

# Keitelman Gallery

## Claude Cortinovis

### Nameless

14.11.2014 – 17.01.2015

Opening 6-9 pm Thursday 13.11.2014

Tuesday - Saturday 12 to 6pm

Contact: Valérie Palacios – Keitelman +32 477 77 53 61

The Keitelman Gallery is delighted to present the third solo exhibition of the Swiss artist Claude Cortinovis.

At a time when an increasing number of artists are involved in the art world, with concomitant expectations of prolific production of pieces that respond to multiple requirements, Cortinovis gambles on producing a limited number of works in a drawn out and lengthy production process, creating just a few pieces a year. His actual process of working, its length and ritual, are fundamental parameters of his work. Everything takes place as though he were grasping hold of time itself, in a soundless process of measuring the effects of drawing out time itself.

In this new exhibition Claude Cortinovis presents ten new works, which, in spite of their apparently straightforward composition, are created with a quite incredible attention to detail. The drawings are composed of thousands of tiny squares (traced geometrically, using the same chalk and cord technique as was used by Renaissance artists to compose their paintings in order to grasp the proportions and the tricks of perspective of each new subject) that Cortinovis then patiently fills in with different colours using tiny stamps coated with ink. This technique results in images that appear pixelated, like digital images, even though they have actually been produced not by machines but by a time consuming manual process which leaves a trace of a thousand and one imperfections, an infinite number of different nuances, giving the image what might be called an aura, a soul.

However it is precisely at that macroscopic level that the artist's conceptual process really begins. If he starts with a photographic image that is 'mechanical', and as it so happens intangible (images of a quizzical eye, seen in extreme close up, intensely present yet anonymous, or portraits of women with the same searching gaze, picked up by chance from the floor of a photo booth) it is in order to offer them a strange and unlikely existence as part of the very fabric of the picture. It is a question of both the absence of the subject and the presence of the image of the subject. A similar paradox is experienced by the viewer of Cortinovis's work for, depending on whether the viewer finds herself standing close to the picture or at a distance from it, she will perceive it very differently, either as close to abstraction, or as close to photography.

Claude Cortinovis is a successor of the artists who explored pointillism and impressionism on the one hand, and on the other of the 1980s school of conceptual photography (for example Thomas Struth). But what makes him truly original (beyond the unexpected union in his work of these two artistic heritages) resides in the fact that he layers an existential component onto his meticulous practice. The question of the presence/absence of the image and subject is always performed through the perspective of the people and places that the artist himself frequents before seeing them disappear forever. Of course he is not the first to undergo such experiences; we are all as human beings regularly confronted if not by loss, then certainly by separation or exile. This acutely contemporary issue is central to our experiences today with regard to new technology and the growing phenomenon of migration.