

Between darkness and levity | Interview with Charles Hascoët

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DI GIULIA PONZANO



Charles Hascoët – Exhibition view, Portrait, 2023 – Galerie Mighela Shama – Photo Julien Gremaud

Charles Hascoët following the conclusion of his solo exhibition titled **"Portrait"** at the Geneva-based gallery **Mighela Shama**. Hascoët, an artist based in both New York City and Paris, graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2014. His artistic practice offers a deep exploration of personal and collective histories, inviting viewers to join him in the process of self-discovery. With upcoming solo exhibitions planned for 2024 at esteemed venues including Perrotin in New York, New Galerie in Paris, and Dumonteil Gallery in Shanghai, Charles Hascoët has undoubtedly become an artist deserving of attention. Join us as we delve into a conversation with this young talent, exploring his inspirations, techniques, and the underlying themes that drive his vision.

Giulia Ponzano: Tell us about your artistic journey: what are the inspirations and challenges that have shaped your path?

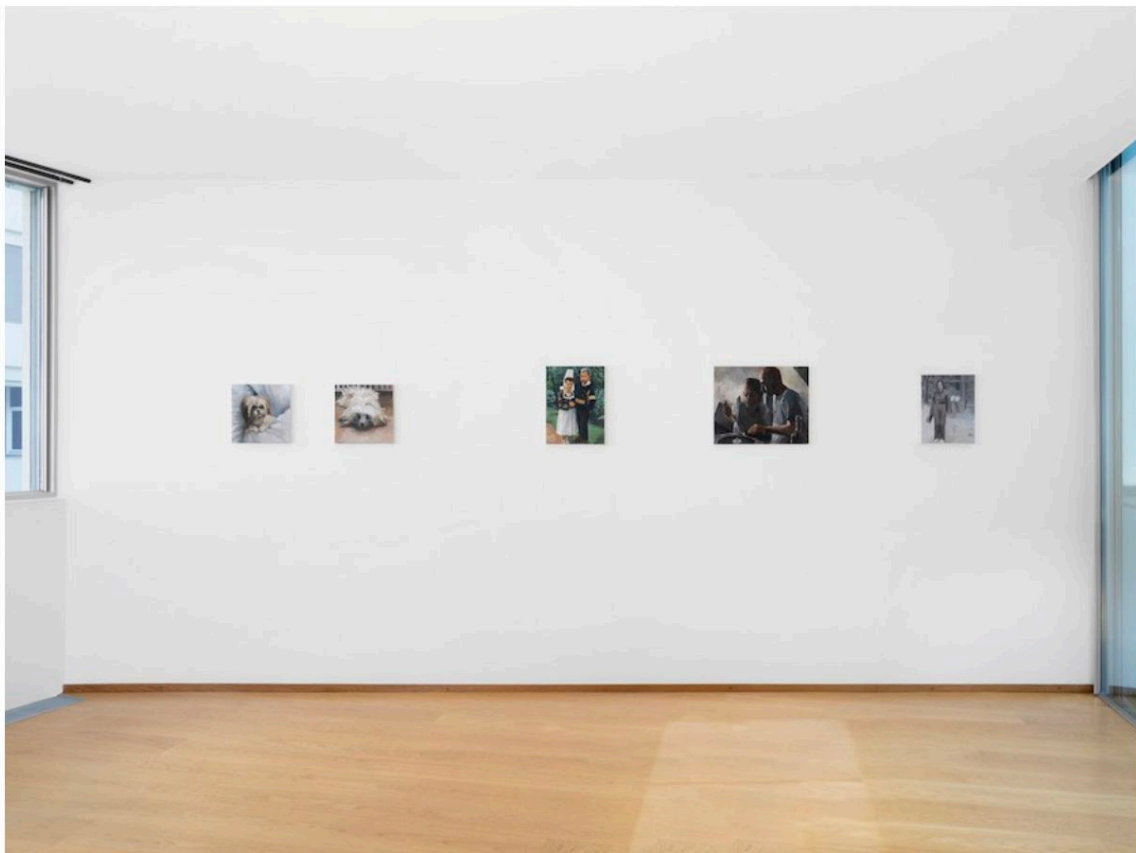
Charles Hascoët: I think for me painting has always been my main objective. I guess I wanted to become a painter when I was quite young. But it wasn't an easy path. At one point in my life I decided to drop that desire and become a lawyer instead, like my dad, but it wasn't my decision really, even though I thought it was. It took me two years to come aware that I couldn't live without that and thus I decided to fully commit to painting. That's the most important thing I've done for me, to really decide for what I wanted and listen to no one else.

GP: If you were to describe your work using five keywords, what would they be?

CH: Honesty, commitment, humility, fan art, love

GP: Your work has been described as having a blend of melancholy and wit, as with the depiction of Tony Soprano by the pool after his ducks have flown away or in your portraits of Larry David and Special Agent Fox Mulder. Can you elaborate on the interplay between darkness and levity in your pieces?

CH: I'm not really trying to bring those emotions to the painting, I think the dark side always comes with the painting. It's not that I want it to but somehow it always finds a way, it's something I live with so there is no reason for it not to show up when I'm working. For the subjects I always follow some intuitions and visions and the subjects impose themselves to me. When the painting is created with sincerity, that interplay between darkness and levity emerges. I believe that's what ultimately makes the painting interesting.



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GP: Music has undoubtedly played a significant role in your life, with your long-standing career as a DJ, spinning vinyl in clubs, bars, and concert halls across Europe and around the globe. It seems that your passion for music extends into your artistic practice, as shown by recent pieces like "Jeff Mills and Aphex Twin", "Daniel Bell DJ," and "Baby Ford and Zip DJ." Do you find yourself listening to music while painting, and if so, what genres do you typically choose?

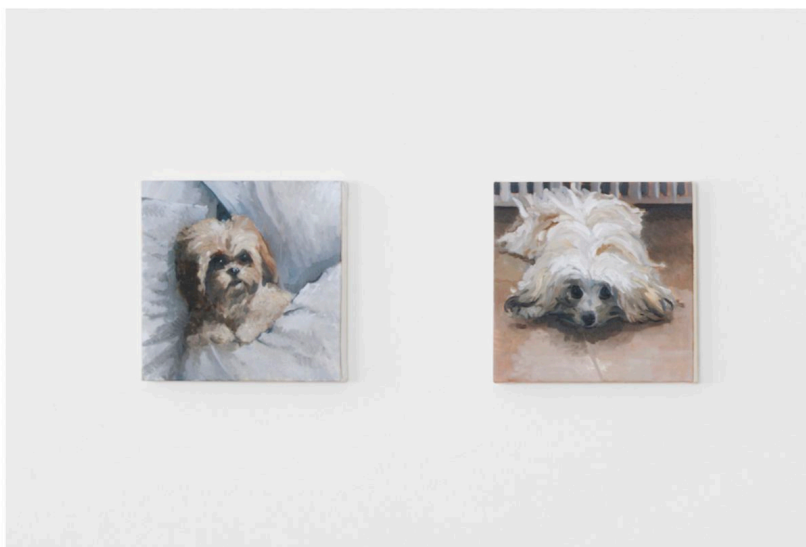
CH: Music is so important to me. It brings out energies and emotions from the depths of the soul that you can't really reach otherwise. My life as a DJ and electronic music enthusiast is immensely important to me. In the studio, I don't always play music. Sometimes I just like to really focus on what I'm doing. Painting is quite difficult for me, so I try not to be distracted by anything else. But sometimes I listen to a wide range of stuff, mostly jazz, funk, and ambient music. Also, the studio is a good place to dance by yourself, so there is always time for some Italo disco and house music.

GP: In your solo exhibition at Mighela Shama Galerie entitled "Portrait," you showcase a new series of portraits that encompass a wide range of subjects, from family members and pets to famous musicians and TV characters. As viewers, we are drawn into this peculiar and bizarre family, "a paradoxical and unique tribe", where you skilfully blend pop-culture references with personal symbolism. You invite us to embark on a journey of self-discovery, revealing different aspects of your own identity as well as our shared histories. Can you elaborate on your process of selecting and combining these fragments to create a cohesive narrative or visual representation?

CH: I'm not sure there has ever been a process behind the selection. When we decided to do the show, my aim was to create something meaningful to me. Mighela generously granted me her blessing and complete freedom to do whatever I felt necessary. Ultimately, our discussions revolved around finding the best way to make the works resonate together. Mighela understands the impossibility of planning too far ahead and the importance of listening to what the works have to express on their own. We waited until all the works were in the gallery to determine how the paintings wished to be exhibited. The entire exhibition has been about being attuned to what resided in my mind. Whether it's Tony Soprano or my dogs, all these individuals, fictional or not, had something to convey about me, and they desired to be a part of that. It's a little bit of fan art, and I like that. I think I'm all that and much more, but to this day, this compilation gives an insight into who I am. I loved the concept of gathering all these people and ideas to tell something about me that truly feels personal.



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