British Journal of Photography - Ones to Watch - 2026
Words by Siobhan O'Leary

If, as many historians suggest, photography is in the midst of an expanded, material moment, Hubert Marot stands out as an exemplary figure. His over-painted still life "photographs" on linen canvases exist firmly outside the limits of the medium's classic definitions. Shown alongside his tyre air-chamber sculptures that bulge outwards like contained chaos, the image metamorphoses from a framed slice of time into a physical world. Crucially, something to be felt and experienced in an exhibition.

We are speaking at a large table in the middle of Marot's studio in an industrial building on the outskirts of Paris. His atelier is one of around thirty in the building, which he co-manages as part of the SIRA artist residency. On the wall behind us, several tyre air chambers and a yoga ball protest against constrictive metal forms. Opposite, voyeuristic images of ground-floor apartment windows from Marot's RDC series — taken with an iPhone from the safety of the photographer's car — line the wall.

The coloured light emanating from the iced-glass windows in these photographs is both excruciatingly intimate and warmly familiar. These digital "poor images," as Marot calls them, are elevated, almost humorously, to art objects by handmade frames coated in metallic car paint, echoing the haunted interior glow.
Other works are firmly anchored in the analogue. His overpainted, humorous still lifes, depicting mundane yet surprising objects of middle-class detritus, are created by projecting black-and-white negatives onto photosensitive linen canvases in the artist's darkroom. The resulting images are pushed beyond the photographic toward a handcrafted, artisanal state through layers of oil paint, where the trace of the human hand obscures the mechanical. "We can feel that a hand has intervened, and straight away this changes everything," Marot says.

This masking of the mechanics of the image through painting paradoxically reveals one of Marot's underlying interests. He traces the camera's mechanics as a catalyst for his unlikely beginnings in photography. "While I wasn't at all predestined to study art, I always liked the mechanical aspect of the photographic object," he says. "The fact that I became an artist is a bit of a coincidence, really.

"Another mechanical fascination runs through much of Marot's work: the car. "The lexical champ of the automobile has occupied me for a long time," he says, "artistically, but also from an anthropological and sociological point of view." His video installation series Wishing was filmed at a carwash near his studio. Marot secretly recorded men cleaning their vehicles, slowing the footage to an almost excruciating pace. "The gesture of car washing is sensual; there is a fetishistic element to it that relates to our relationship with objects, which I find interesting, and a certain hopelessness, hence the title."

"What fascinates me about Marot's work is his ability to innovate by constantly challenging the image's materiality," says Rémi Faucheux, founder of RVB Books, who nominated Marot for the British Journal of Photography's Ones to Watch. "His vision is both poetic and rigorous, and I believe his contribution is essential because it shifts the focus from the subject itself to the very process of its appearance."

That emphasis on process is rooted in Marot's attachment to the studio. "The fantasy of the artist's studio has always interested me," he says. "I like the idea of being able to be in an atelier, to manually fabricate an image." Marot's alchemic mix of artisanal, studio-based practices, spanning analogue and digital photography, installation, and film, is grounded in a sustained interest in material and space. "Since the beginning I have been interrogating photography's relationship to the plastic, while considering how to exhibit images in an ecosystem of physical rooms," he explains. "I always start from photography, around which gravitates sculpture or installation." The exhibition, in turn, becomes integral to the development of the work. "Things really come together when I have an exhibition project. I start to construct a narrative. This is what I really enjoy: the relationship that the spectator can have with my work."

The world of Marot's fabricated images and inventive installations is quietly melancholic. Sour fruit moulds near a jam-jar-turned-vase and an ice scraper in Muscaris et grattoir par-brise (2025), all appearing strangely isolated under a patinated light that renders everything at once ageing and suspended in time. While the human figure is notably absent, our presence looms through these careful arrangements and acts of observation.

That atmosphere of nostalgia might suggest that the best has already come to pass, yet Marot's work points to a photography's exciting future. A 3D-printed test of a helicoidal staircase in the corner of his studio hints that from Marot's laboratory of ongoing experimentation, photography does not look backward, but continues to spiral upward, toward further transformations and new material correspondences.

Balades - 2024
Words by Pierre-Alexandre Mateos

Hubert Marot presents at Fonds de dotation Franklin Azzi in Paris a series of photographs, two installations and a video, all relating to a state that I would describe as circumspect. His practice is illusionistic: photographs are paintings, installations sculptures; but is also prudent, wise, meticulous. It comes from observation, from the careful gaze he takes around him. His work is also marked by a form of mysterious triviality and a penchant for antiquity, the imperishable, a race that he knows is lost in advance.
For him everything depends on the event held in suspension, a few moments that he cuts off arbi- trarily and chooses, even pampers, once the impulse vanished. He practices photography, painting, installation in often fragilely established forms. He is also an artist who is part of a tradition of sceptic humor with regard to his works as well as his contemporary environment which is as if put under a bell, under a dome of spleen and slight paranoia. First there are his living or hypnagogic still-life photographs between a state of sleep and semi-awakening, photographed using a Canon AE-1film camera equipped with a small powerful flash to create harsh shadows like old police photographs. And it is true that his work is partly criminal documentation of minor cases.

On a linen canvas subjected to strong tensions, he mummifies his routine photographic corpse compositions. Thus, “one after the other; skin glue, gesso, undercoat and finally a photosensitive emulsion. The image is then projected on the wall with an enlarger and then finally developed using three silver chemistries: developer, stop bath, fixer. The pieces are then colorized with oil paint, sometimes very diluted for the flat areas (a sort of juice) and sometimes really “painted” in certain places.” The derisory thing, I was saying... the holiday accident of the fifth week of paid leave (Marot is French...) are transformed into *Houellebecquian* antique pieces, rouged to get through their purgatories and access a certain perpetuity. To the end-of-century morbid luxuriance of the French deviants of the 19th century, to the saturated and gargantuan compositions of the Flemish masters of the 17th century, he opposes a 21st century vision: placid, neurasthenic, relativistic but always linked to a form of sentimentality. The work is prepared as would a thanatologist who cleans and powders the body of the deceased. In the conceptual tradition of Frank Stella or even more recently Wade Guyton, his photographs are sleight of hand, hybridized mediums of an artist not yet recove- red from everything but phlegmatic, as if imbued with a traditional depressive lucidity.

Thus, although random and partly due to chemical chance, the compositions proceed in the manner of vanitas by allegorical friction. *Poire nasale et boules azurées du col de Vence* opens the dance with its austere thistles, its curative overtones, and a life that spins, burns from the moment a match strikes. In *Buddleias et duo de pistache-choco*, the fiery butterfly bush stands beside the absurdly diminutive recurrence of a miniature hubcap and an afterparty pastry. In *PEZ et limaçons de Correns*, a rabbit-headed PEZ dispenser, spilling over with candies, shares the frame with small white snails, clinging to dry trails of slime on sprigs of rosemary—a tableau that feigns collective hysteria. Then there’s *Marguerites du Queyras et tue-mouches*, where indifferent flowers, loyal yet detached, exist alongside brown flypaper smeared with dipteran corpses—a hallmark of dingy camper vans. Virginal and resilient winter flowers risk the guillotine in a tin can perhaps left by a tramp in a Parisian park in *Perce-neiges du square Hector Berlioz et couteau*. We are in contact with pure contemporary vanitas, compositions of objects from garage sales, old towns, edges of overloaded bathroom shelves, peripheral rave rooms, cheap talismans, trinkets, objects of predation and restoration which cut, shave, pierce, pull, sponge, rub. These vanities are like dark, brutal realities, tender truths too, because there is nothing more tender than compositions torn between these two polarities. With these works, death ceases waiting, the enslavement of waiting to be, vanity and disillusionment. Hubert Marot’s pieces are exorbitant and mutate with strange solitudes.

Strange and fleeting solitudes:
Let’s talk about his sculptures of inner tubes, carbon black tubes which intertwine into ouroboros, tubular knots which curve by twisting on rectangular and metallic rib cages. His two sculptures which order, overlook with their volumes; in fact manifest a thwarted authority which only exists in the present moment - only for those who believe in it. His are air pump systems that are proudly, inflated like a fleeting stroke of power. This mechanical protection system invented in 1885 by Dun- lop in Scotland evokes here more discomfort, a body subjected to external pressures. This anti-Allan Kaprow (*Yard*, 1961) where disordered tires saturated the exhibition and became a happening, child’s game, becomes here a symbol of hemorrhaging bodies, subjected to a struggle or even punishment. His glossy black tori, or geometric tubes closed on themselves, are all schematic versions of sculptures of Hercules triumphing over Cerberus, of Michelangelo’s rebellious or dying slaves,

of a Laocoon struggling in the embrace of serpents but taken under the industrial aegis of Bruce Nauman or John Dogg (the fictitious artist created by Richard Prince and Colin de Land and fan of large cars).
Here, we find ourselves in the realm of pastiche—a steroidal sculpture, paradoxically fleeting. Its swollen forms and opportunistic volumes teeter between heroic excess and pathetic existence, resembling oxygen-starved relics, abandoned on beaches or relegated to second-rate garages. Intermittently, colorful valves appear, with a charm that is equal parts playful and ostentatiously customized, discreetly nestled within the curves of these overinflated sculptures. These valves function as talismans, relic-like objects, or dilettante fashion accessories. It's a fitting gesture, a microscopic ceremony that concludes this transient sculpture—a masculine flourish as the valves are metapho- rically sealed. Everything here becomes an allegory of swelling, a tribute to inflation, encapsulated within this erect altar.

Wishing is presented at the intersection of the exhibition. Men, filmed unknowingly, polish the bo- dies of their cars. Their hands glide over the surface, grazing, caressing, losing themselves in the curves of the chassis, absorbing their chilled sweat. The neutral tones of Volkswagen, Mercedes, and Citroën C5 polos create an aesthetic of disappearance, a kind of grey ecology. These scenes, captured without consent, evoke a solitary and selfish suspension, bordering on the onanistic—a series of masturbatory images where a man cossets and lavishes affection and tenderness upon his accessory. What emerges is a curious blend of elevation and guilt. The site becomes both a place of pleasure and a space of purification. The video savagely captures—always leaning toward indulgence—the care, the ablutions, or the guilty compulsion to erase undesirable traces: a crime scene, a hit-and-run, a sullied adulterous surface. From this cleansing, a potential elevation emerges: wi- shing, like a wish made while rubbing a genie's lamp. The artist probes this fetishistic gesture, this symbolic act of cleansing—a playful nod to Mr. Clean.

In the final wooden room, the closing installation of mats, composed of interlocking PVC tiles remi- niscent of a detailing garage, is conceived as a site-specific intervention. These tiles morph into geo- metric forms, framed patterns in acidic green or violet, grids with op-art, Tetris, and techno motifs. Their calm arrangement also lays claim to an American minimalist heritage. Here, form is no longer merely form but place—a space that interacts through contrast (with the wood and stained glass), striving to harness physical energy while underscoring the void within the room. This floor sculpture, following in the tradition from medieval tombstones to Carl Andre, invites being walked on, trampled—a physical encounter with the terrain, a testing of the site. The sculpture is no longer an object to be carved but assembled, nearly devoid of volume, renouncing one of its ancient pre- dicates. Yet, unlike Carl Andre, this work does not shy away from symbolism. It could evoke a dance floor, a narthex for baptismal rites, or even the site of a firing squad.

Life is a set of small, indefinitely repeated, often empty rites. What is also beautiful is this idea of considering the works of Hubert Marot from a humorous angle even though they are more tearful than they seem. Laugh- ter and anguish are intrinsically mixed there, a tragic laughter, the kind that reminds us of being familiar with a family member, a friend, an object, a city or vacation spot for a given time. Yet everything dies.

To remain still is to die - 2022
Words by Guillaume Blanc-Marianne

So, here are the consequences of a few nightly undertaken urban wanderings. At driver's height, like those guys at the wheel of their cars who wander the streets, fixating sidewalks in search of who knows what, trouble maybe, perhaps a score to invent in order to better settle later. For a better view of these ground floors also, where those who endure the tragedy of large cities hide as best they can : anonymity and refuge are impossible on these lower floors, among so many would-be voyeurs. All the more screens that stubbornly refuse transparency, to offer only an un- certain shadow theater.

It therefore took poor images to evoke such paucity of the visible. Those who know Hubert Marot know his propensity to toil at the print, to experiment and start over, to come close to a form of material accomplishment before which photography has always shown itself to be a little shy: a paper image, worthless because bank of all values, « flat » as has been said, which can just as well end up in origami or in pieces. But whilst the conventional currency (the image itself) cra- shes in value, the price of the frame goes up, as a compensation.

Hubert Marot works to prepare each frame as one would prepare the bodywork on a vehicle, using the same means and processes: sanding, painting, polishing, and repeating until the exclusion of any vestige of craftsmanship, until the appearance of an irreproachable, absolute luster. It's a question of industrial banality and the doors it always attempts to open to the mirage of perfection : usually it's cheap junk and common things that concentrate the most glitter and complacent reflections.

Remarkably, industry invents the unique to deliver it en masse, like those patented toxic colors, which only belong to one manufacturer; whereas photography invents the critical mass that always makes it possible to create the unique – chips of time which allow themselves to be cap- tured only once. The insignificance of a smartphone photograph, a confirmed mark of contem- porary numbness, is awakened by the pageantry of a labor so hard and precise that it is usually reserved for the powerful means of industry. In short, it's all about displacement, because falling asleep in the comfort of worn conventions and tattered categories is always risky: to remain still is to die.

Maniements - 2020
Words by Naoki Sutter-Shudo

A princess posing under a mass of hyacinths on one side, an abstract composition in a box- turned-frame on the other. A witch's hand enters the scene, holding and showing a severed citrus. All takes place in a comple- tely griddled setting, like the ground glass of a view camera, a fine theatrical perspective. I see drips in the background that the flash, of a Weegee-esque violence, reveals tone on tone. Two little buds like torn out, rotten eyes.

I see a dripping and christic crown, which has become a body through its verticality supported by feet made of perhaps dried bread, an offering of common daisies at its sides, the whole on a pedestal-tray of food pac- kaging origin. Slightly recessed an empty snail shell, its visceral mass possibly already consumed, two small bolts as wheels to form a car that exists only in the two- dimensional flatness of the painting. Sygil-like geometrical patterns form the ground; the background is smoky, I can't grasp its distance.

On the other hand a white background, close to the eye, which slices diagonally across a black and white grid floor. Discreetly a cow in pastures, calm, looking towards me. A poor, pale tulip strangled by two floa- ting smiles while her sisters stand back. The smiles are disembodied; two little tomatoes are faceless eyes with flash pupils. A spider here is a disturbing black silhouette. I am reminded of Dr. Caligari's set, exactly one hundred years ago, with their shadows painted on the tray, with desta- bilised and confining perspectives.

In these large photographic tableaux, improvised compositions appear in ghostly shades of grey. At first there is a domestic construction from bric-a-brac amassed by an instinctive flâneur. Hubert is the only one to see it, through the lens of the compact camera, before capturing it live on the spot to freeze it as a still life.Then the complex steps of chemistry gradually transform the light of an inti- mate moment into a painting, moving from Hubert's white-walled room–a temporary photo studio–to the darkroom. It is in this darkroom that, by the instincts and gestures of a craftsman, the emulsion is sprayed, in fine particles, onto the prepared surface of the stretched linen. The image is the alchemical appearance of the grain: it is on the deposited dust that the composition, destined to disappear from its birth, can, beyond the furtive glances of the first viewer, be seen by other viewers later on.

Bataille, in a short article from 1929: ... *sad layers of dust invade the earthly dwellings endlessly and defile them uniformly: as if it were a matter of arranging attics and old rooms for the coming entrance of haun- tings, ghosts, larvae that the worm-like smell of old dust feeds and intoxicates. [...] One day or another, indeed, the dust, since it persists, will probably begin to win over the house- maids, invading the immense rubble of abandoned buildings, of deserted docks: and at that point there will be nothing left to save us from the night terrors, without which we have become such great accountants... On the manuscript, but not publi- shed, this conclusion: Man does not live on bread alone, but on dust*...

It is a look that freezes the world. First that of the photographer, then that of the viewers facing the pictures which are too large to be a simple still life. I imagine the erased colours that the scene may have had. The intimate logic of Hubert's taste in arranging his odds and ends bestows on them a sublime which, alone, if they had not been composed as a whole, they would lack. Taste is a generative disposition: it is an embo- died practice that requires a physical space. The body, or more precisely the eye, stages a specific real that the camera validates. What may once have been waste and scrap destined to oblivion become spectral traces of a mode of inhabiting the world.

Once the camera steps in between Hubert's gaze and his mise en scène, the human eye is replaced by the technological dimension: the photographed composition thereby loses any other raison d'être

than that of being captured, caught. It will cease to exist immediately. The individual parts lose their identities and find themselves reconstructed inside the machine as the shutter blinks. All things, in front of this mechanical gaze, are a captive shadow already dead. To photograph is an act of violence against the world. To watch the appearance of this ectoplasm on the canvas is to look at what is no longer and can no longer be: a reve- nant from beyond the grave.

I look at the spider on one of these canvases. It is threatening, as is the passing of time or the dust against which the struggle is never-ending. As a temporary respite, one wishes to stop time, as one pins an insect to preserve it. The spider was alive, and now it is fixed, static. Hubert as an embalmer, preparing his maneuvers for the hereafter.

One night around Pigalle, standing still on the pavement, in search of the next stage, we were un- decided and Hubert had led, declaring: To remain still is to die. That was years ago, and the sen- tence comes back to me when I look at the little photographs of Parisian ground floors that Hubert captured as a voyeur strolling around. These colourful images show little. Or else they show what people have tried to hide: close-ups of frosted film, mounted on the windows to conceal the interior from the curious passer-by.

This could be the opposite logic to that of the large canvases: outdoor visual barriers as miniatures, like illuminated pictures, rather than indoor still lifes enlarged and elevated to the level of genre painting. Colour, which extends to the frame, but which remains silent, where it could have taught us the particular meaning of a blue hyacinth (sincerity) or violet hyacinth (request for forgiveness). The light that emanates from behind the glass, as opposed to the unifying flash that we would come to impose.

The small photographs, these fleeting recordings of a stroll: discreetly taken with the iPhone, almost banal. Attracted by the seductive colours of the frames worked like a high-end car's paint job that catches my eye during a walk, I approach them, but I see nothing beyond the colour. Insect bumping into a glass pane. The configuration of *a flower cannot be adequately expressed in language*, according to Bataille; the same, pe- rhaps, for colour. A hazardous survey of the colours of the city, a colour chart of the city drift. Bataille again: *It is futile to consider only in the appearance of things the intelligible signs that make it possible to distinguish various elements from one another. What strikes the human eye does not only determine the knowledge of the relationships between various objects, but also a decisive and inexplicable state of mind. The access to the intimate is blurred. Saul Leiter, 2013: There are the things that are out in the open and then there are the things that are hidden, and life has more to do, the real world has more to do with what is hidden, maybe*. [...] We like to pretend that what is public is what the real world is all about. It's refreshing not to see every- thing. Hubert's photographs make me want to live in them and this desire is not a rational formula- tion, it is a desire of a fantastic order, an invitation.
Leiter: *Photographs are often treated as important moments but really they are little fragments and souvenirs of an unfinished world*. I look at Hubert's manipulations and I say to myself: *maybe I was there*; I wasn't actually there, but in front of them I get caught up in a nostalgia for the unknown, an anguish of curiosity.

GOING-GONE - 2017
Words by Elisa Rigoulet

You could see here a direct reference to Michel Foucault's "androgynous images," which he defined in his text called Photogenic painting, written in 1975 for Gérard Fromager's monographic catalogue. These images combine mediums and categories, and bear testimony to the free relationship between photography and painting. Such is the very substance of Hubert Marot's work
in his exhibition GOING-GONE. His first cyanotypes already conjugated photographic process with pictorial rendition. Here, his latest series introduces color as an element of variation, allowing a shift from negative to task. Color appears, driving the rhythm and, little by little, becomes the subject.

Around this queenImage, whose nuances vary depending on the application time of the liquid emulsion, there is a whole ecosystem of ceramics in enamel, which has also stood the test of time. They turn into solid objects a state of evolution, of degradation. Hybridity still rules, hubcaps melt and become clocks, and scooter seats, lacerated and mended, become, once hung up on the wall, a series of ancient masks.

There is then, in its very technicality, in the invariability of the dried out result, a contained and sealed process of alteration. If matter is adorned with color variations, the intention is entirely focused on time, what it allows, what it dilates, what it forgets. In this work of patience, a softening phenomenon occurs. Before it is fixed, matter has distended, like the closeup of the chewed-up chewing gum on the canvas prints, the ceramics have become limp, waiting for time to pass. A metallic structure, built like a bus shelter, hosts a looped projection of anonymous men who have the patience to rub their car's bodywork until it shines, another reminiscence that this is all, once again, about the passing of time.

We feel like we're in a slow motion movie, in a vinyl record set to the wrong number of turns per minute. In the seriality and repetition of the objects presented here, seats, hubcaps, images, there is the same mechanics as in the mastication of chewing gum, the same fatality, the same latency. And yet, what saves everyone from being swallowed by this great machine is, in the end, the unreproductability of this work. In "each moment in time is unique" there is "each process is unique," and therefore each result. Repetition doesn't rob the image of its singularity, on the contrary, it allows it to vary in its unicity through gesture, for the obsession with reproduction is also the obsession with its failure. An outrageously oiled machinery.