

GOWEN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

LES
ENFANTS
DU PARADIS

By
Jérôme
Zonder

Show Presentation |

May 8 - July 5 | 2025



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.

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.



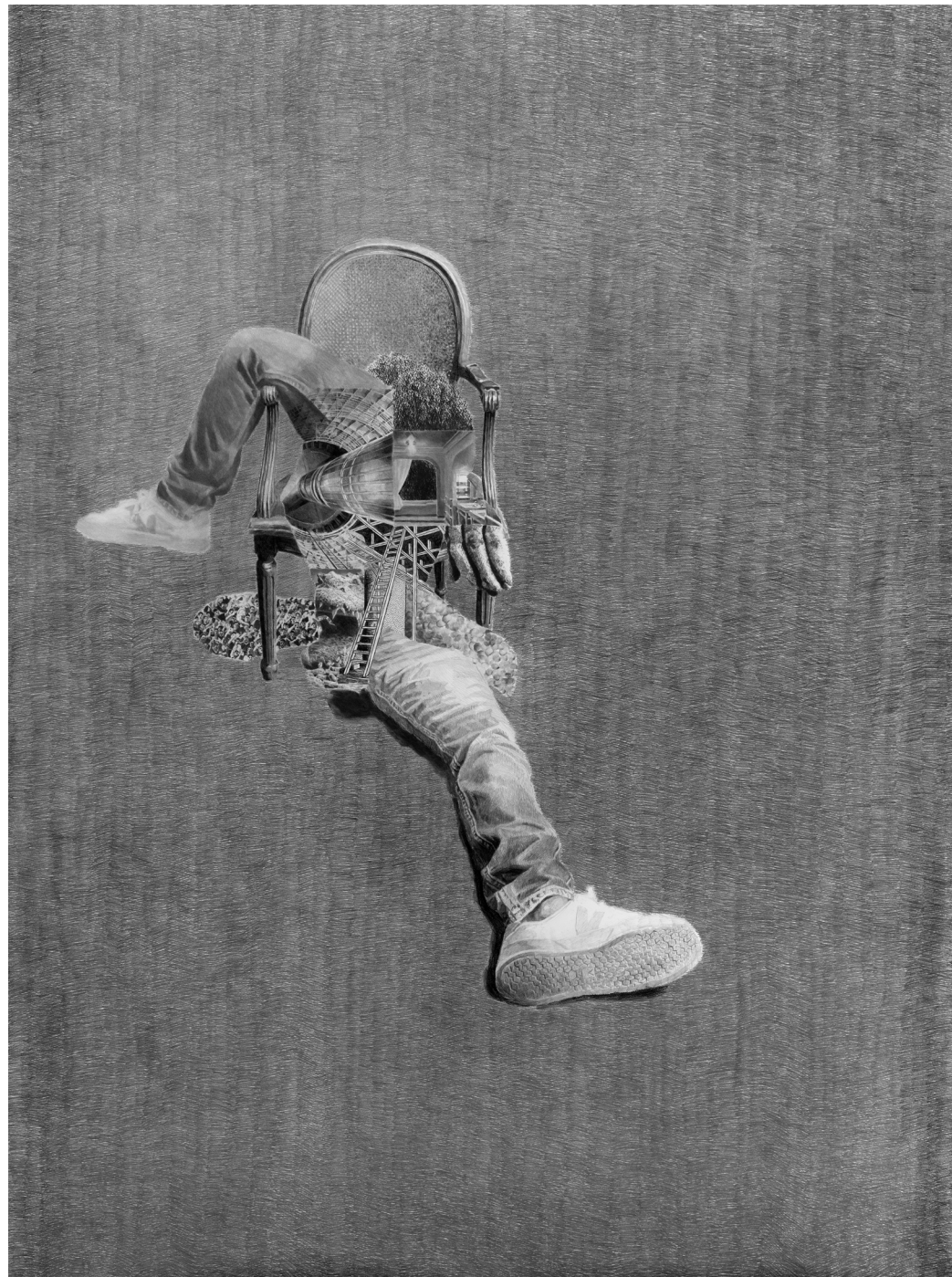
In the words of Zonder "Narration pulls us into the drawing, and only the body keeps us on the surface. Drawing, for me, is existing constantly between distance and proximity, figuration and abstraction, attraction and repulsion."

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.

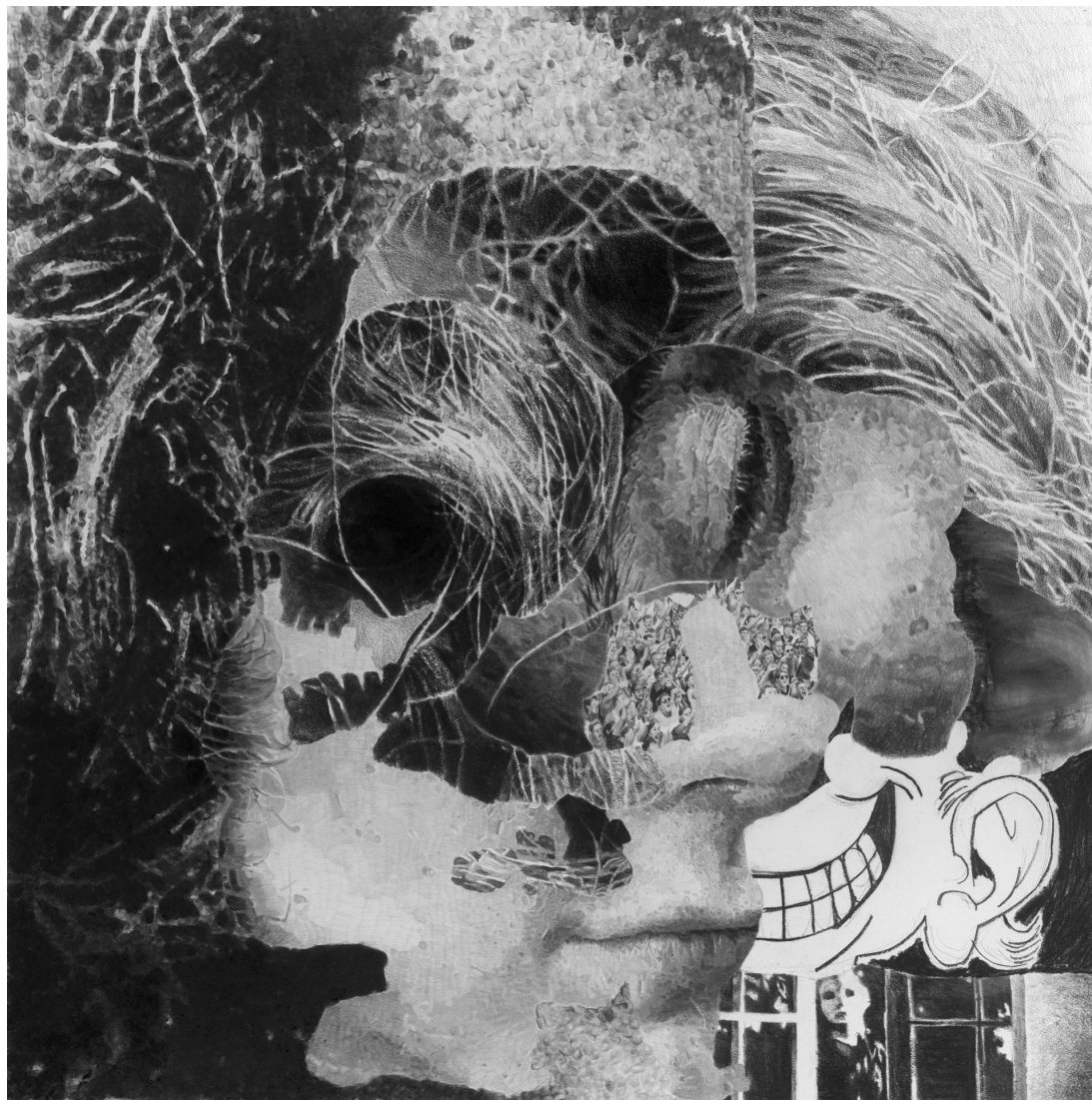
His work is receiving increasing attention on the international art scene and is included in major collections in Europe. Having participated in the gallery's group exhibition at Art Genève this year, the current show marks Zonder's first solo collaboration with GOWEN. He is also represented by Galerie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

Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #44, 2023
charcoal and graphite on paper
200 x 150 cm
78.7 x 59.1 in
Framed: 214.5 x 164.5 x 5 cm
JZ 04





Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #24, 2021

charcoal and graphite on paper

150 x 150 cm

59.1 x 59.1 in

Framed: 161 x 161 x 5 cm

JZ 01



Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #90, 2023

Graphite and charcoal on paper

150 x 150 cm

59.1 x 59.1 in

Framed: 161.6 x 161.6 x 4.7 cm

JZ 85

Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #50, 2023
charcoal and graphite on paper
110 x 75 cm
43.3 x 29.5 in
JZ 06





Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #109, 2025
Graphite and charcoal on paper
90 x 60 cm
35.4 x 23.6 in
JZ 89



Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud

Portrait de Main #5, 2019
Graphite and charcoal on paper
200 x 150 cm
78.7 x 59.1 in
Framed : 206 x 156 cm
JZ 36





Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #46, 2023
charcoal and graphite on paper
150 x 200 cm
59.1 x 78.7 in
JZ 05



Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #64, 2023
charcoal and graphite on paper
75 x 110 cm
29.5 x 43.3 in
JZ 08



Étude pour un portrait de Pierre-François #50, 2023
charcoal and graphite on paper
200 x 150 cm
78.7 x 59.1 in
Framed: 214.5 x 164.5 cm
JZ 07



Installation View. *Les enfants du paradis*, GOWEN, Geneva, CH. © Julien Gremaud



Contact: T. +41(0)79 330 17 54 | info@gowencontemporary.com
Grand-Rue 23, 1204 Geneva