

Alex Ayed

“Roaring Forties”

October 22nd through December 5th

Galerie Balice Hertling is proud to present its second solo show by Alex Ayed. The exhibition includes five wall-mounted works that have been made from sails stretched over canvas, themselves the product of weathering out at sea. Presented alongside these works are four sculptural pieces: a suitcase made from goat skin, a dried greater pipefish, a fluorescent orange sack, and an assembled object in the form of a miniature lighthouse. For reference, a copy of the manual *Des Bois Propres Aux Construction Navale* (1803), which details the construction of boats from various trees, has been made available in the gallery.

The exhibition title, “Roaring Forties,” references the notorious winds blowing in the Southern Hemisphere, between the latitudes of 40 and 50 degrees. Well-known by sailors for as long as boats have sailed in these waters, the Roaring Forties are both feared and valued for the speed at which they allow ships to travel around the world.

In his 1969 *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, Buckminster Fuller develops the concept of the “Great Pirate” in reference to the first people to master navigation at sea. Fuller describes early sailors as having both expanded consciousnesses, in which they were able to envision the world through a comprehensive knowledge of it, as well as the technical skills for how to get there. As technology for producing boats has improved, access to more remote areas of the planet has become increasingly possible, pushing the limits of the known world a little further each time. Simultaneously, the existential side of navigation remains ever present in the question: Where are we going?

Sometimes this question has no immediate answer, or there is no destination. It was in this spirit that solitary sailors like Joshua Slocum and Bernard Moitessier began navigating the world’s oceans on their own, throughout the 20th century. Mostly without any assistance at all, these vagabonds ventured out to sea for months at a time. In such isolation, it was the wind, clouds, stars, and even the tiniest signs of life—a species of bird or a distant ship—that became their most precious allies. Such fleeting and sparse connection is evident in the open expanse of the works, where a sprinkling of dust accrued on a sail mirrors the constellation one might use to find their way.

Alex Ayed (b.1989) lives and works between Brussels, Paris, and Tunis. He studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He has recently had solo exhibitions at B7L9 Art Station Kamel Lazaar Foundation Tunis (2019) and Institut of Arab and Islamic Art, New York (2019). His work has also been recently exhibited at POUISH Manifesto, Clichy (2020) and the fifth edition of Jao, Tunis (2019), amongst others.