 285 cm



Pierre Aghaikian  
*KingdomHearts2850xmph*, 2018 (details)

Pierre AGHAIKIAN was born in 1994 in Lyon (FR). He lives and works in Paris (FR).  
*Pierre AGHAIKIAN est né en 1994 à Lyon. Il vit et travaille à Paris.*

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS / EXPOSITIONS PERSONNELLES**

- 2019 *Maps To The Stars*, ENSBA / Atelier Dominique Gauthier, Paris.
- 2018 *Maps To The Stars*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris.
- 2017 *Fresh Out Of Death*, ENSBA/ Atelier Dominique Gauthier, Paris.
- 2016 *10 days with... Pierre Aghaikian*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris.

## **GROUP EXHIBITIONS / EXPOSITIONS COLLECTIVES**

- 2019 *Un coeur simple*, cur.: César Brunel et Louis Meyer, Centre Tignous d'art contemporain, Montreuil
- 2017 *Open Museum #4*, cur. : Valentine Meyer et Alain Passard, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille.  
*Week Show*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris.  
*Spring Break*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris.
- 2016 *Peintures*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris.
- 2015 *Été éternel*, ENSBA Paris.

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## **SAVE THE DATE**

### **31.08.2019 | Passage Pas Sage | 3pm - 10pm**

Vernissage Joint openings and artistic events in the Passage des Gravilliers and 13 rue Chapon  
With the galleries CHRISTIAN BERST ART BRUT, SATOR, PAPILLON et ISABELLE GOUNOD

### **15.09.2019 | Un Dimanche à la Galerie, 5<sup>th</sup> edition**

Hundred galleries exceptionnally open across France.  
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## **UPCOMING AT THE GALLERY | PROCHAINEMENT À LA GALERIE**

**Pierre AGHAIKIAN - *Burn The Witch*** | August 31<sup>st</sup> - September 24<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Martin BRUNEAU - *La fable de Butadès*** | October 10<sup>th</sup> - November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019

**Dan BRAULT (Solo show)** | November 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 - January 11<sup>th</sup> 2020

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## **ARTISTS REPRESENTED BY THE GALLERY | ARTISTES REPRÉSENTÉS PAR LA GALERIE**

Pierre AGHAIKIAN (FR), Glen BAXTER (UK), Dan BRAULT (CA), Martin BRUNEAU (FR)  
Jacqueline DAURIAC (FR), Martin FERNIOT (UK/FR), Luke HENG (SG), Sophie KITCHING (UK/FR)  
Florent LAMOUREUX (FR), Jérémy LIRON (FR), Audrey MATT AUBERT (FR), Catherine MELIN (FR)  
Aurore PALLET (FR), Lenny RÉBÉRÉ (FR), Pierre-Alexandre RÉMY (FR), Michaële-Andréa SCHATT (FR)  
Leslie SMITH III (USA), Katharina ZIEMKE (DE)

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## **GALERIE ISABELLE GOUNOD**