



GOWEN

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS

By
Jérôme
Zonder

Press Release |

May 8 - July 5 | 2025

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By Jérôme Zonder

May 8 – July 5, 2025

*Public opening: May 8 from 5pm to 8pm

Preview: Wednesday May 7, 2025 from 4pm to 8pm (RSVP)

In the presence of the artist

*Opening in conjunction with **Art en Vieille-Ville (AVV)** vernissages en commun.

Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © The Artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia.



Jérôme Zonder, *Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #47*, 2023, charcoal and graphite on paper, 75 x 110 cm.

This spring, GOWEN is honoured to host a solo, site-specific presentation by leading French artist and draughtsman Jérôme Zonder (b. 1974, Paris). In his first showing at the Geneva gallery, Zonder, who, for the past 20 years has developed a virtuosic oeuvre centred on the constantly reinvented practice of drawing, takes over the entire exhibition spaces, transforming them into a single, immersive installation. **Les enfants du paradis** includes over eighty black and white drawings realized in the artist's signature technique of lead pencil and charcoal.

Known for his highly complex, labyrinthine environments, Zonder weaves into his works myriad subjects and topics across time and place. His broad range of expression, from hyperrealism to caricature is typically executed with obsessive attention to detail, without using instruments or even an eraser. Instead, using his fingertips, charcoal and graphite powder are smudged onto paper or occasionally on canvas surfaces.



Jérôme Zonder, *Etude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #33*, 2021, Graphite and charcoal on paper, 90 x 60 cm.

The variations in the scale of his works generate spatial circulation games: the viewer wanders spatially and mentally amongst the enigmata of an extremely vivid polygraphic system through which Zonder provokes the viewer to question the line between the commonplace and violent, raw, unsettling images. Drawing from current or archive imagery, the history of art and with an eye for popular culture, Zonder places adjacent references to Albrecht Dürer, Robert Crumb, Rembrandt, Hieronymus Bosch, Charles Burns, Otto Dix, Walt Disney, pornography or the world of literature, composing narratives with eclectic, sometimes cruel themes. Portraits of adults, celebrities, characters from cinema and comics or self portraits mingle with those of children and teenagers, gradually filled with questioning, trauma, doubt, or pain, making often uneasy viewing.

In the words of Zonder "Narration pulls us into the drawing, and only the body keeps us on the surface. Drawing, for me, is existing constantly between distance and proximity, figuration and abstraction, attraction and repulsion."

The exhibition takes its name from Marcel Carné's film "Les Enfants du Paradis" (Children of Paradise, 1945) and in naming the child characters used in his own drawings, Zonder adopts the same names from the film. The viewer frequently meets Garance, Baptiste, and Pierre-François, protagonists who reoccur over the years throughout his work. Just like in the film, constantly shifting between fiction and reality, his characters move within a theatrical world. They become a metaphor for our century and for life, where everyone plays a role - sometimes without even realising it.

Dark, powerful, and with an overwhelming visual intensity, Zonder's drawings push the boundaries of his craft, executed with extraordinary technical prowess, experimentation, particularly with scale and focal length, and question our relationship to violence and the wider world we inhabit.

His work is receiving increasing attention on the international art scene and is included in major collections in Europe. Having participated in the gallery's group exhibition at Art Genève this year, the current show marks Zonder's first solo collaboration with GOWEN. He is also represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris.

Running in parallel with the exhibition, the gallery will host an artist presentation with Claude Cortinovis and a group exhibition curated by Carine Bovey and Yannick Lambelet entitled *Sans Armure* at its sister space at Rue Jean-Calvin 4.



Jérôme Zonder, *Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #64*, 2023, charcoal and graphite on paper, 75 x 110 cm.

Jérôme Zonder

Born in Paris in 1974, **Jérôme Zonder** lives and works in Paris. He is a graduate of the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in 2001. Solo exhibitions include: *Au Village* at Lieu unique (Nantes, France, 2014), *Fatum* at the Maison Rouge - Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France, 2015), *The Dancing Room* at the Tinguely Museum (Basel, Switzerland, 2017), *Devenir traces* gathering more than 130 works in the historical spaces at the Chateau de Chambord (Chambord, France, 2018) and *Jérôme Zonder, Portraits* at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France, 2019). Casino Luxembourg (Luxembourg, 2023), Museum of Jewish Art and History in 2024 (Paris, France). Group exhibitions include: *Le Massacre des Innocents : Poussin, Picasso, Bacon* at the Musée Condé curated by Laurent Le Bon and Pierre Rosenberg (2017, Chantilly, France), *Guernica* at the Musée Picasso Paris (Paris, France, 2018), *Quel amour!?* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille (France, 2018) and at the Berardo Museum (Lisbon, Portugal, 2019), *Déflagrations - Dessins d'enfants et violences de masse* at the MUCEM (Marseille, France, 2021), *La Beauté du Diable* at the FRAC Franche-Comté (Besançon, France, 2022), the MO.CO. in Montpellier (France, 2023), and *Désordres - Extraits de la collection Antoine de Galbert*, Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, France, *La peinture est-elle une arme ?*, La fabrique des Arts, Carcassonne, France, *Inspiré.e.s - Acte 4 - Dessin Contemporain*, Centre d'art contemporain l'arTsenal, Dreux, France (2024). Collections include: the Istanbul Modern Museum (Istanbul, Turkey), the Musée Jenisch Vevey (Switzerland), the Musée des beaux-arts du Locle (Le Locle, Switzerland), the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Neuchâtel (Neuchâtel, Switzerland), the Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain (Paris, France), the Abattoirs, Musée - FRAC Occitanie (Toulouse, France), FRAC Picardie (Amiens, France), FRAC Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand, France), Musée des Beaux-Art (Paris, France), Musée National de l'histoire de l'immigration (Paris, France), Collection Antoine de Galbert (Paris, France), Fondation Emerige, Collection Laurent Dumas (Paris, France), and Collection Florence et Daniel Guerlain (Paris, France).



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