



Exhibition Jean-Pierre GIBRAT

Jean-Pierre Gibrat was born on 17 April 1954 in Paris and had an uneventful suburban childhood. He was brought up with trade unionism all around him, excelled at history and passed his *baccalauréat* specialising in the *Front Populaire* [Popular Front] and Soviet agriculture. He started out in graphic design in the field of advertising, but then decided to study Visual Arts in 1975. Two years later he abandoned his studies to go into comic strips, publishing his first full stories in the French magazine *Pilote*.

His work can be divided into three distinct periods.

During the first period, from 1978 to 1996, he demonstrated great talent, although he worked exclusively as an illustrator on stories written by other people, such as Jackie Berroyer (Goudard et La Parisienne), Guy Vidal (Médecins Sans Frontières series) and Daniel Pecqueur (Marée Basse). At the same time, his colour illustrations caught the eye of editors at various magazines, including among others *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *L'Événement du jeudi*, *Le Figaro magazine* and *Elle*.

The second period began in 1997 when he became involved in the *Aire Libre* comic strip collection published by Dupuis, working alone on *Le Sursis* – a work of rural nostalgia and a recreation of the years rural France spent under German occupation during the war. *Le Sursis* won various awards and was enthusiastically received by readers, making his first foray into authoring an entire work alone a resounding success.

This was followed in 2002 by the magnificent *Vol du Corbeau*, for which he was awarded the grand prize at the 2004 *Quai des Bulles* Comic Strip Festival in Saint Malo. He also received the *Prix du Dessin* at the Angoulême Festival in January 2006 for the second volume of *Vol du Corbeau*.

The fundamental change during this second period was that Gibrat was writing his own stories, revealing himself to be an outstanding storyteller and dialogue writer. And it was only by writing his own work that he dared to push his illustrating further and become more a master of his own style, giving his colours greater generosity and charm.

The third period began in October 2008 with the publication of the first volume of *Mattéo* (published by Futuropolis) – a high quality, novelistic story in five parts. *Mattéo* recounts a man's singular destiny between 1914 and 1939 – taking in the First World War, the inter-war period, the Russian Revolution, the Popular Front in France and the Spanish Civil War – detailing his tumultuous experiences and heightened passions. In the end, despite himself, Mattéo becomes involved in all of these wars, both the wars that rocked his militant pacifism as they engulfed the early decades of the twentieth century and those that wounded his spurned lover's heart.

Gibrat's writing had never known such brilliance; nor had his drawing. More than ever, it soared above the limits imposed by ink on paper, becoming freer in its expression and colours, disregarding the unnecessary and getting straight to the heart of what really counts – narration, sense and light.

Enjoy the visit!