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## Simon de Pury Brings French Painter to NYC Art World

Eileen Kinsella, Wednesday, September 3, 2014



Guillaume Bruère *Portrait Vanilla 1* 19.06.2014 (2014) Photo: Courtesy the artist and Nahmad Contemporary

Just a few months ago, French-born Guillame Bruère (b. 1976) was a relatively obscure artist who had served as an assistant to Jacques Villeglé and Thomas Hirschhorn following art school in France. His work had mostly been seen at shows in Europe. But all that changed when curator, dealer and former Phillips CEO, Simon de Pury came upon the solo show of his striking portraits at the newly opened Van Gogh Foundation in Arles, France, a few months ago.

“I was blown away,” says de Pury, who is something of an art world dynamo himself, as he stood in the center of the Nahmad

Contemporary space on Madison Avenue earlier today. Thanks to his enthusiastic response, a show of Bruère's paintings is opening there tonight. After seeing the work, and learning that Bruère's studio was in Berlin, where de Pury happened to be heading the next day, the former auctioneer made a visit and quickly helped to spread the word.

It helps to have powerful friends. In St. Tropez in late July for Leonardo DiCaprio's inaugural foundation gala and charity auction, which de Pury conducted, he ran into Joe Nahmad and showed him images of Bruère's work on his iPhone. Nahmad was equally enthusiastic and traveled back to Berlin with de Pury in late August for another studio visit. Thus the "fastest show I ever organized," in de Pury's words, was set in motion.

The widely varying portraits—even those depicting the same subject—are large, striking mixed-media on paper works that reflect the artist's belief that every single person has "so many different facets," in de Pury's words. They also, he says, reflect his "deep knowledge of art history," as well as his intense study of and admiration for artists ranging from Cranach to Ingres, Van Gogh, and Egon Schiele. He notes the "strong energy and fantastic color of the works." "Vanilla," the title of the exhibition at Nahmad (through October 1), takes its name from Bruère's assistant, the subject of the artist's most recent series consisting of eight, drastically different portraits in the show. There are also "earlier" self portraits, if you can put that label on paintings made two years ago. The artist produces work at a rapid pace in what is described as "a highly concentrated, almost trance-like state." By minimizing the opportunity for deliberation he attempts to distill and represent the true essence of his subjects.

"At a time when a new academism of process-based abstraction has become the norm among emerging artists, it was a refreshing experience," says de Pury of his initial viewing of the work in Arles.

Bruère's work has been seen at institutions in Europe including MARTa Herford and Galerie de Stadt Backnang in Germany, Galerie Heike Curtze in Austria, and Galerie Bernard Jordan in Switzerland, but this marks his first solo show in the United States. As of yet, he does not have US gallery representation or much of a market track record, having sold works directly from the Berlin studio where he has worked since 2003. De Pury said a move to a larger studio in Berlin kept Bruère from attending the opening tonight though he will be visiting New York next week.