Mario Benjamin, le moins haïtien de tous les artistes haïtiens, édite depuis près de 30 ans son œuvre psychématique sur les cataclysmes du moi. Bourreau de la conscience et des nuits de raison, ce dandy magnétique véhicule son art d’illumination des fantômes qui nous gouvernent, de chambres vides en chambres fortes, et de maîtres en cliniques, dans un exil volontaire au sein de sa propre prison antilope. La monographie secrète de ces éditions Revue Noire rappelle à propos le caractère irremplaçable de ce diamant noir. Comme Steve McQueen, le vidéaste et réalisateur anglais — originaire de la Grenade — qui s’attache à la respiration limite des corps, Benjamin revendique la même hallucination familière du sang et des matières que celles du film Hunger. Désaliant ses rêves en installations, l’artiste caribéen peint aujourd’hui des toiles phosphorescentes de faux autoprêts irréels, où la figure se désintègre dans une ébullition de traits sanguins, où la peau meue en lucides vaines sous la puissance d’une âme absente, rongée par la schizophrénie du monde. Devant ce mélange de regard et de chair abîmée, on songe péniblement à l’effondrement dans la nuit des derniers Caravaggio ou de Steve McQueen touchant du doigt l’œil rouge de Charlotte Rampling. Si c’est cette tension entre appariation et disparition, vivant et mort, organique et décoratif, brûlant l’espace en inondant les territoires basculés de l’autre côté de l’existence, Haïti est un dieu sauvage, et Mario Benjamin demeure son prophète. 

Emmanuel Daydé

Un livre bilingue publié aux éditions Revue Noire accompagne l’exposition. Il s’intitule Chambre de Mario Benjamin. (Textes de J.L.P. Poirier, P. Martin St Leon, S. Juma.)

Mario Benjamin, the least Haitian of Haitian artists, has been developing his psychotic body of work about the cataclysms of the self for going on thirty years. Slayer of silence and of the nights of reason, this magnificent dandy practices an art that illuminates the ghosts that govern us, from camera obscuras to strongrooms, and from houses to clinics, in a voluntary exile within his own West Indian house. The secret monograph of the Revue Noire publishing house is issuing a timely reminder of the irreducibility of this black diamond. Like the English video artist and maker of the film Hunger, Steve McQueen, whose roots are in Grenada, and who focuses on the limits of the body and its respiration, Benjamin asserts a disembodied hallucination of the blood and wounds. Leaving behind his recent spectacular installations, Benjamin is now painting phosphorescent canvases, false radiated self-portraits, in which the figure disintegrates in a bare composition of bloody lines, in which the skin is sloughed off and becomes yellow fireflies under the power of an absent soul, gnawed by the world’s schizophrenia. Facing this mural of the abolished gaze and flesh, one thinks, perhaps of those late Caravaggios disappearing into the darkness, or of Steve McQueen touching Charlotte Rampling’s red eye. Were it not for this tension between appearance and disappearance, living and dead, organic and decorative, space burns, burning up territories that have switched to the other side of existence. Haiti is a savage god, and Mario Benjamin remains its prophet.

Emmanuel Daydé

Translation, C. Penwarden

With Zaven Paré everything begins with drawing. As an artist and researcher, he likes to balance complexity and simplicity, hi-tech and lo-tech. When viewing his works, or those of his friend Kenji Yanobe, we may think of Jules Verne. The status of his machines oscillates between puppet, automaton, and robot. They give the impression of being prototypes of prototypes, projects in progress that are not necessarily destined for some form of completion: it’s the research that counts, the process.

Zaven Paré

Galerie Charlot / 20 octobre - 17 novembre 2012

Avec Zaven Paré, tout commence par le dessin. Artist and researcher, he aims to reconcile simplicity and complexity, high-tech and low-tech. When looking at his works, or those of his friend Kenji Yanobe, we could think of Jules Verne. His machines oscillate between puppet, automaton, and robot. They give the impression of being prototypes of prototypes, projects in progress that are not necessarily destined for some form of completion: it’s the research that counts, the process.

Zaven Paré is interested in the limit between the machine and the human. He works on anthropomorphism of robots, which he used to experiment with the expression of impotence in a million-dollar robot animated by some fifteen motors, and also to explore the theory of "the uncanny valley" developed by the roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970. (1) This theory concerns the infra-thin line between the empathic and the disgust inspired in us by artificial creatures when they attain a high level of resemblance to the human. This exhibition can be viewed as one big installation, a panorama covering some ten or so years, even if each piece has its own autonomy: "tracing the path back through my career is like walking through a cybernetic forest planted with mechanical trees by Nicolas Schöffer and Jean Tinguely," says Paré. He explores the conception of technology proposed by Bruno Latour: "'technique' does not designate an object but a difference, a totally new exploration of being-as-other, a new version of alterity." (2)

Raphael Cuir

Translation, C. Penwarden

(1) See art press 2, no. 25, Cyborg
(2) Enquête sur les modes d’existence, une Anthropologie des modernes, La Découverte, 2012.