

R.A.S. (rien à signaler)

by Éric Manigaud

FIFTY ONE

Opening reception: Saturday, February 2nd 2019 from 2 to 6 pm
In the presence of the artist!

Show: February 5th - April 6th 2019

Gallery FIFTY ONE TOO is honoured to announce 'R.A.S. (rien à signaler)' by the French artist Éric Manigaud (°1971). Manigaud is celebrated for his monumental, photorealistic graphite drawings, that are based on historic photographic archive material. In this exhibition, the artist will present his latest series, focussing on the Paris massacre of October 17th 1961, during which the French police attacked a peaceful demonstration of the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in a shockingly violent way.

The events took place towards the end of the Algerian War (1954-62), during a period in which the FLN stepped up its struggle for independence with a bombing campaign against the French police. The demonstration of October 17th 1961 was a direct answer to the imposition of a curfew for all French-Algerian Muslims. The protest march ended in the brutal and intentional killing of many unarmed demonstrators. Some drowned after they were thrown in the Seine by police officers. The events have been denied and censored in the press for a long time. Although the death toll is estimated between 200 and 300, in 1998 only 40 victims were officially recognised by the French state. No one was ever convicted for the killings. The title of this exhibition, 'R.A.S.' or 'rien à signaler' is a reference to French military jargon for 'Nothing To Report'. With this title, Manigaud also refers to the eponymous 1973-film by French director Yves Boisset, treating the Algerian war and how the French army handled Algerian insurgents.

The film by Boisset was released at a time when the French public was still very sensitive about this subject. Today, October 17th 1961 remains one of the darkest episodes in recent French history and a painful reminder of the country's colonial past. The few sources that bear witness to this evening are press photographs, taken for the newspapers *L'Humanité* and *Libération* but seldom published. For his drawings, Manigaud selected photographs by photojournalists Georges Azenstarck, Georges Ménager, Louis Dalmas and Elie Kagan, as well as stills from 'Octobre à Paris', a film by Jacques Panijel, that was banned immediately after its release in 1962. Manigaud projected these images on paper, on a much bigger scale than the original. He traced the projected contours, shades and lights with pencil and graphite powder; a slow and labour-intensive process that lends weight to the volatile snapshots Manigaud started from.

The enlargement of these often graphic and shocking images to a monumental scale turns them into a physical and disruptive experience for the viewer. Watched from a distance Manigaud's drawings seem photo-realistic, but coming closer, the countless dots and strokes start to blur and deconstruct the spectator's vision. This ghost-like and elusive quality offers the viewer a way of distancing himself from the hard reality of what is depicted.

The series on view illustrates Manigaud's interest in archival sources that often bear witness to violent episodes in Europe's evolution towards modernity. He regularly uses photographic sources from the era between 1850 and 1920, when the medium was still considered strictly objective and scientific. His drawings of badly wounded soldiers of the Great War, inhabitants of 19th-century mental institutions and early 20th-century crime scenes remain burned on the retina. By means of the often graphic nature of his drawings, Manigaud urges his audience to remember painful parts of history that some would rather forget.

Gallery FIFTY ONE first showed the work of Manigaud in 2016, followed by several editions of Art Brussels, to great acclaim. The work of the artist is presented in several prominent collections, such as Saatchi Gallery (London), Musée d'Histoire de l'immigration (Paris), FRAC Haute-Normandie (Sotteville-lès-Rouen, France) and The SØR Rusche Collection (Berlin).