

HALLOWEEN
Jean-François Lepage



From october 1 to 31, 2026
at the madé gallery



Jean-François Lepage : Art Against the Grain

Born in Paris in 1960, Jean-François Lepage has built his body of work on a constant rejection of the obvious and of automatic responses.

From his debut in fashion in 1981, he has distinguished himself through a physical, almost surgical approach to the medium.

On his light table, he etches, scars, and cuts the film; thereby exploring an “unbalancing equilibrium” between seduction and brutality.

Going against the grain of a hyper-commercial decade, Lepage distanced himself from the market during the 1990s to devote himself entirely to drawing and painting. When he returned to fashion photography in 2001, it was once again under the banner of independence.

He chose to focus on magazine pages rather than bow to the demands of advertising campaigns. He believed this approach was more conducive to freedom of thought, as well as to the maturation of his art.

Stepping out of the studio, he openly pitted his artificial light against the sun’s brilliance, with flash heads placed directly on the ground, like stray stars.

Ten Years in the Archives (2014–2024)

In 2014, he broke away from commissioned work for good to turn to his own archive and launch *Genèse* (The Recycle Project).

This ten-year project, which concluded in 2024, features photographic surfaces reworked by hand, never following the same path twice. It includes *Prélude* with its nostalgic grain, *Zombie* with its emaciated bodies reminiscent of Egon Schiele, and *Cent Vingt-Neuf Jours sur Terre* with its dark abstraction.

From one series to the next, no style is repeated. Perhaps the only constant in the project is that it has none—a demanding body of work that has earned him international exhibitions and acclaim for his radical approach.

In the September 2021 issue of *Fisheye Magazine*, Lou Tsatsas elicits from Lepage an admission of a deliberately counterintuitive aesthetic. He says he seeks balance on “the slope of the non-beautiful,” preferring work that speaks to the senses rather than the mind.

This approach permeates his entire body of work, where the cold beauty of fashion fades beneath layers of gouache, scratches, and painterly reworkings, until the original image is reduced to raw material, almost unrecognizable.

Once the project was complete, he changed its name one last time. It is no longer called *Genesis*; it is now called *Babylon*.

What comes next

In any work that lasts long enough, there comes a moment when it ceases to mean anything and simply begins to exist, like an abyss that draws the gaze without ever promising anything in return. Babylon was that abyss.

An entire constellation suspended on the edge of silence, where each work burned with its own light before fading into the next. It was ten years of wandering among its own ruins, cultivating that slightly dark intoxication of things nearing their end.

And now Halloween dawns at the Madé Gallery, from October 1 to November 31, 2026. Not like a dawn, but like one of those nights where you never know if they're drawing the day to a close, so much do they already resemble the immensity that follows them.

If Babylon were a galaxy, Halloween is neither its logical continuation nor the promise of something better. It is its dark center, that exact point where light cancels itself out, where time coils in on itself like a serpent devouring itself.

One enters it silently. One does not quite return from it, but there are darkneses from which one emerges transfigured, as from a vertigo one would henceforth carry beneath one's skin.

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