

Guillaume Bruère | Vanilla
Curated by de Pury de Pury
September 4 – October 1, 2014



Portrait Vanilla 1, 19.06.2014, Mixed media on paper



Portrait Vanilla 5, 07.07.2014, Mixed media on paper



Portrait Vanilla 8, 24.07.2014, Mixed media on paper

'When I first saw Guillaume Bruère's portraits, earlier this summer at the opening of the Fondation Van Gogh in Arles, I was blown away by their raw intensity and power. At a time when a new academism of process based abstraction has become the norm amongst emerging artists it was a refreshing experience. Am thrilled that Joe Nahmad shares our enthusiasm for Guillaume's work and offers him his first exhibition in the United States.'

– Simon de Pury

Nahmad Contemporary is pleased to present *Vanilla*, a solo exhibition of work by French artist, Guillaume Bruère, curated by de Pury de Pury, the husband-and-wife team of Simon and Michaela de Pury. This is the artist's debut presentation in New York City. With an opening reception from 6-8pm on Wednesday, September 3, the show will be on view through October 1, 2014.

Born in Châtellerault in 1976, Bruère attended the European School of Visual Arts in Poitiers and the Nantes Fine Art School, after which he assisted artists such as Jacques Villeglé and Thomas Hirschhorn. Bruère, who has been based in Berlin since 2003, is an exceptionally prolific artist whose diverse oeuvre encompasses painting, drawing, collage, sculpture and performance. The artist's wide-ranging aesthetic defies classification and he, himself, refrains from drawing clear distinctions between his varied media. At its core, Bruère's work provides a glimpse into the complex inner workings of his psyche. The artist produces his works at rapid speed in a highly concentrated, almost trance-like state. By aspiring to outpace his own consciousness and thus diminishing the opportunity for deliberation, he distills his subject down to its truest essence.

The exhibition at Nahmad Contemporary features recent large-scale portraits of friends and acquaintances, eight of which make up the *Vanilla* series, named after his assistant whose striking appearance enamored the artist. In each of the portraits, Vanilla appears starkly different,

a strategy Bruère deploys to underscore the philosophical notion that a great deal of diversity lies within each person.

Executed with an amalgamation of oil pastel, watercolor, acrylic and graphite, the exhibited works exist somewhere between painting and drawing. By experimenting with the infinite permutations of various media, Bruère strives to achieve the richness of a traditional oil painting. The artist's work intersects explicitly with his fascination and knowledge of archeology and art history, particularly German and Dutch portrait painting from the 16th century and onwards. Hans Holbein, Vincent van Gogh, Egon Schiele and Francis Bacon are amongst the handful of artists Bruère counts as true masters.

Portraiture is a genre that no longer holds as much importance as it once had. As such, Bruère is preoccupied with the question of what it means to make a contemporary portrait. He is greatly influenced by the French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, who posits that it is our duty to remove all prejudices when we encounter a face for the first time. Without this ability, we would no longer be human. Likewise, Bruère attempts to strip away any accumulated layers of preconceived notions about the painting or sitter from whom he is working. To Bruère, taking on portraiture is an immense responsibility, which he ventures to undertake by imparting humanity into his work.

Bruère's works have been the subject of solo and group exhibitions at numerous institutions, including MARTa Herford and Galerie de Stadt Backnang in Germany, Galerie Heike Curtze in Austria, and Galerie Bernard Jordan in Switzerland. His work belongs in such prestigious collections as the Kunsthau Zurich, Switzerland, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Germany, the Salzburg Museum, Austria and the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing, France. The artist was honored with a residency at Foundation Van Gogh in France in 2013.