

## READING

JULY 12 AT 18:00

### CONGO

by **Éric Vuillard**

Free entrance

Read by Jean-Claude Leguay

Saxophone par Sylvia Toumaian

Dramaturgy Karine Bracchi

Music

*Concertino da Camera* by Jacques Ibert (excerpts)

*La Pie Voleuse* by Gioacchino Rossini (excerpts)

*La Partita en La mineur* by Jean-Sébastien Bach / *L'Allemande* - first part

On a proposal from Ronan Barrot

Text published by Actes Sud

## AND...

### NAVE OF IMAGES

Video screenings of pieces presented in the Festival d'Avignon, July 8-26  
(except July 14 and 20), Église des Célestins

### LE CUBE – 360°

*Histoires d'Espaces* - Saison 2, July 10 | 16 | 18 19 | 26 from 16:30 to 18:00,  
July 11 | 15 | 22 | 25 from 18:00 to 19:00, July 14 | 20 from 14:30 to 19:00,  
Église des Célestins

### EXHIBITION

*Five Truths* by Katie Mitchell, July 6-26, Maison Jean Vilar

## EXHIBITION

By exhibiting his work in the Église des Célestins, Ronan Barrot has chosen to take the setting into account. Always on the edge—ambiguity of meaning, ambivalence of sound—the painter highlights the paradox of the place. Although desacralised, this church nevertheless retains its memory, and continues to enact taboos. Should he brave them, make light of them...? Ronan Barrot doesn't discard the religious iconography that played a major part in the history of painting, but instead lets biblical elements enter profane scenes, almost like a temptation. Within a single painting can great banality and mythic inspiration come head to head. The throughline of this exhibition: scenes. Theatre, this profane ritual, was born right outside churches and their rites. Against and with them. That's what Ronan Barrot's great paintings remind us of, with an edge that doesn't cut but rather opens. Landscapes and fictions welcome the unavoidable figures in such a holy place, and the consecration of recurring everyday images. The painting becomes the place where "something is about to happen." A sensual fable? A mythological drama? A real event? Painting will tell, and our gaze will choose.

## RONAN BARROT

Born in 1973, trained at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts (Paris) and at the Berlin University of the Arts, Ronan Barrot is a French painter who creates his paintings "on the canvas," the way others write shows "on the stage." With their penetrating darkness, his works radiate. A need to be involved confronts the trivialisation of fleeting images. His paintings have a density and a length reminiscent of the great mythical stories. Haunted, like their titles, they open a spectrum of rumours: legendary scene or banal situation? They are troubling, in the way they capture—a nuance, a question, a gesture. Ronan Barrot has in his head all the history of painting, but also all the images that television, newspapers, and the propaganda of advertisement would want to put there. And if "peindre, c'est se jeter dans la gueule du Louvre" ("to paint is to walk into the Louvre's den"), it is because he thinks one should let one's painting be invaded by any other painter who feels like coming in, but also by the traits that seem necessary and by the words that haunt one's memory. Whether they were created through a series of successive steps or appeared fully-formed, *We will come pick you up* and *Prudence*, like *Sunny Spell*, respond to a desire to experience the thickness and texture of time.

**71<sup>st</sup>**  
EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,750 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tireless and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.



FESTIVAL-AVIGNON.COM



#FDA17

## INTERVIEW WITH RONAN BARROT

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**How did you come to create the painting that will be used as the poster for this year's Festival?**

**Ronan Barrot:** There is, of course, “those images you were spared,” like in Charlie Hebdo, but the question of the popes soon became central. I first thought about doing away with the three keys. Many see them as a symbol for the three popes, but it's much worse than that: they open a hell (where many will be), a purgatory (where most of us will end up), and a paradise (for a select few). I wanted to make it clear that we're only on Earth. Then, I thought that since we're in Avignon, there should be a Christ-like figure, and I wanted that figure to be ambiguous. The first version of the painting showed more clearly that the man was a police officer, but it ended up being too clear, it was like looking at an old-fashioned theatre set. Power doesn't reside in the accessories. What I like about this final version isn't only that the action is very ambiguous, but also that it is no longer gendered: some look at the painting and see women. Then, when I visited the Église des Célestins, the crèche hadn't been put away yet, and I saw the Ravi [the Raptured], this figure that raises its arms in astonishment at the Nativity. It comforted me in the idea of having a figure with its arms raised, because the Ravi has a double meaning: he's nuts, simple, the village idiot; the idea of rapture echoes at once his joy and the fact that he's taken leave of his senses. From this double idea of a Christ and a Ravi, I came back to a series I'd previously started around the idea of the search. Before that loop, I didn't know I'd end up with that. Ideas come to me as I paint. I was drawing, and suddenly those three legs appeared, which brings us back to the definition of sculpture—with its three legs—it wasn't premeditated. You also have the constraint of having to use red, I hadn't planned to use it as a sort of curtain, that the light would come from behind. It might as well be Yves Klein—who would have traded his IKB (International Klein Blue) for some Barrot red—who's about to jump off a cliff, and who's being pulled back. Who's pulling him back? A mother figure? Is that someone searching someone else, or listening to them...? We can't tell whether the man is healing or killing, consoling or executing. *Fouille* [Search in English] isn't only “a search,” it's also the imperative. French [and, in this case, English] is loose enough to allow us to muddle what is a simple title by using a capital letter but no article. I don't want the title to restrict the audience to one particular reading. That's why *Voile* [Veil] isn't called “le voile.” French is convenient that way. If a decision is made, it must lead to an extension of the painting, not to a tightening around one specific meaning.

**How does a painting become “fixed?”**

There is, in painting as in all the other arts, a part in every project when you have to mull things over, but it's on location, “onstage” if you will, that it comes together—or not. People often think that a painter starts with a specific idea, or bases his work on a preexisting painting, as if there was a pre-established agenda that he or she just had to follow. But painting is a movement from one image to another, it's a passage. Since we carry all the images that came before us in our heads, of course there are elements of a painting that'll “make you

think of” something else. But if another painter barges in—you can't keep art history out of your paintings—you can either invite him in, or kick him out. It's like chance, actually: when something happens randomly, you can either accept or reject it. The point is to accept, to fit what happens into this formal setting. Precisely to counter this randomness, this part you didn't decide. I don't think everything's already been done. I don't agree at all with that postmodern idea that sees art history as a set of pots and pans in which to cook something up. This painting, the one from the poster, for instance: I've never seen it anywhere. That's it. Saying it like that is very pretentious, but it allows you to live. When I painted *Le 17 octobre 1961 à Paris* [17 October in Paris], for instance, I knew no one had ever painted it. But ideas for history paintings don't come to you every five minutes. I'm not trying to do something that's never been done just to say I've done it. The creation of a painting often involves the hybridisation of pre-existing paintings. We make paintings “grow.” I think of myself more as a peasant: it's as if there were several plots of land, some of them fallow, and that I made paintings grow, one after the other. After that, you do it by ear—that's why I love George Baselitz's *Ralf III*, which is in the Pompidou Centre, because there's an ear in the foreground—because you have to listen, you can't just stand in front of the canvas and saturate it, you have to let things come to you... Series don't exist for the simple pleasure of creating series. They're born of the need to make changes to a painting, to hybridise ideas.

**To what kind of reflection did your exhibiting in a church lead?**

For the Église des Célestins, you have to create works with a strong religious bent, and others that are entirely prosaic. You have to widen the spectrum as much as you can because this is a laicised church. And very simply, you have to remember that when Picasso displayed his work in the Palais des papes, he created his Musketeers, and that all of them stood on their own, people remember them. You have to take into account the place itself and—you can't free yourself of the context—let's say, go with it, and against it. Both at once. In the Église des Célestins, there's a wall with a frame in it, as if it were just waiting for a painting; so I had to create a painting that would fit it exactly. I'll try to take advantage of the very layout of the place in at least two spots, of the invitation to set my work there. A Last Judgment, of course, that's very tempting. But if I try to do that, I might end up hanging myself three months down the road, scared by how pretentious it is! In any case, there will be scenes. Maybe a Massacre of the Innocents. In a church, there are some things you can't do without, you can't escape them. Maybe a Manna as well. There are so many horrible things in churches, with all those representations of martyrs. But Tintoretto's *The Miracle of Manna*, which is in a church in Venice, is a painting of joy. It's paradise. I love paintings which, even when black, open up on hope and bring you a happiness of colours; something of a promise, of a vision of humanity as finally free.

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Interview conducted by Marion Canelas and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach