

# GALERIE NELSON – FREEMAN

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**Eric Poitevin**

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The Nelson-Freeman Gallery is glad to announce its new collaboration with French artist Eric Poitevin. Born in 1961 in Longuyon, Eric Poitevin made himself noticed in 1985 with his WWI veteran portraits. In 1988 the Ministry of Culture awarded him the Great prize for young talents, and from 1989 until 1990 he was a guest at the Villa Medici when he photographed priests of the Roman Church, vine-growers from Arbois and his famous nudes and landscapes of the region of Meuse. After numerous personal and group exhibitions he showed at the *Plateau* in 2004 and throughout Europe. In 2007, to the occasion of the reopening of the Paris Museum of Hunting and Nature, he was given the opportunity to put together a large exhibition of images of the Bel-Val estate.

For his first exhibition at the Nelson-Freeman Gallery, Eric Poitevin chose to show in the basement unseen photographs of underwoods, oaks and a new portrait. The forest is a repeated element in the artist's photographic work, with which he offers an identified point of view by working on the centering and depth of the image – the depth here being emphasized by the absence of glass and by the dull aspect of the photograph. He hereby stages the vegetal density of the forest. The branches guide our eyes from a general view into the details of vegetation.

The new portrait shown alongside those pictures is a turning point of the exhibition. It balances the "country" aspect of the other series shown, by being the only image that gives a vision of our contemporary society. It comes as an indication of the fact that Eric Poitevin isn't an artist of ecology and nature. To him, the forest is more of an endless supply of past and future images, rather than a romantic adventure.

Below the glass roof is exhibited an unseen photograph of the front of a bull from Charolais. This new series on which Eric Poitevin is currently working is a continuation to the horse back series. The alterations made on the image give it a strong pictorial aspect. The white background emphasizes the volume and the consistency of the bull, which contributes to the idea of power and strength.

A triptych from the little shown Arbois vine-growers series (1989) counterbalances the presence of the animal. The character's different expressions and different lights show 3 distinct aspects of the vine-grower. Just like the Veteran Portraits (1984-1985) and the Roman Church Portraits (1990), they carry an elusive burden of time and experience that the artist manages to immortalize. It is that burden that makes the photographs so focused.

On the first floor we can see two photographs of underwoods, and three animals on pedestals. That last series, produced at the Bel-Val Estate (property of the Hunting and Nature Foundation) is extremely unsettling as it stages the animals' death by presenting them on pedestals, which whiteness strongly contrasts with the animal's blood. The use of the pedestal as an architectural element is a reference to sculpture, and therefore gives the dead creatures a certain nobility. In doing so the artist stages mankind's major influence on the animal world. The photographs strike us with a strange silence and a densified sense of time induced by the immobility of the images. The confrontation of the deers with the underwoods strengthens the contrast of life and death.

By exclusively working indoors, Eric Poitevin's photographs show a rare density. The technique used reduces the process of taking pictures to letting light in, which generates a discrepancy between time and reality. We find in his work an authenticity of the image shown, a precision and a quality of details that are usually attributed to silver prints.