

Derosia

Mona Varichon, Artforum, October 4, 2018

ARTFORUM



View of “Bloom,” 2018.

LOS ANGELES

“Bloom”

BEL AMI

709 N. Hill St. #105

September 20 - October 27

Homages and kinships run through “Bloom,” an exhibition curated in collaboration with painter Orion Martin. Looming large is the specter of the late Michel Majerus—the curators translated four of his large-scale paintings into murals, stretching them, Louise Lawler–style, to fit the gallery’s walls. Majerus sampled profusely from other sources, and the press release’s mention of his death in a plane crash reminds

us that collisions can consist of momentary impacts as much as they can form lasting influences. While the works in this show are formally disparate, most function as tributes to artists or works that have shaped the organizers’ practices.

The titular work, *Bloom*, 2003–2004, is a larger-than-life portrait by Martin’s undergraduate mentor, Caitlin Mitchell-Dayton. The young student’s unapologetic aura, exalted by the scale of the painting, symbolizes the impact that students and teachers can have on one another. Nearby, a circular painting on Plexiglas by Sean Kennedy, *Untitled*, 2016–18, packs Nascar decals into a composition of concentric rings (the commercial language echoes that in Majerus’s work). The once legible logo of BASF appears to have disintegrated due to repeated circular motion, as if the image had been spun at an unmanageable speed until it was brought to a deadly halt. In the next room, in a series of works employing the ink and screen tone used in Manga drawings, Matthieu Manche—a childhood mentor of one of Bel Ami’s codirectors—illustrates his travels, grafting characters from Japanese popular culture onto various locales, from Antwerp to Tokyo, via superimpositions and connected limbs.

Not mentioned in the press release is the gallery’s decision to include a small painting by Martin in the back of the show, a work which reveals the curators’ driving force. The painting depicts a leather shoe whose sole is geometrically fragmented like shrapnel flying toward the viewer and the rest of the works in the show, leaving behind a red pool of blood.

—Mona Varichon