

ARTS & CULTURE

Sculpt and awe: Laurent Perbos brings colour to life at Firetti Contemporary



DUBAI: Colour Gives Me Life, Firetti Contemporary & Alserkal Avenue's current exhibition (Dec. 7, 2024 – Feb. 7) unearthis the organic link between artists, colour and the energies their synergies bring to the public — a topic which has been of interest among scientists, artists and the viewing public for ages. Giotto, an Italian painter and architect from Florence during the Late Middle Ages (d. 1337), for example, believed the colour blue represented heaven. He painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel a radiant blue.

Henri Matisse said: "Colour helps to express light, not the physical phenomenon, but the only light that really exists, that in the artist's brain." Claude Monet exclaimed: "Colour is my day long obsession, joy and torment." Vincent van Gogh is widely known for his vivid and bold use of colour in his paintings. Wassily Kandinsky wrote that "Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul." French painter, sculptor, and filmmaker Fernand Léger opined that "the craving for colour is a natural necessity,

Top: A sculpture in close detail.
Left: Laurent Perbos eyes the world.
View of the works at Firetti Contemporary.

just as for water and fire. Colour is a raw material indispensable to life. At every era of his existence and his history, the human being has associated colour with his joys, his actions and his pleasures." In the 1940s and 50s in NYC, a style of painting emerged known as 'Color Field' painting; it made colour itself a subject. Mark Rothko was one of the leading pioneers of the Color Field movement. "Colour Gives Me Life is an exploration of the vibrant energy that colour brings to our lives," says Firetti Contemporary, "fold through the dynamic works of Ludmila Radchenko, Rachel K. Ihab Ahmad, Laurent Perbos, Yano Abramova, Siamak Azmi, and Samuele Venturini. United by their bold use of colour as a medium for storytelling, these artists invite viewers into worlds where

imagination, memory, and transformation come alive in full spectrum."

French artist Laurent Perbos, who recently created 'La Beauté et le Geste' (Beauty and Gesture), a collection of Venus-inspired sculptures that were installed during the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2024) on the steps of the Palais Bourbon, the seat of the French National Assembly, with each of the sculptures representing an Olympic discipline, is one of the participating artists. In the Firetti Contemporary exhibition, he carries on the work in Paris, with its signature classical-meets-contemporary dimension. In his series 'Antik Basketball', he brings together antique sculptures like those of Apollo, Artemis, Meleager, or Julien de Médicis, with serendipitous modern elements such as affixed basketball covers. Breathing new life into ancient symbols, he reenergises them, creating a dialogue between eras. Gulf Today sought out his thoughts in an interview.

Why is sports the main theme of your work?
The objects that I chose to work with in my first sculptures were sports articles, well known to

everyone and offering an undeniable connection with the public. Generally speaking, my works mainly concern mass and entertainment activities from popular culture (gaming, sport, DIY, etc.), all with a logic of diversion.

Can you detail your practice for us?
I have included my practice a certain complicity between the work and the public, relying on the idea of a collective sensibility and considering "art as a state of encounter". My intention is to create works as a ground for exchange, both physical and intellectual. I utilise components from already existing games, such as ping pong tables or footballs, whose codes I divert. The spectator is offered games and also another reflection on competitiveness and competition, entertainment or work.

Can you tell us more about your work for the Olympics?
The theme of myth is largely present in some of my exhibitions. The history of the world is inscribed in the marble of the statues, and Paris, the

museum city with its numerous artistic testimonies, reflects this heritage. To respond to the National Assembly's proposal to exhibit a work during the Olympic Games, I had the idea of combining ancient sculptures and sport to create 'Beauty and Gesture'. The Venus de Milo, an ancient work, kept at the Louvre Museum, is one of the 50 best-known statues in the world. I projected the Venus de Milo into the contemporary world, inviting her to participate in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Like the Olympic rings symbolising the five continents, the Venuses displayed over the course of the chromatic prism. In short, 'Beauty and Gesture' reflected inclusiveness and the strong values of Olympism.

What were the results of your work?
I was delighted to see that the enthusiasm generated by this project in France also conquered the international scene. I hope to have transmitted through this work a vision of a more inclusive Olympic spirit, shaking up the collective imagination that still too often associates sport with a standardised masculinity and which frequently excludes women and people with disabilities.

How did you feel about your work coming to Dubai for the first time?
The opportunity to exhibit in Dubai, in collaboration with the Firetti Contemporary gallery, particularly excites me. This opening towards new territories, new horizons and new audiences, is in perfect harmony with my current artistic aspirations since I have always conceived art as a space of exploration, a permanent quest. I wish to share through this new collaboration, the result of many years of work.

Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer