

EN

WIELS

BENOÎT
PLATÉUS

ONE INCH OFF

02.02

28.04

BENOÎT PLATÉUS RECYCLES EXISTING IMAGES, SUBMITS THEM TO A RELENTLESS PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

This exhibition of the work of Benoît Platéus retraces for the first time the span of his career, from his earliest photographs to his most recent paintings. He was born in 1972 in Liège and lives and works in Brussels. The show's non-linear arrangement, which includes a number of works never before exhibited, relies on the diversity of his techniques to reveal the topics that occupy Platéus. The exhibition draws its title, *One Inch Off*, from a series of fanzines that he produced, intermittently, between 2004 and 2007. Although modest in their production and appearance, these printed objects can be regarded as a sort of manifesto for his work, since they gather a host of ideas and techniques that Platéus employs and develops in his oeuvre.

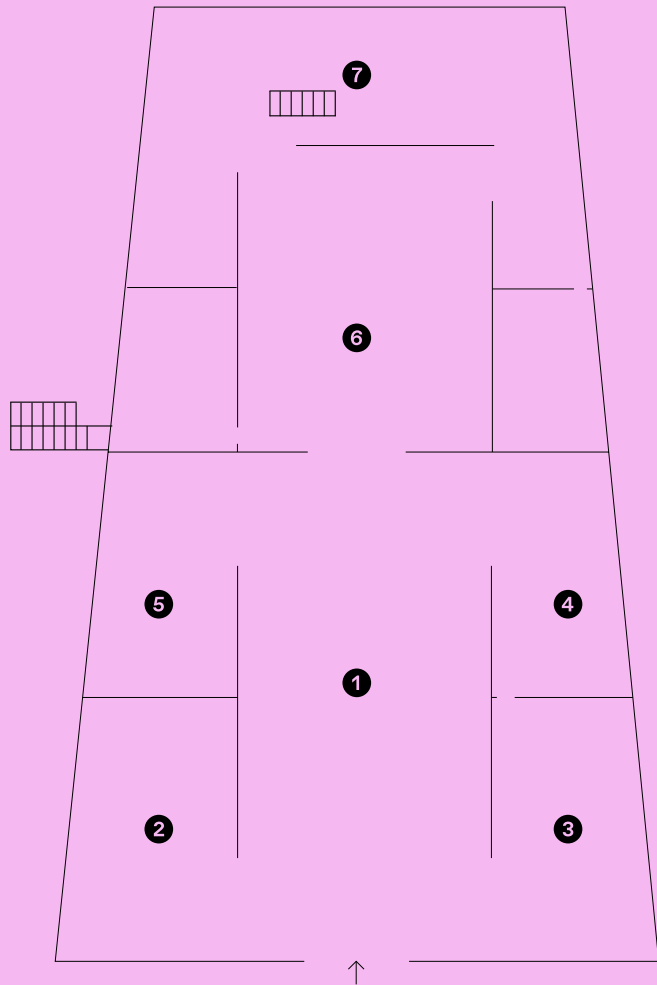
Platéus first ventured into the world of art via comic books, but he quickly became interested in other techniques, working first with photography and moving from there to recycling existing images, a process in which he subjects magazines, newspapers, books, film posters and other cultural objects that have affective value for him to a process of experimental transformation. A child of the generation that saw the digital revolution and the explosion of image circulation, Platéus fully embraces the creative possibilities of both analogue and digital technologies, using both to treat the visual sources that he deforms, saturates, disfigures, dazzles, enlarges, effaces or reverses.

His practice attests to the infinite circulation of images today, but it does so while remaining anchored to a direct, and eminently subjective, experience of the real. A seasoned skateboarder, Platéus never stopped exploring urban spaces – from Liège to Los Angeles – and perpetuating the 'gliding spirit' that values those elements regarded as marginal, the subversion of function and the shunning of reason. The imaginary and the unconscious play an essential role in the way that he puts the everyday into perspective. Platéus, consequently, has more than once availed himself of his own dreams to create drawings, texts and videos that obey a hallucinatory logic. By turning his gaze towards the psychic apparatus, whether his own or someone else's, he has broadened the field of the visible and given free rein to absurd images, unstable associations, or plural forms.

This singular artistic practice relies equally on the heavy machinery of filmmaking and on simple automatic drawings, and seems to explore a certain beyond. From the interstitial space of the city to the meanderings of the mind, Platéus sets off in search of new forms of representation that bear witness to another reality, a still-fragmented reality that is always in the process of becoming.

Check the 😊 if you visit the exhibition with kids

FLOOR + 1



1

In 2010, Platéus started producing sculptures by pouring urethane, the material used to make the wheels for skateboards, into used jugs that he recuperates from photo labs. The jugs had originally contained the chemical products needed to develop photographs. Each mould bears the name of the product in question (Kodak Flexicolor, Fuji, Ilford BW Developer, Fujihunt Bleach) and is unique in its nuances of colour. Chance creates abstract effects through the mixture of pigments across the various layers, and leaves open the space for an image in the process of becoming, akin to the chemical processes of photographic development.

The series of large collages in this room is made using publicity posters that Platéus has combined with some of his unfinished works, in a gesture that incorporates his own work into the infinite circulation of media images.

☺ Imagine you could pour out the liquid from these containers on a table. What would you see?

2

As the title of the work *Appareil psychique* indicates, Benoît Platéus is trying to represent the psychic apparatus. He draws and scrawls words on large sheets of paper. But, given that the psychic apparatus is not rectangular, he has cut up the sheets, made incisions, and extracted elements from the poster to extend and complicate it, making it a surface of multiple dimensions that offers itself to us with words that form a structure even though many of them have disappeared.

3

The photographs that Platéus started producing in the mid-1990s display visual effects that anticipate some of the series that he would produce later, giving the earlier work a programmatic aspect. Light effects are omnipresent: overexposures, luminous stains, reflections, projections, concentric forms.

Plus petit que/Plus grand que [Smaller than/Larger than] is another precocious series. What is distinctive about these images, taken by the artist, is that they are printed in reverse. Platéus operates a shift in the image: the pyrotechnical show, seen from afar, now appears as abstract drawings or as scientific images that demand close inspection. Distance is relativized.

4

In 2001, Platéus created a piece for the small space adjoining the bookstore of the CIVA Foundation, in Brussels. It is an image of an orange Rotring ruler, which Platéus enlarged in order to make the two extremities correspond exactly to the height of the wall upon which the work was vertically mounted. Enlarging everyday objects has been common currency in contemporary art since Pop Art, but Platéus' *Étançon* is unique in calling into question the very rule used to define measures. Indeed, the scale is not supplied by the measuring instrument, but by the space that the rule has been adapted to. By inverting the relation, Platéus raises a fundamental question: who measures whom?

The allusion to measuring systems was already present in *One Inch Off*, the fanzines Platéus produced at irregular intervals between 2004 and 2007. The nine issues of *One Inch Off* are all in A5 format – or, more precisely, they are made using A4 paper folded in two and stapled in the middle. The fanzine's title, however, references the standard paper size used in the US, which, according to the artist, is about an inch smaller than the standard European size. *One Inch Off*, then, proposes a sort of translation, very subjective and approximative, of the relation between two standard formats. Paradoxically, the fanzine's title bears the description of dimensions that do not fit it; following the artist's logic, it should have been called *One Inch More*.

☺ **Are the centimeters real? What is happening with the measurements?**

5

Comic books are governed by some clearly defined codes: a plate composed of several horizontal strips, which are themselves subdivided into smaller panels; bubbles for the characters' speech or thoughts; and squares for the author's narrative interventions. Platéus throws the basic rules of the genre into confusion in order to reveal a new pictorial potential and to strengthen the subversive force of images. The drawings and colours overflow the panels, disrupting the narrative. And the page, which Platéus photocopies, appear so deformed as to be oftentimes entirely abstract.

6

Filmic imagery is at the heart of the series of paintings presented in this room, which Platéus makes on the backside of film posters that he buys online. By approaching the image from its backside, what he reworks is not the original representation, but its vestige, trace and memory, all of which are marked by absence. Platéus renders unreadable the residues of texts or figures that are too visible. And yet, through the addition of colours, he paradoxically makes manifest what is no longer there and thus creates a new spectral image.

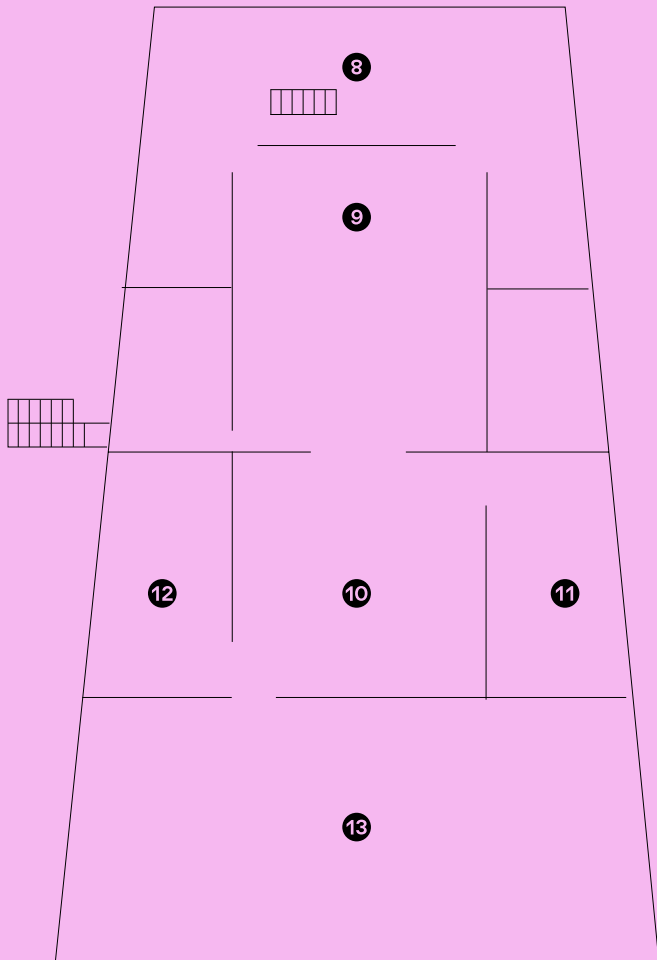
☺ **If you look at the paintings, can you tell what's on the other side?**

7

The suspended mobiles in this room are portraits of anonymous scientists found online. Each face is transformed into a sort of glow, something like a subversion of the makeup mirror with lights typical of film sets and theatre dressing rooms. Here, however, the lighted mirrors seem to have invaded the faces they were supposed to illuminate, rendering them invisible. The electrical cables powering the lights are an equally essential part of the work. They render visible the—usually repellent—innards underneath the skin: 'these are the face's guts', he explains.

On the walls, the scanned and enlarged pages compose a mysterious universe peopled by lascivious women and unexplored ocean depths.

CHALLENGING
THE RULE
THAT DEFINES
THE MEASURE



8

For Benoît Platéus, New York is a city with an archipelagic configuration that constantly opens up perspectives on itself. That view of the city is the source of the series *Broccoli and Steel*, which is based on the pages of the *Sing Tao Daily*, one of the largest Chinese-language dailies in Hong Kong (and available in newsstands in New York), and on photos that Platéus took during his many visits to New York. The series offers the possibility of fragmenting the image of that city, and of recomposing it in a new space – in this instance, the pages of a daily newspaper.

Besides the fanzines, *One Inch Off*, Platéus has made a number of artists' books, and they are an integral part of his reflection, both on the relation between image and text, and on the process of visual recycling. Some of his books are collaborations with other artists. Michael, for example, was a collaboration with the Swiss artist David de Tscherner, and is essentially a reproduction – the two artists patiently reproduced each page as a collage – of a comic book about the life of Michael Jackson.

Mémoires d'un névropathe – Bootleg Version [Memoirs of My Nervous Illness] is another re-appropriation, in this case of a book by Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911). In 1893, Schreber, who was at the time the presiding judge of Dresden's highest court, was placed in an asylum following a series of hallucinatory episodes. He went to court to reclaim his freedom in 1900. It was as part of this legal process that he wrote his *Mémoires*, which were published in 1903. Freud, Lacan and their disciples regard Schreber's text as an essential document for the understanding of paranoia. For his version of the book, Platéus photocopies a French translation of Schreber's book published by Le Seuil in 1975, shifting the position of the pages on the photocopying plate. The result is that the book's gutter became its edges, and a black strip

imperceptibly hides the start of certain sentences, thus recalling the troubled psychological state of its author.

9

In the mid-1990s, while he was still an art student, Platéus reproduced on a wall an image he had found in an advertising flyer. It was an image of a medical centre where patients could have their eyes examined – or, as the title of the work puts it, a *Centre de basse vision* (Low Vision Centre). The theme of sight – or of problems with vision – no doubt played a role in catching the artist's attention, but so too did the fact that the medical centre bore a striking resemblance to a chaotic installation or a Dada decor. Platéus would continue to use this image of the medical centre, and each time he returned to it, he magnified the process of abstraction and dematerialization. Here, Platéus reproduced the scene using a silvered adhesive paper that produces a mirror effect. Depending on the spectator's position and the exhibition space itself, the perceived image changes: it becomes fluid, ceaselessly appearing and disappearing. These early works reveal the extent to which the artist is interested in exploring and showing how vision – or, more generally, perception – is fundamentally relative.

10

For the series *Ghostburn*, Platéus photographed the pages of film books that he overexposed to natural light. The procedure has a dizzying effect that renders the subjects – River Phoenix, Kate Winslet or Sissy Spacek – entirely unrecognizable: it is as if spectres had taken their place. These works, which the artist describes as ‘ghosts’, call to mind Jacques Derrida’s idea that the spectral nature of the world is inherent to any and every technique of reproduction. Images – ceaselessly reproduced and altered – preserve the traces of objects that have disappeared, and can be considered as ghosts, spectres.

😊 Do you recognize the characters in the pictures? Why did they become unrecognizable?

11

W.o.w, a film from 2015 titled after a radio signal captured in outer space in 1977 and regarded by some as a message from extra-terrestrial beings, narrates two dreams, the first in a woman’s voice, the second in a man’s. The digital voice used in both cases gives a strange air to the narration, which is itself punctuated by phrases designed to induce hypnosis. The man tells the story of a voyage inside his own body, while the woman speaks of an escape into a shelter in the middle of the desert. The images, for their part, consist of unconnected film sequences that function like a collage. In particular, we find in the film existing images of works by Platéus himself, who thus extends his incessant visual recycling.

12

The black and white drawings done in ballpoint pen stem from Platéus’ almost daily ‘scribbles’. Forms succeed one another across A4 pages doodled with thin and thick lines: spores, aquatic plants, bulbs, liliaceous plants (onions, shallots, etc.), molluscs, faces... Each image seems inhabited by the ghost of an image to come, giving the succeeding image the power of revealing appearances, or of yielding discoveries that had perhaps been left hidden behind the appearance of the preceding image.

13

For a recent series of paintings, Platéus projected onto a blank canvas enlarged rubbings that he had made on electrical poles in New York and Los Angeles. As a result of this method, what we see on the canvas are not only the wood grain, but also the staples used to attach small flyers or ads to the pole. Platéus took these imprints as the starting point for abstract paintings that he titled using the names of people close to him. This choice invests the images with an animist character, as if beings could be invoked in matter. The work also denotes a drive that is akin to the work of the unconscious, which preserves, selects, or represses a host of things.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST

Born in 1972 in Liège, Benoît Platéus lives and works in Brussels. A graduate of the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Saint-Luc in Liège and of the Ecole de Recherche Graphique in Brussels, he is a laureate of the 2003 Belgian Art Prize. His work has been shown in a large number of exhibitions, both solo and group shows, among others at Bozar, Mu.ZEE and S.M.A.K., as well as in galleries (Albert Baronian in Brussels, Aline Vidal in Paris, Almine Rech in London and Karma in New York).

PUBLICATION

One Inch Off

In collaboration with König Books, WIELS is releasing the first monograph devoted to the work of Benoît Platéus. This richly illustrated book includes essays by Devrim Bayar, Curator at WIELS; Jill Gasparina, independent curator and art critic; and Virginie Devillez, historian and expert in modern, impressionist and contemporary art at Sotheby’s Belgium. The graphic design is the work of Boy Vereecken, assisted by Antoine Begon.

#ONEINCHOFF

The exhibition and the publication are made in collaboration with Bonner Kunstverein

BENOÎT PLATÉUS
ONE INCH OFF
02.02 - 28.04.2019

EVENTS

BENOÎT PLATÉUS ONE INCH OFF

- 06.02 at 19:00
Look Who's Talking:
Benôit Platéus and Devrim Bayar (FR)
- 20.02 at 19:00
Look Who's Talking:
Aline Bouvy (FR), artist (Brussels)
- 20.03 at 19:00
Film, *Le Passe-Montagne*,
1978, Jean-François Stévenin
In collaboration with JAP
- 31.03 at 16:00
Look Who's Talking:
Phillip Van den Bossche (NL),
director of Mu.ZEE (Ostend)

Discover the details
on WIELS.ORG
or our Facebook page
[WielsBrussels](https://www.facebook.com/WielsBrussels)

WIELS.ORG

design by: oilinwater.be

