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MBP Presents *The Obscene Image* **The Secret History and Kinky Paintings of Parisian Hospitals**

New York, NY - November 11th, 2010 - Yoda masturbates, Batman cross-dresses, priests' penises burn as votive candles-these and other bawdy scenes ignite the walls of Parisian hospitals. Concealed within the *salles de garde*, the break rooms where French medical interns eat their meals and manage their studies, the paintings offer a glimpse of a little-known French tradition that dates to the Middle Ages. In [The Obscene Image](#), photographer Gilles Tondini and writer Marie L. Bouchon introduce the world to that tradition's history, customs, and, of course, explicit art. And they do so just in time: austerity measures and changing educational standards threaten to literally demolish the break rooms that remain in use.

The Obscene Image reveals how the frenzied frescos and manic murals it captures are more than exercises in depravity. They are a necessary release valve for the medical interns' stressful lives: just around the corner from an orgiastic rendition of the Sistine Chapel, the interns' patients lay injured, sick, or dying in hospital beds. Working long hours, constantly reminded of the fine line between life and death, frustration and stress take shape on the break room walls, depicting iconic figures as well as hospital staff in myriad compromising and engorged scenes.

But today, the break rooms and their kitchens are being replaced by microwaves and vending machines. The disappearance of the *salles de garde* motivated Gilles Tondini to produce *The Obscene Image*. "These images are an exceptional aspect of French culture that might disappear completely," he says. "So the urgency of the situation inspired me. As well as being a photographer, I took an almost anthropological approach. My approach was also that of an engaged citizen: through the book, I wanted to join ranks with the interns, and to defend a certain vision of what hospitals are."

All of the text in *The Obscene Image*, including an extensive glossary of terms, is bilingual English and French.

About the Author:

Gilles Tondini is a photographer based in France. He previously authored [Paris Underground](#) with MBP.

About Mark Batty Publisher

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L'Image Obscene (The Obscene Image)
Parisian Hospital Break Room Graffiti
Gilles Tondini

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