

## THE STILL POINT

Imran Ali Khan traverses through Edouard Baribeaud's narrational landscapes and Schön Mendes' packed cityscapes.



Edouard Baribeaud. *The Nocturnal Vault*. Ink and watercolour on paper. 12" x 18". 2016. Image courtesy the artist and Galerie Isa.

There is a great quiet that follows Edouard Baribeaud's works on paper at Galerie Isa, Mumbai. It's the sort of quiet that you would expect from the anticipation of a curtain call at the theatre. Featuring a stage, Baribeaud's works dip in and out of mythology, both Indian and Western, and pop culture, linking them through the agency of his own pen and paint.

The show, titled *The Nocturnal Vault*, from the 7<sup>th</sup> of September to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, explores the theme of the night, a favourite of poets, filled with the imagery of moonlight and stars. Baribeaud's watercolours depict props and stagelights, speaking about the moments behind the shadows. We encounter characters or we watch from behind the curtains the end of an act. Baribeaud's treatment of his works is pinned heavily in the style of miniature paintings from the Rajasthan schools – works that influenced him when he first saw them in 2014 during a research trip to India. He draws them out and juxtaposes with the contemporary, and we watch as two, almost disparate worlds come together.

In an interview about his process, the Franco-German Baribeaud talks about the ways in which he creates his art works – using gouache, egg tempera, pen and paint which

he uses to travel from light to dark, much in the same way as the miniaturists he looks up to. His process, like his works, recalls acts of layering images and effects – delicate trees, the gleam of a silver moon, a burst of flowers, strange rajahs, hippies and electric poles. He draws out retellings of St. Jerome and Eve at one end and long-haired, bell-bottom wearing hippies in caves at another. Baribeaud remains conscious of time – its materiality is negotiated by the stillness of the subjects; as viewers, we come full circle through the metaphors and the imagery that remain captured in our own imaginings.

The works are, in many ways, a sensory experience, where a slow guitar meets a flute and carnations bloom, where tigers roam with thorns in their paws, Ingres' nude wears woollen socks and a headless Christ becomes a portent. The show ends with *The Last Act*, a work that seems to encapsulate the nature of the show, where the artist draws us to appreciate the impermanence of his works and the movement of time by poking the viewer back into the real world where Grecian women no longer roam bathed in moonlight and acidheads no longer strum guitars in secret caves. We move from the front of the stage to the back in these watercolours and all our images collapse into a pile of wooden cutouts, trees are carried away by a t-shirt wearing production manager and the moon, half smiling, shines and lies dismantled.