

Persistence overcomes resistance.

Often, wandering through the aisles of art fairs, I wonder (as you do) whether there will ever be enough walls in this world to carry as many works, considering that those displayed here are only a tiny fraction of the colossal mass produced each year. Enough cellars and attics, a few freeports, to let them sleep in peace while they wait in obscurity for a regard that may never come. This thought hovers over the booths, appearing and then fading for no reason, at the mercy of the attention paid to one enterprise or another...

Let's focus on what we see:

We now find ourselves before a series of landscapes *Pains Polonais* by Gijs Milius, consisting of four pictures in the booth of Mieke van Schaijk's gallery. A horizon created by the separation of two saturated color fields, one green and the other blue. On three of the four images, a grayish shape floats in the center of what we can only call a sky. The seeming naïveté of the composition along with the ultimate banality of the subject might trigger a nostalgia for a Windows XP wallpaper, the unconscious archetype of the arrival of digital technologies in households at the beginning of the 21st century. A window, then? Rather a painting, for we must "remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." (Maurice Denis)

It's a trap, because even in its awkward flatness this object depicts in spite of itself. Since 1929 this is called *La trahison des images*.

To appreciate a figurative painting, to allow oneself to be charmed, one generally questions where the light is coming from. Astrophysicists and religious thinkers ask themselves the same thing. Yet every inquiry into origins of light, form, or matter, unavoidably leads back to infinity. There come the ghosts of metaphysics without having been summoned... We know that if matter is finite (as is the speed of light), the practical consequence of the universe's infinity is the inevitable repetition of worlds. Everything exists, has existed, will exist. Thus, in very distant worlds, these paintings are repeated: some identical, others with a sky that is green instead of blue, a vertical horizon, and no one is surprised - or worlds in which you painted this picture and Gijs Milius is the one looking at it...

Galerie Mieke van Schaijk
Gijs Milius
Booth B34
Art Antwerp 2025

Here, beyond this horizontal horizon, luminosity seems to have no source. The cloud casts no shadow on the ground; the light emanates uniformly, like that of a computer screen. The illusion is turned inside out, and the light does not settle upon the depicted object but diffuses from the whole of the composition as though backlit.

Through this more ironic than naïve simplicity - one cannot help but notice the technical virtuosity that serves the disconcerting result - Milius inscribes himself in the long tradition of landscape painting. And if we know of a Dutch painter whose starry nights reproductions adorn dentists' waiting rooms across the world and who, at the end of the 19th century, shot himself in the head to conclude a life of misery, one might believe that the Dutch painter whose work concerns us today is, instead, intent on shooting himself in the foot.

In this maze of booths, overwhelmed as we are by so many works begging with imploring eyes to be adopted like little dogs in animal shelters, Gijs Milius troubles our peaceful and harmless wandering and, in a subtle way, makes us consent to acquire the point of view of cattle gazing at the horizon.