

HUBERTY  
& BREYNE

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# François AVRIL

*BXL*

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17.05.2024  
> 15.06.2024

**BRUXELLES | Châtelain**

33, place du Châtelain

1050 Bruxelles

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BXL 9 - Preparatory drawing - Coloured pencil on paper - 2024



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From 17 May to 15 June 2024, François AVRIL will be paying tribute to his favourite city, Brussels, at the Huberty & Breyne gallery in Brussels – just as the artist prepares to quit the Belgian capital, where he has lived for the last twelve years. Through a new series of paintings and drawings, the exhibition – entitled “BXL” – offers viewers a poetic and highly personal vision of the city and its various districts that is far removed from the regular tourist haunts.

*“You won’t find the Horta Museum, the Grand Place or the Manneken-Pis in this exhibition. What you will find is My Brussels. The lower part of town, extending from the Gare du Midi to the Place de Brouckère via Le Sablon and Les Marolles with its open-air flea market – an area where I have really enjoyed wandering about and hunting for curios.”*

François Avril

The exhibition coincides with the publication – jointly by SKIRA and the Huberty & Breyne gallery – of a book that brings together some hundred paintings executed by François AVRIL over the last twelve years.



BXL 3b - Preparatory drawing - Coloured pencil on paper - 2024

In January 2012, François AVRIL moved into a new Brussels studio, close to the Grand Place and Les Sablons. The move – initiated by his gallerist Alain Huberty – enabled the artist to start working in a different dimension. The vast, light-filled space, in excess of 200 m<sup>2</sup>, gave him the opportunity to switch back and forth between drawing and painting while experimenting with larger surfaces and more ambitious canvases. Over the years, as a result, François AVRIL has explored different creative avenues that have provided him with exciting new ways of channelling his artistic vision.

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Brussels always held a strong attraction for François AVRIL, even long before he moved there. As a great fan of comics eager to make a career in that world, the young François AVRIL began coming to Brussels in the 1980s to meet up with publishers and artist friends. Working in the *ligne claire* tradition and a close friend of Yves Chaland, Avril was to form a strong attachment to the city over time.



BXL 10 - Preparatory drawing - Coloured pencil on paper - 2024

In 2012, when gallery owners Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne offered the artist a studio space, he jumped at the idea, clearly envisaging the artistic possibilities that this vast, light-filled space had to offer. He installed his drawing table, and his easels, his brushes and his coloured pencils, recreating a home-from-home. He adorned the walls with original plates by comic book artists, patiently collected over the years, while the huge bookcase housed his beloved tomes – among them, of course, the classic works of Hergé and Franquin, and those of friends like Chaland, Loustal, Moebius, Götting, Juillard and Serge Clerc. His shelves gradually filled up with treasures garnered at the Vieux Marché, objects of all kinds, some of dubious identity – miniature model cranes made of metal, numerous skulls, made of paper or glass, teddy bears surveying family portraits with an air of amusement. The odd bicycle and golf club – representing two of the artist's other passions – are prominently displayed like ready-mades in the big Boulevard Lemonnier apartment that seems to float above the city rooftops.





BXL 3 - Preparatory drawing - Coloured pencil on paper - 2024

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In the following interview [conducted at Boulevard Lemonnier], François AVRIL revisits his memories of Brussels and the works that form part of his forthcoming exhibition, "BXL".

**What are your earliest memories of Brussels?**

The first time I came to Brussels was in 1985 to meet the brothers Daniel and Didier Pasamonik at the Magic Strip publishing house. They had a small comics collection called Atomium, dedicated to the artists of the ligne claire movement. It was a really prestigious thing to find your way into that collection. I was working on Doppelgänger SA at the time and dreamt of being published alongside Chaland and Serge Clerc. The album came out in 1986! I was planning to pursue a career in comics. That was my goal. And then Chaland died. It was the end of an era, and I opted instead for a career as an illustrator and a painter.

**What do you think of when you think of Brussels?**

I have a particular attachment to Belgium. Prior to the 2000s, there weren't many French people living in Belgium. The border, although it was the same as now, seemed further away. There was something exotic about travelling to Belgium, even though they speak the same language there. It was a foreign country: you had to go over the border; the currency changed. Let's say that it was abroad, though an abroad that wasn't very far away. And, above all, it was the birthplace of the *bande dessinée*. Because we may talk about "Franco-Belgian comics", but the *bande dessinée* isn't Franco-Belgian – it's Belgian! It's Hergé, Morris, Tilleux, Jacobs... And then having Yves Chaland – whose *Jeune Albert* stories were set in the Marolles district – as a teacher and friend only served to strengthen my attachment to this city.

In 2012, you set up a new studio in Brussels, not far in fact from Les Marolles and Place Rouppe, where the Magic Strip publishing house was located. What were the advantages of the location?

It was an incredible opportunity when Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne (whose first gallery was situated right opposite the studio) offered me the space for my work. Space is such a luxury for an artist! I immediately saw that it was a chance to draw on a bigger scale. This place very soon gave me the idea of producing the *Victoria Street* mural – a sequence of nineteen linked pictures which were shown in 2013 at the Huberty & Breyne gallery. After that, I kept going with fairly large formats. I loved this place because of the light, the volumes, and the

atmosphere too. It gave me enormous creative freedom. Because I work in series, it enabled me to work on a dozen different canvases at the same time. I could set them aside, engage with them, look at them with a fresh eye the next day with a view to creating coherent groupings. Most of my painted works these last twelve years were produced here, in Brussels. What's more, I enjoyed the total confidence of my gallerist, who never imposed anything on me.

**This most recent exhibition is a homage to Brussels. What vision of the city were you wanting to convey?**

It's a homage to Brussels, which can go from the ugly to the beautiful. What I mean by that is that I can see beauty in certain working-class neighbourhoods, and certain buildings and architecture, that most people find frightful. What I see, quite simply, are compositions, rhythms, volumes and lines that I find very inspiring and which I reinterpret in my works. You won't find the Horta Museum, the Grand Place or the Manneken-Pis in this exhibition. What you will find is My Brussels. The lower part of town, extending from the Gare du Midi to the Place de Brouckère via Le Sablon and Les Marolles with its open-air flea market – an area where I have really enjoyed wandering about and hunting for curios, some of which came from chez Barbara, a key figure in the Place du Jeu de Balle. There'll also be something of the Étangs d'Ixelles, the Parc Edmond, the Canal and the Atomium. And equally some little compositions representing the studio I'm about to leave, with all its objects, things I want to crystallise on paper.



François Avril's workshop, Boulevard Lemonnier, Bruxelles



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## Biographie

François AVRIL was born in Paris in 1961. He graduated from the ENSAAMA School of Art and Design and started out working as an illustrator for magazines and in the world of publishing and advertising. Operating either solo or as part of a collaboration, he illustrated a great many children's books, in addition to a handful of comics, including *Soirs de Paris* and *Le Chemin des Trois Places*.

Since the early days of his career, François AVRIL has been continually on the lookout for new modes of graphic expression, creating a world that is both utterly distinctive and constantly evolving. He explores different techniques as the inspiration takes him – acrylics, Indian ink, lead pencil and colour pencils. And his supports are equally varied. As comfortable working on paper as on large-scale canvases, AVRIL produces paintings and drawings of great delicacy, purity and elegance, sometimes flirting with abstraction.

Starting out from real-life observation, he creates a utopian vision where landscapes and cityscapes are filtered by memory, imaginary and imagined, dreamlike: AVRIL is not seeking an exact representation of reality, but rather the essence of what he sees.



*François Avril dans son atelier Bruxellois - Juillet 2021 © Gloria Avril*

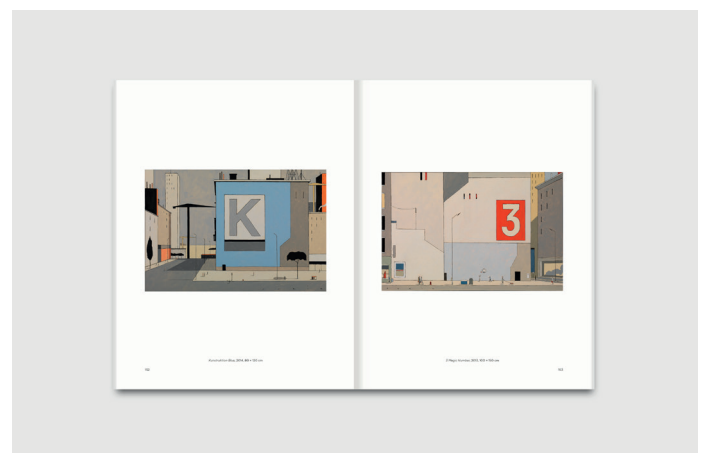
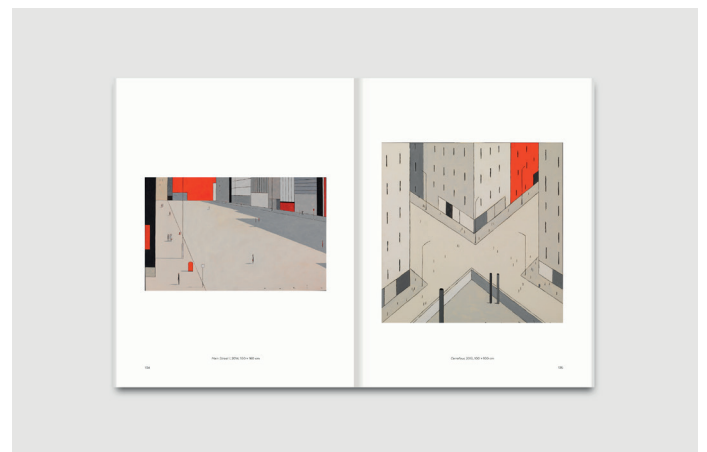
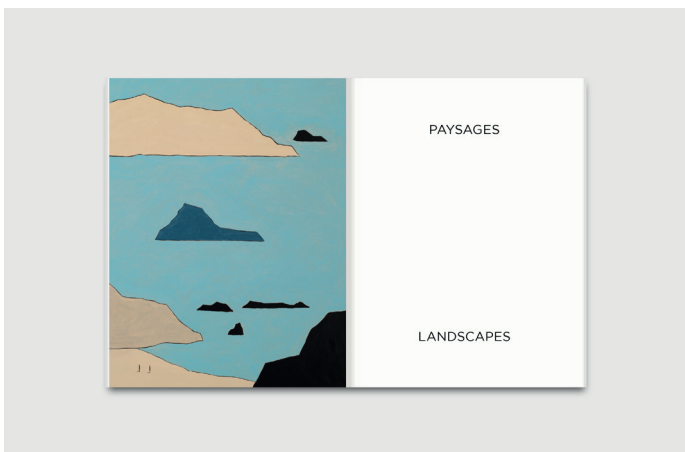
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*Peintures / Paintings*, co-publication with Skira



192 pages  
30 x 23 cm  
Hard cover  
Text by François Landon  
French-English

This book was published in May 2024 by Huberty & Breyne and Skira. A first edition of 30 copies with an original drawing was numbered from I to XXX. Fifty copies with a bookplate were numbered from 1 to 50.



# François AVRIL

*BXL*

## OPENING

Thursday 16 May 2024, from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm  
in the presence of the artist

## EXHIBITION

From Friday 17 May 2024  
to Saturday 15 June 2024

## BRUXELLES | Châtelain

33, place du Châtelain  
Wednesday > Saturday 11.00 am – 6.00 pm


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HD visuals available on request  
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# HUBERTY & BREYNE

Huberty & Breyne is a contemporary art gallery specialising in original cartoon work. Operating out of Brussels and Paris under the direction of Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne, the gallery – which has been in existence for almost 30 years – represents both established and up-and-coming artists linked to, or inspired by, the 9th art.

Its exhibitions of original plates, paintings and sculptures champion contemporary art in all its guises and provide a platform for the crossover of different disciplines. A key reference point in the world of comic art, the Huberty & Breyne gallery offers collectors a rigorous selection of works by both household names and promising newcomers.

The gallery is closely involved with the contemporary art market scene and a contributor at major international fairs such as Brafa (Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair), 1 – 54 London, Art Paris and Drawing Now. It occupies a 1,000m<sup>2</sup> exhibition space in Brussels, in place du Châtelain, and two further exhibition spaces in Paris, in avenue Matignon and rue Chapon.

Aside from running the gallery, Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne also advise auction houses regarding the sale of works of comic art.

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## BRUXELLES | Châtelain

33 place du Châtelain  
1050 Bruxelles  
+32 (0)2 893 90 30

Wednesday > Saturday  
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

## PARIS | Matignon

36 avenue Matignon  
75008 Paris  
+33 (0)1 40 28 04 71

Tuesday > Saturday  
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

## PARIS | Chapon

19 rue Chapon  
75003 Paris  
+33 (0)1 71 32 51 98

Wednesday > Saturday  
1.30 pm - 7.00 pm

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