



# LOST LOOSE AND LOVED

**FOREIGN ARTISTS IN PARIS  
1944-1968**

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The exhibition *Lost, Loose, and Loved: Foreign Artists in Paris, 1944–1968* concludes the year 2018 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía with a broad investigation of the varied Parisian art scene in the decades after World War II. The exhibition focuses on the complex situation in France, which was striving to recuperate its cultural hegemony and recompose its national identity and influence in the newly emerging postwar geopolitical order of competing blocs. It also places a particular focus on the work of foreign artists who were drawn to the city and contributed to creating a stimulating, productive climate in which intense discussion and multiple proposals prevailed.

Cultural production in a diverse, continuously transforming postwar Paris has often been crowded out by the New York art world, owing both to a skillful exercise of American propaganda that had spellbound much of the criticism, market, and institutions, as well as later to the work of canonical art history with its celebration of great names and specific moments. Dismissed as secondary, minor, or derivative, art practices in those years, such as those of the German artist Wols, the Dutch artist Bram van Velde, or the Portuguese artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, to name just a few, lacked the single cohesive image that the New York School offered with Abstract Impressionism and its standard bearer, Jackson Pollock. In contrast, in Paris there existed a multitude of artistic languages and positions coexisting and communicating: prolific debate between figurative approaches and different forms of abstraction, such as lyrical and geometrical, was common; as it was between different tendencies such as the Informel, Surrealism, or the incipient experiments in kinetic art; or between the School of Paris, which sought to integrate foreign references with a certain rationalism and Parisian savoir faire, and more personal trajectories; or different ideas about the role of the artist, which ran from the exaltation of individual freedom to social and political commitment.

The exhibition spans more than two decades, starting with the Salon d'Automne in 1944, the year of Paris's liberation, which became a symbol of the longing for cultural reconstruction, and ending in May 1968, when a new

international paradigm came into being with the French capital as its epicenter. Those were the years of the Cold War, of the beginnings of the consumer society, of the shift from the Fordist production model to the service economy, but also of the independence movements of protectorates and colonies, and the calling into question of the grand linear and unequivocal narratives. In this changing and suggestive context, the diverse community of foreign artists featured in this exhibition pursued the freedom and the conditions favorable to experimenting and exchanging ideas, while also facing disappointments, tensions, and conflicts.

The exhibition looks at all of these issues through a representative selection of over one hundred artists with widely differing styles and languages, embracing painting, sculpture, photography, and film, accompanied by a large section documenting the years of the exhibition, which prominently features leading journals such as *Art d'aujourd'hui*, *Arts*, or *Présence Africaine*, all of which were essential vehicles for the effervescent critical activity of the time.

Finally, we must express our gratitude for the collaboration of the large number of institutions, collectors, and other cultural entities from different countries, the involvement of which made it possible to bring together this varied selection of works and archive materials. We would like to acknowledge them for their participation and eagerness to engage in this project, with which we hope to provide a kind of panoramic view of the exciting and turbulent art world of postwar Paris.

José Guirao Cabrera  
Minister of Culture and Sports



The canonical narratives of art revolve around famous names, be these of practitioners or of particular cultural settings. The history of Western art in the second half of the twentieth century is generally depicted as a smooth journey, without interruption or digression, in which World War II marks the point at which the focus shifts from Paris to New York, the new capital of modern art. An ancient Henri Matisse lying in bed cutting out paper for his *papiers découpés* gives way to a youthful Jackson Pollock moving around an immense canvas. Everything outside this focal point is consigned to the peripheries, considered secondary or derivative, or simply ignored. *Lost, Loose, and Loved: Foreign Artists in Paris, 1944–1968* explores some of the work that was produced beyond the spotlight: the ruptures, divergences, and discontinuities in the story.

According to the German Jewish philosopher Theodor Adorno, the moment images of Auschwitz began to circulate through Europe, the writing of poetry became a barbaric act. The postwar Paris art scene was characterized by collective disenchantment and pessimism, the utopian thinking of the avant-garde movements no longer possible. This mood permeated cultural and philosophical production for decades to come. The numerous and varied attempts to reinvigorate France's national identity following the humiliation of the Nazi occupation were overshadowed by the collective fear of another violent conflict, this time between the new ideological enemies and global superpowers of the Cold War. The world seemed to be constructed of binary opposites: capitalism or communism, Abstract Expressionism or Socialist Realism. Yet Paris at the time was also home to the intense and varied creativity of a diverse group of foreign artists. They had come to the city with different motives and aspirations, and the plurality of their languages and visions defies attempts to categorize their work.

This exhibition investigates these other imaginations, taking us down smaller paths that branch away from the major artistic highways, looking at work that bucks dominant trends, both international and local, that was not part of the

so-called School of Paris and did not receive the critical support of institutions. It analyzes the political, social, and economic context in which these artists worked, as well as the conditions that colored their reception and study in the years to come. The exhibition's curator, art historian Serge Guilbaut, aims to explore the legitimization of cultural practice, including the ideological apparatus that underpins it and informs histories and theories of art. The dialogues he sets up between different artistic approaches and trajectories are based on relationships or tensions that move beyond traditional categories such as national identity, style, or form. The intention is to open the door to alternative readings, incorporating a wide array of motifs and formulations, in order to offer a multifaceted and pluralistic impression of these years. The essays by Tom McDonough and Amanda Herold-Marme in this publication take the cases of the Spanish artists Pablo Picasso and José García Tella respectively. Despite sharing an ideological background, these two artists took very different creative paths and encountered different receptions.

An examination of the approaches taken by foreign artists serves to complexify and diversify our understanding of the artistic axes and relationships of the period, often understood purely in terms of a dialogue between Paris and New York. The heterogeneous creations, but also the varied life circumstances of these artists, especially those who were non-Western and in particular those from territories subject to French colonial rule, reveal new links, positions, and struggles. These artists sought not only a voice for their work in international creative debates but also a reevaluation of their traditions and identities that moved beyond the myths and stereotypes generated by Western modernity during the first avant-garde movements. In her essay, Maureen Murphy describes their objective as being the creation of their own version of modernity that could coexist on an equal footing with that of artists from Europe and the United States. This exercise presented its own conflicts and challenges. Isabel Plante's contribution focuses on the large and active group of Latin American artists who were

involved with the Parisian kinetic art scene. Through a genealogical study, she questions the Eurocentric approach that has ignored the influence of the Latin American Madi movement on European kinetic art.

The exhibition ends in the significant year of 1968, a year in which a shift in the collective imagination presented a fundamental and irreversible challenge to monolithic accounts of Western modernity, widening the debate to allow for a whole spectrum of opinions, epistemologies, and sensibilities. The streets of Paris saw huge, cross-sectional mobilizations of people, all demanding a transformation of society, politics, economics, their whole way of life. Many of the artists featured in this exhibition were part of the frenetic creative activity that took place in the years immediately before and after 1968. Committed to the antiwar and anti-imperialist movements, and critical of the excesses of unfettered capitalism—a modern utopia they judged a failure for its effect on the most vulnerable—these artists designed and tested out spaces for interdisciplinary discussion in a climate of openness that sought the involvement of all social actors. In her essay, Kaira M. Cabañas analyzes the approaches taken by two foreign artists in Paris, the Romanian Isidore Isou and the Brazilian Lygia Clark, in the context of anti-psychiatry, exploring their desire to challenge stereotypes, protocols, and the political status quo.

The exhibition reminds us of the importance of constantly re-politicizing the history of artistic practice in order to reclaim its relevance and agency in the present. Evaluating this present means questioning linear, uniform, and closed accounts, and exposing ruptures, discontinuities, and anomalies. It also involves working from a model of implicit institutional critique that situates and re-situates artistic practices in an open dialogue with the debates, problems, and challenges of the present. The historical exhibitions mounted by the Museo Reina Sofia highlight the need to view the past through the lens of the present in order to suggest alternative accounts to that of one single modernity, as well as to understand the critical and performative

nature of cultural formulations capable not only of reproducing hegemonic systems but also of encouraging resistance and dissent. Other 2018 exhibitions, such as *Russian Dada 1914–1924* and *Pessoa: All Art Is a Form of Literature*, analyze specific expressions of modernity that combine the international languages of the avant-garde with local approaches, agendas, and digressions. An exploration of these other modernities allows for the creation of an open and multifaceted cosmology in which alternatives and divergences are visible and the map of what is possible, to use the words of philosopher Marina Garcés, can expand.

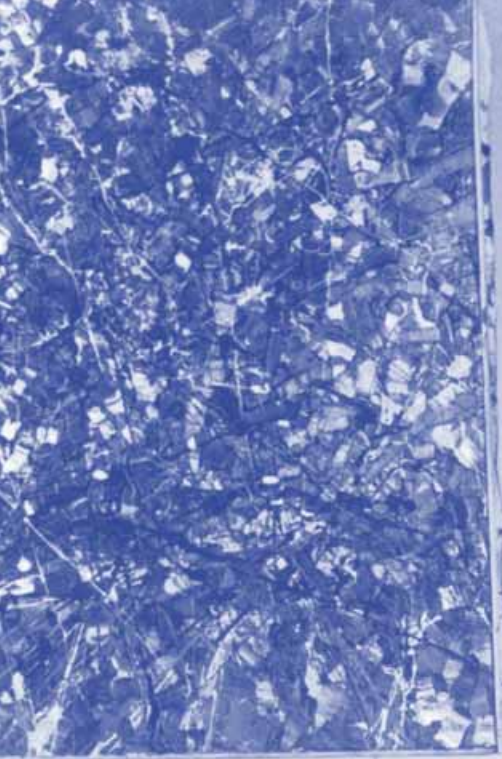
Manuel Borja-Villel

Director of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía





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Serge Guilbaut

Cover, p. 8  
Mario Dondero  
Untitled (At the studio of  
Roberto Crippa, in Milan,  
during the completion of *Grand  
tableau antifasciste collectif*  
[Great Collective Anti-Fascist  
Painting]; from left to right:  
Jean-Jacques Lebel, Valerio  
Adami, Tancredi Parmeggiani,  
and Alain Jouffroy)  
1960

p. 12  
Denise Colomb (Denise Loeb)  
Untitled (Pierre Loeb with his  
artists on the first floor of the  
Galerie Pierre; from left to right:  
Jean-Paul Riopelle, Jacques  
Germain, Maria Helena Vieira  
da Silva, Pierre Loeb, Georges  
Mathieu, and Zao Wou-Ki)  
1953

I like this title because it reflects the atmosphere of Paris at the time: a city reconstructing itself—physically and mentally—from the devastation of war while trying to rebuild an image comparable to the old cliché of it being the cultural capital of the world: “the City of Light.” This title refers to the atmosphere a foreign artist could encounter when arriving there full of strength, hope, and dreams. The reality was a bit different, of course, because foreign artists often felt alone and lost at first, but usually rather quickly—due to the detached/cool attitude of Parisian people—they felt loose, able to follow their interests without being intimidated by an environment overly worried about the color of your skin or your sexual orientation, at least in the bohemian world. This famous old world bohemia, still alive in the early 1960s, gave the impression that Paris was still “a moveable feast” as described by Ernest Hemingway. This book recalling his excited and complicated life in Paris in the 1920s was published posthumously in 1964, almost as if to show that the city, despite her fall from grace after the Venice Biennale of that same year, was still active in the minds of foreigners: “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.”<sup>1</sup>

The idea behind the exhibition is to present the complex political and cultural postwar situation through the production of foreign-born artists who went to Paris to discover themselves or to find success through the Parisian critical filters. At the same time, they participated in and contributed to the cultural reconstruction of the postwar French capital that was still trying to be the standard-bearer for modern Western artistic achievement.<sup>2</sup>

While it is impossible to exhibit every foreign artist then resident in Paris, it is possible to uncover the intricacy of the art scene and the struggle that foreign artists were confronted with during the postwar artistic reorganization. That is why the show is structured along historical lines so as to point out the evolution of an art scene to which foreign artists had to adjust or respond.

<sup>1</sup> Half a century later, right after the 2015 Bataclan attack, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Scribner; London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), as a sign of resistance, shot to the top of French bestseller lists.

<sup>2</sup> The topic is being worked on by Fanny Drugeon, *Paris cosmopolite? Artistes étrangers à Paris, parcours 1945–1989. Éléments d'une recherche en cours* (in progress at Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris).



Another complication is the definition of “foreign artists.” In most cases this means artists who were born outside of France and who actively participated in the postwar Parisian art scene. Of course we also have to take into account the different environment in which those artists functioned. Some American artists until the early 1950s would be fairly at ease because of their GI Bill grants, while others did not have this luxury due to their political milieu and background. The Parisian art scene kept changing in relation to worldwide political variations happening in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Differences have to be made between the painful immigration of some and the short passages of other artists, described as “nomadism” by Laurence Bertrand Dorléac.<sup>3</sup>

Such divisions could be even more complicated, as in the case of the painter Mohammed Khadda.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Algeria—a French department until 1962. His case is important because moving to Paris in 1953 as a Frenchman, like other citizens of the French colonies who sought to leave their lands for Paris, unshackling much of their identities, he thought that Paris could give him the possibility to not only drop the cliché of African primitivism still attached to his culture but also connect to the new modern art world. His struggle was to be able to keep some of his specific cultural history that he cherished while nevertheless integrating Parisian modern visual language into his work. Khadda developed a type of abstraction close to that of Roger Bissière, yet keeping some of his own traditional cultural signs such as Arabic writing. One could say that this was in many ways a typical “École de Paris” (School of Paris) attitude, an idea developed in 1925 by the art critic André Warnod, who wanted to protect the art of Paris from academism. One way, he thought, was to welcome foreign artists, who by integrating into the art scene would bring different elements from their culture to help refresh Parisian ideas. Warnod nevertheless insisted on the fact that those elements, often too loose, would be pacified and rationalized according to the French tradition. The concept of this grouping of artists is a complex and often contradictory one, as Bertrand Dorléac explained in her text “L’École de Paris, suites.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the impact of the school keeps changing. It passes from being a danger to the French identity in the 1930s to a strong sign of cohesion in diversity when confronted with the New York School in the 1950s. The strength of the School of Paris over the years, ruled by a fear of excess, was in always pushing for a certain equilibrium in forms as well as in concepts: a calculated sophisticated freedom.

In 1962, after his return to a liberated Algeria, Khadda’s work, while staying balanced between the personal and his cultural past, was shifting and starting to lean toward the production of an Arab modern art. He was still dealing with contemporary formal issues, but from his Algerian base, while keeping the notion of internationalism alive despite some controversy in Algiers. This was an important issue at the time. Artists would try to become modern and

<sup>3</sup> Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, “De la France aux Magiciens de la terre. Les artistes étrangers à Paris depuis 1945,” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès and Pierre Milza (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), 415.

<sup>4</sup> See *Les Casbahs ne s’assiegent pas. Hommage au peintre Mohammed Khadda, 1930–1991*, exh. cat. Musée d’art et d’histoire, Tour 46, Belfort (Paris: Éditions Snoeck, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, “L’École de Paris, suites,” in *L’École de Paris, 1904–1929. La part de l’autre*, exh. cat. Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (Paris: Paris Musées, 2001), 148–57.

international, relating to the discourse then available, while trying to keep some form of cultural difference that would keep their identity alive. The difficulty was then to maintain this difference without being called exotic, decentered, or obsolescent.

The goal of the exhibition is not to reconstruct the old dream of Paris as a universal cultural center—the blinding City of Light incorporating all—but to present, in their diversity, sets of rich but different and often contradictory cultural layers at play after the war as they remain in constant dialogue with global and international issues. At the heart of the project is the presentation of the experience and production of countless foreign artists coming to this mythical city in order to become, as they aspired to, important artistic voices. This research and exhibition aim to bring attention to a series of artists and their cultural production all too often forgotten.

This does not mean that we want to erase the traditional canon in order to replace it with another. But what seems important is to propose a discussion that will analyze the reasons why certain artists and their choices, often under heavy cultural and political pressure, became central and dominant, while others, sometimes equally relevant, disappeared or never got to be widely heard. To put them together in a dialogue after all these years could shed light on this particularly exciting era. In the exhibition, artworks will again talk, or scream at each other, but with a context that should be able to clarify issues, successes, and failures. To respect art and artists is to take seriously what their elaborate forms try to establish; it is to discuss the very identity of the work and the ideological battle in which it is constantly involved, wanting it or not. It is this work of the sleuth that gives the history of art its charm, but also its value and importance. What is proposed here is a history of art that represents on the wall aesthetic debates still connected to the stakes of the present, to the theoretical discussions of the moment, so that writing does not become a tombstone or a transcendental cloud. Let's say it is a form of "back to the present."

Despite the apparent disappearance from international memory of much of the art produced during this period, it is important to note that Paris, after the war, was still a vital space where intellectuals from around the world could gather and have a life.

Indeed, since 1945, Paris witnessed an important arrival of African American artists leaving a still prejudiced atmosphere in the United States, which accelerated further in the 1950s under the political pressure of McCarthyism. Discriminated gay populations in the US also found in Paris a seemingly liberated environment. Other artists left Latin America and Eastern Europe due to political pressure. Thanks to the legendary past and then active bohemian environment of Paris, newcomers felt free: from racism, from

prejudice, and from traditional academic behaviors. Political realities, like everywhere else, sometimes blocked many hopes and desires, but other times the intense discussions in bars, jazz clubs, and studios gave a sense of freedom and a joyful “couldn’t care less” attitude representative of Paris at that period. Bohemia was still alive and Paris was relatively cheap.

So countless artists after the liberation of France at the end of World War II decided to relocate to Paris in order to reconnect with the established modern art world. Foreign artists were welcomed because, as mentioned above, since the nineteenth century they had been at the core of what was then known as the School of Paris, a complex mixture of foreign influences and inventions pacified and reformatted thanks to a traditional Parisian rationalism.<sup>6</sup> As Michel Florisoone wrote in October 1945 in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, “Le Génie Français: Il faut de l’étranger pour que celui-ci fonctionne” (To function, the French Genius needs a foreign element). Without immigration, without a worldwide collaboration, great modern art could not be produced or developed. We know that this concept of the “School of Paris” was a difficult one to grasp in its complexity and contradictions, and that is why all through the 1950s the concept will be refashioned, reframed with new names and new styles, amid a succession of quarrels about the definition of the new postwar art.<sup>7</sup>

At a 1944 conference following the liberation of Paris, after an elaborate and long emotional description of the new postwar situation, the Swiss art critic and historian Pierre Courthion launched into a sharp description of what he thought still constituted the core of French civilization. Even within the typed transcription one can hear the quavering voice, the slow, profoundly emotional pace of the recitation of what were still, for a while, French attributes and strengths:

Coming out of the tempest, French culture and society were lucky enough to be able to gather their new strength and provide, again, universal qualities that will be cherished and, thanks to her charitable bent, copied by the rest of the world: The gift of transmission is a constant of this people. The French do not ignore the fact that man—to be whole—needs, alternatively, sun and fog, dream and reality, and far from bringing everything to herself in an arrogant gesture, the French have, on the contrary, the power to go toward others, to communicate, to disseminate their thought through the universe.... France has the ability to maintain herself between the beast and the angel in a subtle equilibrium made of confidence and humility, of knowledge and intuition, of heavy matter and spiritual flight.<sup>8</sup>

For Courthion, reacting like so many other Frenchmen, it seemed that things were finally getting back to normal. Even if hyperbolic, this was indeed the

<sup>6</sup> See the classic book on the subject by Natalie Adamson, *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École de Paris, 1944–1964* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Michel Florisoone was also saying a similar thing in an article entitled “Le Patrimoine artistique,” *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, October 25, 1945, 6: “There is a cycle of French art like there is a cycle for water, and for the rivers to flow it is imperative that clouds coming from far away, from the sea, from foreign lands, swell the springs. French art perpetually transforms itself, reproduces itself, disperses, but it grows on a humus wet with rain. It needs a vital minimum of imported products.”

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Courthion, “Réalité de la France,” conference lecture, 1944. Pierre Courthion Papers, 1901–1987, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 890007-17.

general feeling in France immediately after the war, and this hope of transforming a corrupt bourgeois state into a socialist heaven seemed, at least for several months, to be a possibility. But ecstasy was short-lived. People were stunned that, though the war was over, things surprisingly were not back to normal as hoped, because the world had indeed changed forever, and France had great difficulties adjusting. In fact, France had not only a blurry historical memory but also a catastrophic economy. Problems were enormous and seemed at first to be manageable only thanks to the help provided by other powers. Nevertheless, the general feeling was that if France was undeniably on her knees, she could recuperate some of her previous symbolic aura through the resuscitation of her Parisian cultural hegemony. This was paramount among the new French elite. French reconstruction—a “renaissance,” as it was then called—was sought through the important return of past aesthetic glories. The reconstruction then, it became clear, was not only to be made of mortar and concrete but also achieved through the imaginary and with foreign help.

The immediate postwar period was then marked by a long and difficult conquest of a lost paradise at a time when international relations were in a state of disintegration, and when artistic and cultural productions were actually becoming crucial in East-West foreign policy as the Cold War was settling in.

Debates among art critics, institutions, and intellectuals produced a very exciting context for creation, but it also produced a divided image: an image of chaos, of dissidence similar to the political turmoil that became the cliché of French politics. Debates were fierce between different types of abstraction, between abstraction and figuration, between the School of Paris and individualistic pursuit, without forgetting the renewed importance of Surrealism. It is in this environment that foreign dreamers landed after the war. So in order to show the interesting mix of nationalities working toward a similar concept of modern art, this exhibition will avoid the presentation of works in national sections but will try rather to show common links between certain artists and groups of artists such as the South African artist Ernest Mancoba and his relation with CoBrA, Chinese painters like Chu Teh-Chun and Zao Wou-Ki, or the Portuguese artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva. Over the years, foreign artists would embark on exhilarating adventures in art and life, taking part in international debates and participating in the complexity of an art scene at times difficult to comprehend. The exhibition unveils the intense creativity produced by foreigners who were often not integrated into what critics called the “School of Paris.” Despite that, they were still active as an essential part of artistic life in the French capital. I am thinking here about Ellsworth Kelly, Bram van Velde, Wols, Ralph Coburn, John-Franklin Koenig, Herbert Gentry, José García Tella, and more.

Was Paris still the place where the most advanced art was defined, thereby becoming universal, as it was believed before the war? In a certain sense, yes, because Paris always was thought to be the cultural capital of the West, where everything was possible and allowed because, paradoxically, the general indifference permitted artists to live intensely their experiments and their dreams, in invisibility. The immediate postwar Paris saw the arrival of a large and new wave of artistic immigration; particularly artists, women, African Americans, and homosexuals from the United States who were seeking a space of freedom difficult to find in the “witch hunt” atmosphere that had invaded all spheres of US society. The attraction was such that, for ten years, workshops and schools such as the Académie Fernand Léger, the Académie Julian, or the Académie de la Grande Chaumière buzzed with activity.<sup>9</sup> A number of artists from the US were encouraged by the GI Bill, which provided benefits to demobilized soldiers and allowed them to live comfortably and take classes at Parisian universities and art schools.

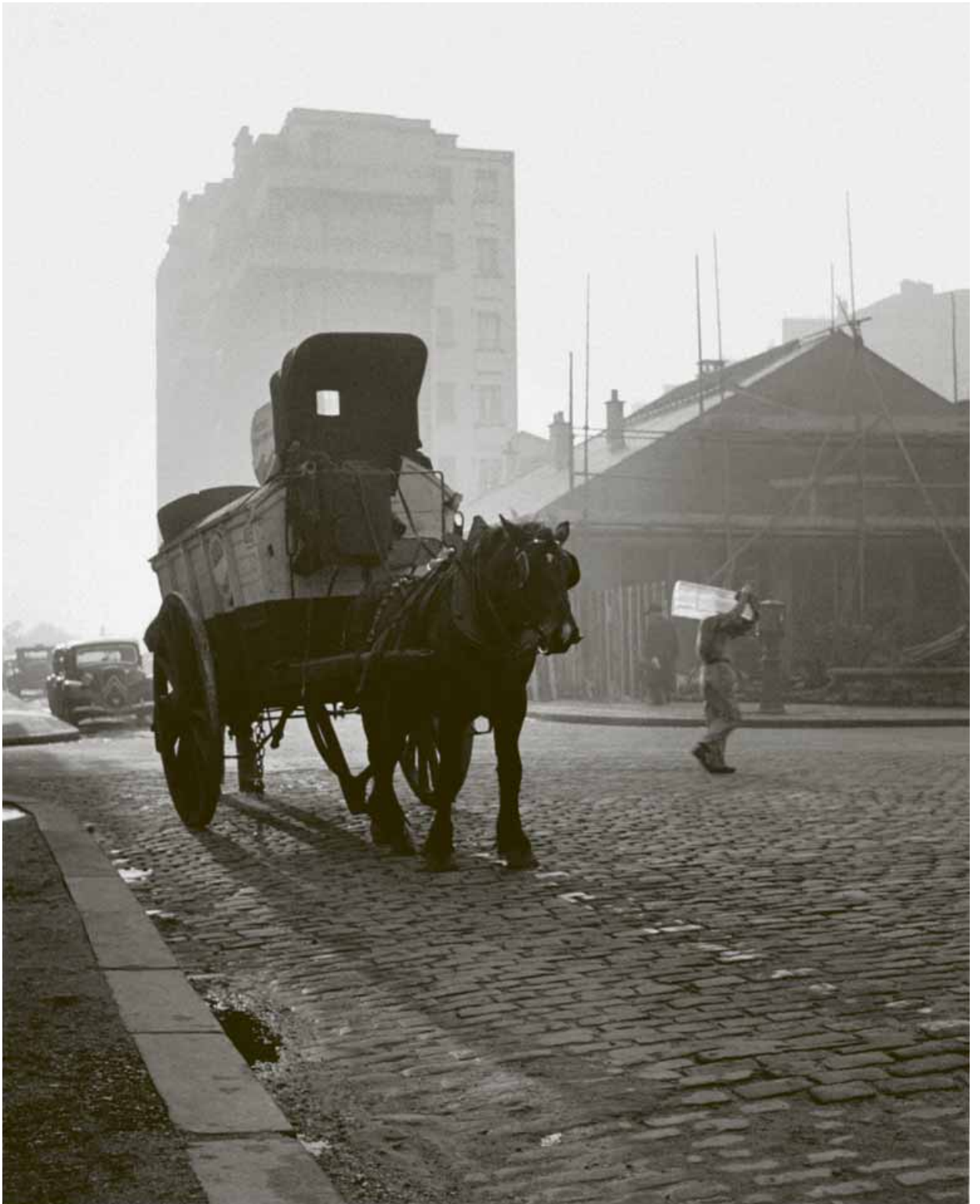
<sup>9</sup> It was very popular among Americans students on the GI Bill as, apparently, the institution rarely checked who was actually present in class: Frank Lobdell, who stayed in Paris only a year, recalls that at the Grande Chaumière, where he enrolled in 1950, the administrator would warn students when the American Embassy representative was to visit, but he hardly ever checked enrollment. Merle Schipper, *Americans in Paris: The 1950s*, exh. cat. Fine Arts Gallery/California State University (Northridge: The Gallery, 1979), n.p.



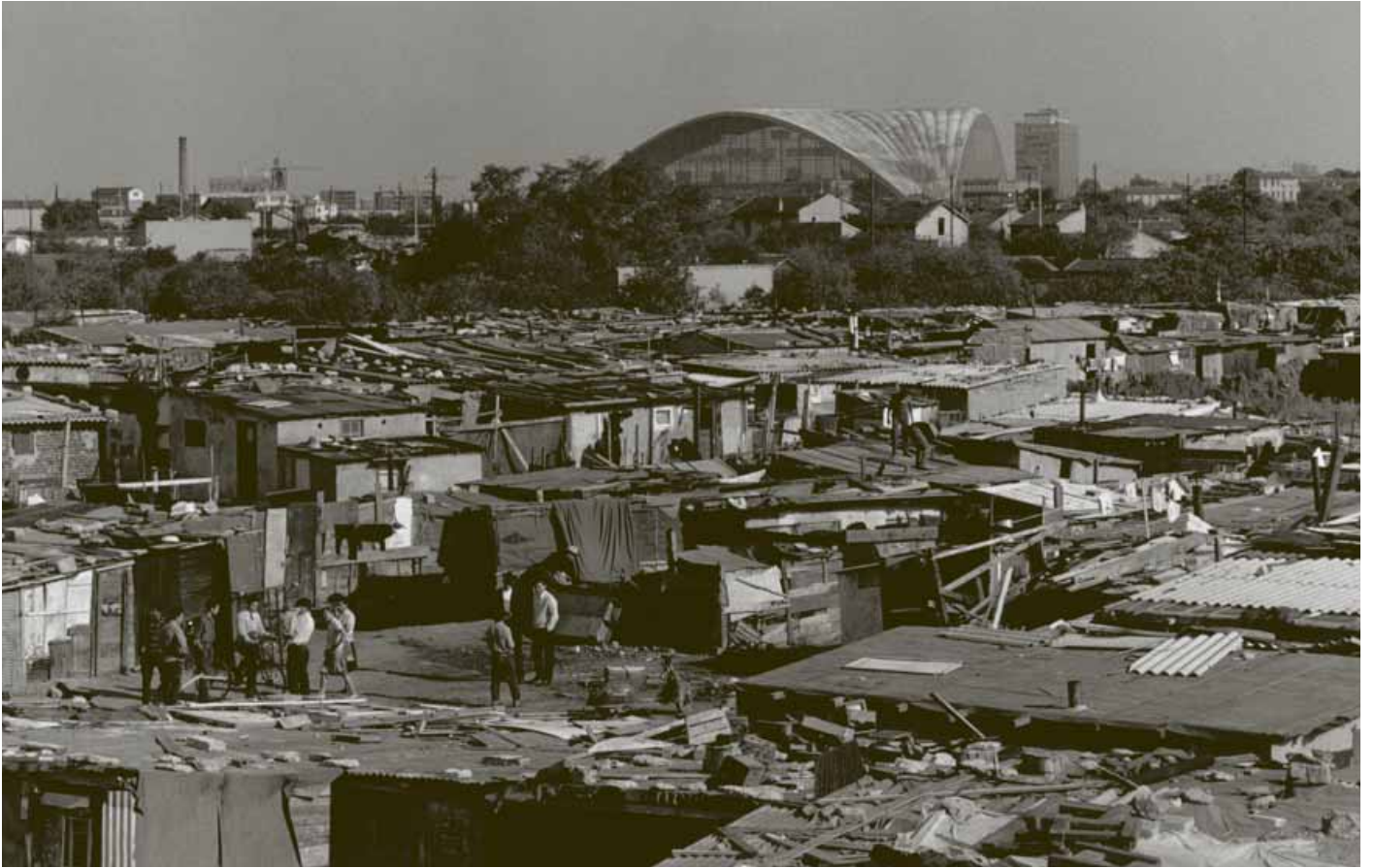




Sabine Weiss  
*Angle boulevard Murat* (Corner of Boulevard Murat)  
1951



Sabine Weiss  
Untitled (Paris)  
1952



Jean Pottier  
*Bidonville de Nanterre, la Folie, rue de la Garenne* (Shantytown in Nanterre, La Folie, Rue de la Garenne)  
1964





Jean Pottier  
*Bidonville de Nanterre* (Shantytown in Nanterre)  
1959





Ed van der Elsken  
*Vali & Claudi Sitting*  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
ca. 1950–52



Ed van der Elsken

*Devant "Le Mabillon," Saint-Germain-des-Prés (In Front of "Le Mabillon," Saint-Germain-des-Prés)*

Series: *Love on the Left Bank*

1950 (period copy 1957)



Ed van der Elsken

*Vali Lifted by a Man Looking in the Mirror, "Chez Moineau," Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris*

Series: *Love on the Left Bank*

1953

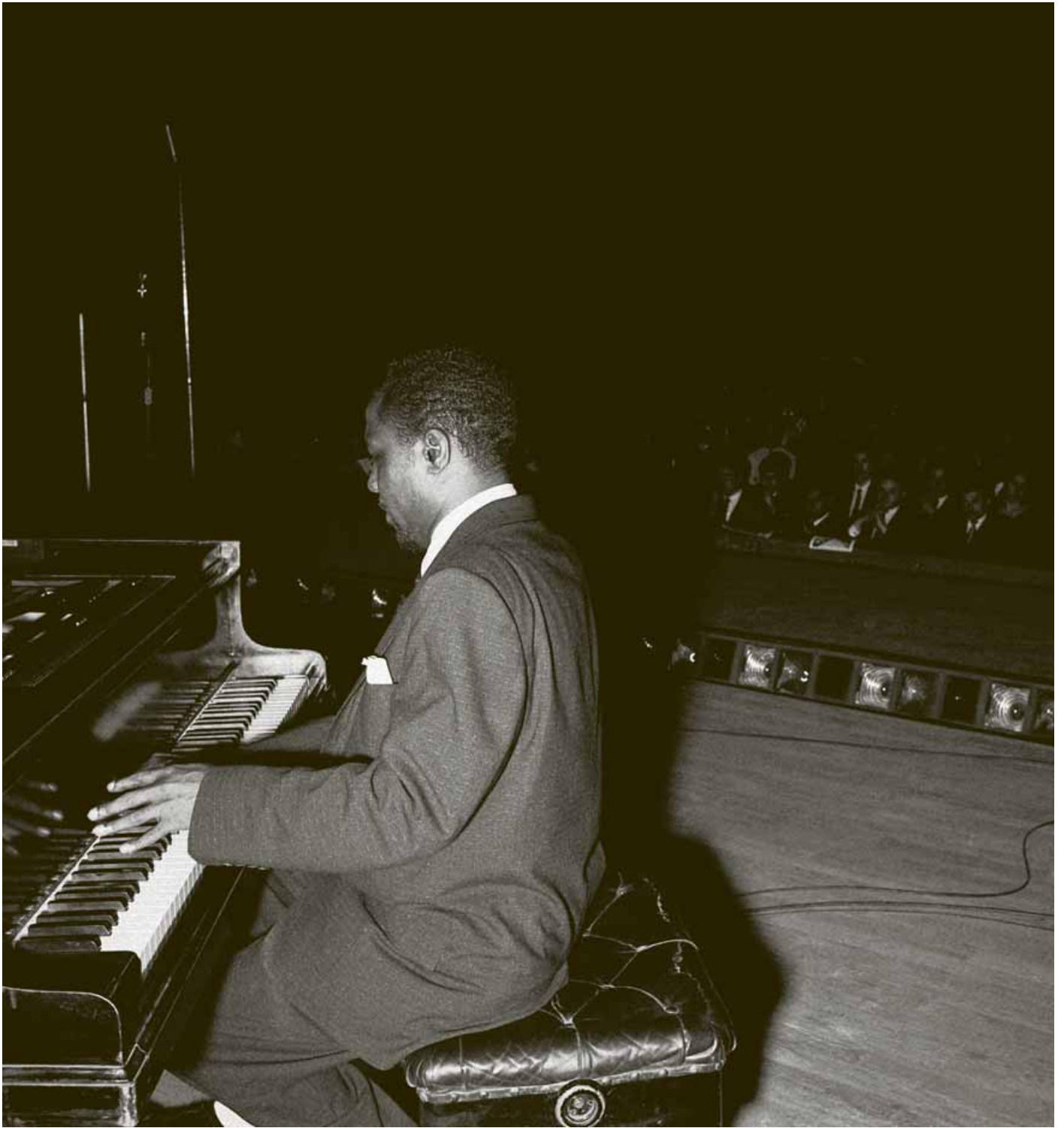


Ed van der Elsken  
*Vali Dancing, Paris, Saint-Germain-des-Prés*  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
1950



Marcel Fleiss  
Untitled (Red Mitchell, Gerry Mulligan, and Bob Brookmeyer at the Salle Pleyel, Paris)  
June 1954





Marcel Fleiss  
Untitled (Thelonious Monk at the Salle Pleyel, Paris)  
June 1954



Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
*Vue Cuisine rue du Four* 1952  
(View of Kitchen at Rue du Four 1952; top: Jean-Robert Arnaud; bottom: John-Franklin Koenig)  
1952



Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
Untitled (John-Franklin Koenig on a Paris Rooftop)  
1950

*John in Paris*  
(In the image: John-Franklin Koenig and Jean-Robert Arnaud)  
ca. 1952





Rogi André (Rosa Klein)  
*Kandinsky sur son lit de mort* (Kandinsky on his deathbed)  
1944

## A New World is Coming

Two strong signs in 1944 shook the art scene in Paris: the death of Wassily Kandinsky, which signaled the end of an important current of modern art, and the celebration of Pablo Picasso at the new Salon d'Automne, which opened up a new optimistic period. Two foreigners thus symbolically defined the new Paris.

Between the 19th and 25th of August 1944, Paris was liberated from German control, and it subsequently became clear to the Conseil National de la Résistance that the return of eternal France had to be symbolically marked. Without forgetting the suffering of the occupation period, it was necessary to reconnect with the prewar cultural world. The reopening of the famous Salon d'Automne became the emblem of this renaissance.<sup>10</sup> So this was the great return of modern art to Paris, symbolized on the one hand by the appointment of Picasso as the head of the Conseil National des Arts and on the other by installing the Spanish artist in the very center of the Salon with a retrospective including seventy-four of his works. The Paris coming out of the *Résistance* reached several targets at once. The state recognized the heroic stature of this great avant-garde artist whose “degenerate art” had been vilified by Vichy and, symbolic revenge of history, the artistic community was exonerated from the shame felt by many intellectuals before the passive attitude of the Popular Front in the Spanish Civil War. Picasso also represented the energy and rebirth of France. Not only did he symbolize the Parisian Resistance but also the future of French society. The Salon d'Automne was renamed “Salon de la Libération,” which shows the importance given to cultural symbolism by the Communist Party and other groups of the Resistance.

In an article by Louis Parrot published in *Les Lettres françaises*, Picasso emerged, like a phoenix, from the ordeals of war: “He is the symbol of purity, the one whom anybody who needs to rediscover equilibrium in these uncertain times will reach toward, this stable force of nature nevertheless bursting with culture. His presence alone fortified the world around him during the Occupation.... He gave back hope to those who were starting to wonder about our chances of salvation. His confidence ... that better days were ahead, brings gratitude from all intellectuals, all our country's artists.”<sup>11</sup>

Parrot compared Picasso in his article to those Spanish fighters who, for lack of a Republican army, had engaged in the Free French Army. “These thousands of Spaniards did not constitute a foreign legion, they had become French soldiers.” These soldiers had found a mother country, and defended it fiercely. “In the Place de la Ville, one of the first tanks that stopped in the midst of women in tears bore in large white letters the name of Guernica.” Picasso, in the discourse of the Resistance, imposed himself on all as the responsible

<sup>10</sup> See Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *Histoire de l'art: Paris, 1940–1944. Ordre national, traditions et modernités* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1986), 167–97.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Parrot, “Hommage à Pablo Picasso qui vécut toujours de la vie de la France,” *Les Lettres françaises* (October 7, 1944): 1.



modern artist par excellence. Deeply engaged, he spoke and was “spoken of” through metaphor.

The exhibition also played another role, which André Lhote emphasized in *Les Lettres françaises*: a role of domestic politics. Like the palace of Sleeping Beauty, the Salon de la Libération testified to the fact that great French painting had remained intact, alive, fervent, and free, despite years of oppression. She finally woke up without a wrinkle.<sup>12</sup>

The celebration of Picasso was more than a homage to a painter, it was rather the signal that victory finally had come and that this victory over the forces of evil and collaboration had a face, a modern face, an international foreign modern face: Pablo Picasso. This message was so strong, so clear, and for some so overwhelming, that the exhibition was disturbed by unrest. In the best tradition of nineteenth-century avant-garde fashion, disturbances occurred in the Picasso rooms to the point that police had to be called in order to protect the works from being destroyed. In a letter smeared with feces and preciously preserved in his archives, somebody violently attacked Picasso’s work using strong and disparaging words: “Dear Picasso: Shit on your filthy paintings. Here is some shit taken from the ass of a sixty-year-old prostitute.”<sup>13</sup> So, one can anticipate a certain rocky road ahead to find the Parisian way.

From the Liberation to the spring of 1946, the country developed an original and vibrant cultural scene filled with creative forces and constructive debates that addressed the traditional realism defended by Waldemar-George or the most radical abstraction presented in the new experimental galleries: the Galerie du Luxembourg and those of Denise René and Lydia Conti.<sup>14</sup> However, this creative explosion had several levels, as if the scene had an iceberg-like structure: a dazzling but small peak hiding huge, bustling activity. At the top, artists considered by the institutions as powerful national icons of reconstruction were dominating while any other experimental forms were perceived as weak or dangerous. Especially pampered were the art forms attached to a certain modernism mixing the colors of Henri Matisse and Pierre Bonnard with the line of Picasso (produced by Jean René Bazaine, Maurice Estève, and André Marchand), while artists like Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier, Hans Hartung, or Pierre Soulages were relegated to the periphery in small private galleries. Painters like Wols or Bram van Velde were completely ignored by the establishment.

So a crucial question arose: What forms would the symbols of French renewal take? Thanks to a new generation of critics (Michel Ragon, Charles Estienne, Michel Tapié, Édouard Jaguer, Claude Duthuit, Léon Degand), a major debate took place about the relevance of modern art within a culture in full social and political reconstruction.

<sup>12</sup> André Lhote, “Le Salon d’Automne, un rassemblement de la libre peinture,” *Les Lettres françaises* (September 23, 1944): 7.

<sup>13</sup> Archives Musée Pablo Picasso, Paris.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the French art scene in its renewal had a large number of women artists and gallery directors. Many incisive and experimental galleries were run by women like Lydia Conti or Denise René. Several women artists had a great reputation, swept away since by a history of art more interested in the athletic prowess of American abstraction than by a historical discussion of the stakes and possibilities at work in Paris. For years, everything that did not fit with Abstract Expressionism had been covered with a modest veil, a sort of intellectual shroud, which had forgotten the history of Western artists such as Minna Citron, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Marcelle Loubchansky, Claire Falkenstein, Shirley Jaffe, Marie Raymond, and Karskaya, among many others.

If the early exhibitions of abstract art at Galerie Denise René in 1946 presented a wide array of abstract expressions (from Jean Dewasne, Jean-Jacques Deyrolle, and Marie Raymond to Hartung and Gérard Schneider),<sup>15</sup> it soon seemed impossible to sustain such a liberal, experimental eclecticism. Before long, it became politically important to differentiate between an abstraction signifying an individualistic expressionism and another expressing an ideal reality, rationally constructed to propose a coherent utopian common social space. The new Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, where many foreign artists were exhibited, reflected this dilemma. When it opened in 1946 under the chairmanship of Fredo Sidès, it allowed a multitude of abstract experimentations but rapidly became the stage for the unique presentation of radical geometric concrete art. Since Auguste Herbin's manifesto of 1948, in which he forbids the inclusion of any curvilinear shape in geometric expression, many participants found his rule too dry and authoritarian and left the institution. They saw it as a creeping academicization—which was finally formalized in October 1950 with the creation of an academy of abstract art, the Atelier de l'Art Abstrait, by Edgard Pillet and Jean Dewasne, which was violently denounced by Charles Estienne in his pamphlet *L'Art abstrait est-il académique?*<sup>16</sup> Other artists like the Cuban Carmen Herrera had to wait until she was 101 years old to be recognized as a very original geometric abstract artist.<sup>17</sup> It was becoming clear that a new type of abstraction, ready to fight the old-fashioned and manipulative figurative art, was being promoted: a type of abstraction based on poetical rather than on academic mechanization.<sup>18</sup> Estienne preferred inner life rather than happy decoration as a way to talk about the contemporary world. Impersonal and clean geometry seemed to be codes for the old illusion of cultural coherence. Quoting Kandinsky at length, Estienne attacked those who wanted to codify personal feelings into universals. The pamphlet seriously shook the Parisian world of abstract art and opened new avenues, or at least made it possible to take the newly fashionable individual and expressionist tendencies more seriously.

Originally desired by all political factions—from the Communist Party of France (PCF) to the Catholics of the journal *Esprit*—in June 1947 this “rebirth” quickly became bogged down. The launch of the Marshall Plan and the ousting of Communist ministers from Paul Ramadier's government incited the entire communist press (*Les Lettres françaises* in the lead) to follow Soviet creeds and promote Socialist Realism to validate a body of works, certainly accessible to the people but at the antipodes of modern experimental forms that were considered bourgeois. The communist newspaper *Les Lettres françaises* suddenly changed its mind and Claude Morgan, its director, did not hesitate, as he wrote, to “spit” on abstract art and to dismiss the art critic Léon Degand, too affiliated, according to him, to abstract formalism. Frontiers were clearly established and for several years Socialist Realism was seriously promoted, even though the power and fame of Picasso, who became a member of the Communist Party, allowed him more freedom than other artists to experiment.

<sup>15</sup> In June 1945, the Galerie René Drouin had already tested the waters by presenting a show entitled *Art concret*, organized by Nelly van Doesburg, who took the same title as Theo van Doesburg used in 1930 to signal a continuation. But this was also in clear opposition to the group Cercle et Carré (against Michel Seuphor and Piet Mondrian) in order to try to delimit, without too much success, the borders of postwar abstraction.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Estienne, *L'Art abstrait est-il un académisme?* (Paris: Éditions de Beaune, 1950).

<sup>17</sup> Her first show, *Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight*, was presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 2017.

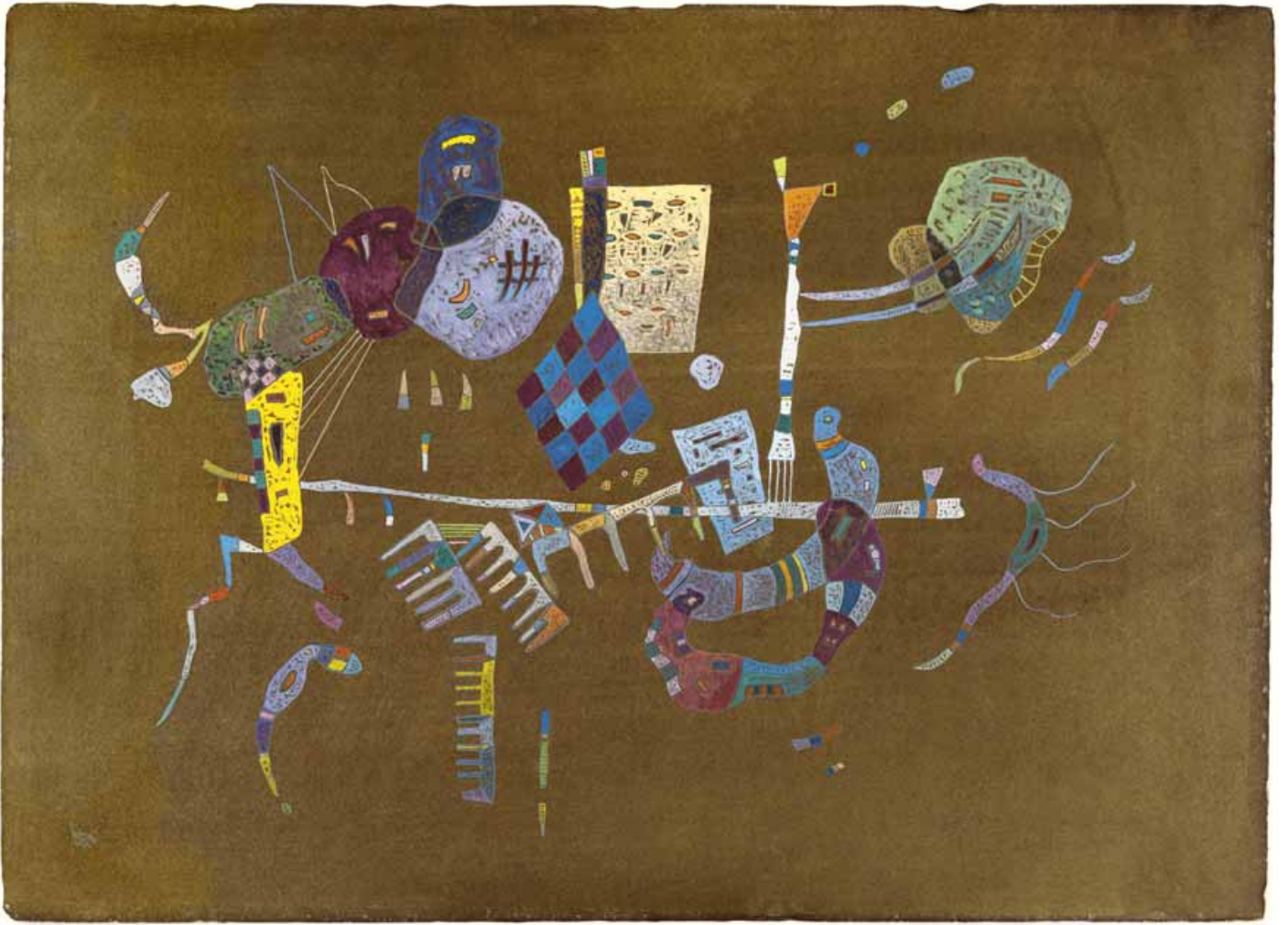
<sup>18</sup> A strong tradition against abstraction was still in action, as we can see from the lithography produced by Bernard Lorjou (ca. 1948) in which he ridicules abstraction: *La peinture abstraite fait se pâmer les poules, bayer les singes, braire les ânes* (Abstract Painting Makes Chickens Swoon, Monkeys Bay, Donkeys Bray).

Thanks to this 1947–48 political split that divided the world according to political positions (US/USSR), and thanks to the growing fear of a third world war, which, as newspapers and magazines were constantly stressing would be nuclear, many artists realized that no more United Front of whatever sort was possible. Aesthetic lines were drawn for the most part along political demarcations (social realism, bourgeois realism—including the optimistic brand and the pessimistic one à la Bernard Buffet; the utopian and optimistic geometric abstraction, and the individualistic depressed informal abstraction). All these styles seemed to be negotiating, jockeying for position, in order to represent, in order to be, the voice of postwar France. This division was not a laughing matter, as the historian Maurice Duverger writing in *Le Monde* in September 1948 explained: “Between a sovietized Europe and the Atlantic empire, the second solution is clearly preferable, because in the first instance slavery would be certain, whereas in the second case war would only become probable. Should circumstance dictate this dilemma, we would choose the least terrible alternative. But since we are not conclusively locked in, a third solution remains: that of a neutralized Europe.”<sup>19</sup> A similar pragmatic position was also envisaged by the *surréaliste révolutionnaire*, communist poet, and CoBrA member Christian Dotremont, who, when asked what he would do if Soviet troops arrived in Paris, answered in his famous dialectical way: “Of course, I will take the first plane for America.”<sup>20</sup>

This stiffening of the PCF was quickly counterbalanced by an acceleration of American propaganda in France, mocked by Jacques Tati in his film *Jour de fête*. France, which risked falling democratically on the Soviet side (on November 10, 1946, the PCF, by obtaining 28.5 percent of the votes in the elections, was the leading political party in the country), was becoming an ideological and cultural battlefield.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Duverger, “L’Empire atlantique,” *Le Monde*, September 14–15, 1948.

<sup>20</sup> Christian Dotremont, Interview, *Carrefour*, October 20, 1948.



Wassily Kandinsky  
*Autour de la ligne* (Around the Line)  
1943





Michel Sima (Michał Smajewski)  
Untitled (Pablo Picasso in his Antibes studio with the canvas  
*La joie de Vivre* [The Joy of Life])  
Summer 1946–

Robert Doisneau  
Untitled  
(Policeman and woman at the Autumn Salon, Paris)  
1944





Pablo Picasso  
*L'enfant aux colombes*  
(Child with Doves)  
August 24, 1943



Pablo Picasso  
*La cuisine (The Kitchen)*  
November 1948









Tella (José García Tella)  
*Le bal de la Bastille* (The Ball of the Bastille)  
1952



Tella (José García Tella)  
*La Seine* (The Seine)  
1951





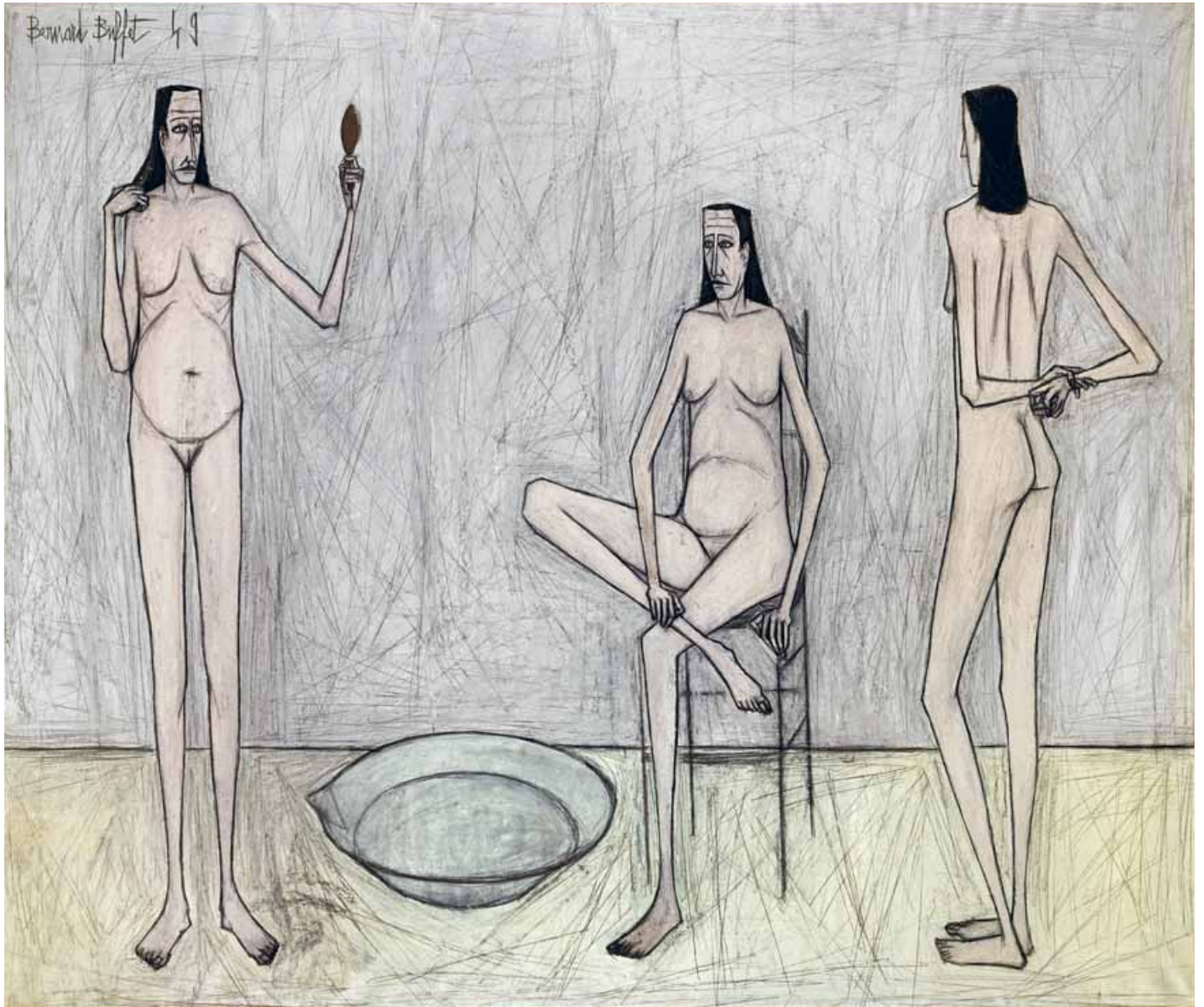
André Fougeron  
*Bretagne (Composition)* (Brittany [Composition])  
1946





Enrico Baj  
*Al fuoco, al fuoco (Fire! Fire!)*  
1963-64





Bernard Buffet  
*Trois nus* (Three Nudes)  
1949

## Automatic Abstraction

When Jean-Paul Riopelle, former student of the famous Quebecois painter Paul-Émile Borduas, arrived in Paris in 1947 after a long journey on a commercial freighter, he immediately sent his first impressions to his friends in Montreal. The words were not kind to the French capital. In fact, his initial meeting with the Parisian art scene was deeply disappointing: “Always the same shit! Too lucky when we discover a false Picasso or a Braque, because most of the time they stick to Vlaminck or Utrillo.”<sup>21</sup> The Parisian scene seemed to him old-fashioned, slow going, and depressing. But things were actually gradually beginning to develop, especially around the most advanced movement: Surrealism. In June and July of 1947, the Galerie du Luxembourg presented *Automatisme*, an experimental show introducing the new wave of Quebecois automatic Surrealist artists like Marcel Barbeau, Borduas, Roger Fautoux, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, and Riopelle himself, however with mixed reaction from the public.<sup>22</sup>

It was only in the fall of 1947 that the specialized press began to discover the different aesthetic layers of the Parisian scene. In the Salon des Surindépendants of October 11, 1947, geared toward young and new creators, Leduc, Georges Mathieu, Riopelle, Soulages as well as the work of Toyen, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, and Ramses Younan could be admired. None of them were of the traditional “School of Paris” model, nor were they stylistically like Picasso.

To provide an alternative to Surrealism of the traditional sort, the Galerie du Luxembourg presented a new exhibition from the 16th to the 31st of December 1947 entitled *L’Imaginaire*, showing what Michel Mathieu called a form of “lyrical abstractivism.” Riopelle, Leduc, Mathieu, Camille Bryen, Schneider, Hartung, Jean-Michel Atlan, Wols, Jean Arp, Raoul Ubac, Gérard Vulliamy, Victor Brauner, Bruno Solier, and Jacques Verroust were dealing with total freedom, detached from tradition and politics. This was a form of art announcing a modern way of seeing and feeling, influenced somewhat by Surrealism, without being a prisoner to it. The importance of the individual expressing him- or herself through a disordered form was formulated in the preface written by Jean José Marchand: “Only one tradition is valid: that of the absolutely free creation.”

### Stateless Wols, Awkward Vieira da Silva

The debate about real, free abstraction was launched. Unfortunately, the institutions and the general public, as well as the press in general, ignored an impressive exhibition of forty paintings by the German painter Wols held at René Drouin’s gallery in May – June 1947.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Paul Riopelle, letter to Paul-Émile Borduas, January 9, 1947, Archives of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Dossier 159. Fernand Leduc, arriving in March 1947, had a similar approach: “All the paintings I saw here are extremely disappointing—in particular from young Surrealists—I still have hope to meet some young people... I am still full of hope.” Fernand Leduc, letter to Paul-Émile Borduas, March 22, 1947, published in Fernand Leduc, *Vers les îles de lumière. Écrits 1942–1980* (Ville LaSalle, QC: Hurtubise HMH, 1981), 46. See also the essential book by François Marc Gagnon, *Chronique du mouvement automatiste Québécois, 1941–1954* (Montreal: Lanctôt, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> A lukewarm introduction by the champion of geometric abstraction Léon Degand was printed in the catalogue, with Degand being surprised by such a liberated, almost libertarian type of abstraction. André Breton, when presented with such work, did not see art in those examples, only disconnected activities.

The violence with which painting was applied in works by Wols was an indication of the violence prevailing in the world. Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the few who could see existential issues in the work. Indeed, the fight between the masses of paint, the brilliant colors thrown on each other, struggling between them to survive on the small theater of the canvas, was certainly an allusion to our struggle for life. And for Wols, this is really all that painting could do, a similar approach to what Bram van Velde was doing around the same time. Authenticity, which some artists no longer saw anywhere, had become crucial for the generation of the disappointed “Popular Front.” The anarchic, personal, sincere gesture seemed much stronger and more destabilizing than any organized form of politics. Politics, which had become spectacle, was the great mechanism that had crushed authenticity in the workings of the modern machine, the one that Charlie Chaplin had described in *Modern Times*. Wols preferred trees to men who talked too much. With a keen sense of humor, he announced in one of his aphorisms, “to resist effectively in this disgusting trash, I have begun to let my beard grow, the only honest activity during my short life.”<sup>23</sup> This said a lot about the pessimism displayed by some regarding any hope that traditional political and cultural organizations could change the world. Wols was not recognized in his lifetime. He died of alcoholism in 1951. On the other hand, art critics found in the work of the Portuguese artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva hope, optimism, and somehow a connection, erroneously I would argue, with the School of Paris. Her work was recognized quite early by the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris, which acquired one of her canvases already in 1948 (*La Partie d’échecs* [The Chess Game], 1943).<sup>24</sup> Vieira da Silva’s work was caught in the struggle to establish a reformulated “School of Paris,” providing crucial elements for its reconstruction. But to perform this role, her work had to be seen through a modern Parisian grid, leaving aside what was, interestingly, a somewhat destabilizing and vacillating artistic proposition. Her work was clearly related to a modern, even Cubist vocabulary. While Analytic Cubism was often seen by French critics as too intellectual, Vieira da Silva’s idiosyncratic formations brought together two elements that revitalized Parisian tradition. Her study with Stanley William Hayter, Joaquín Torres-García, and Roger Bissière gave her work a soft constructivist vocabulary, addressing some of the post-Mondrian questions posed by artists at the end of the war: How could one produce meaningful but emotional abstract statements about everyday experiences without falling into the hated decorative? Also beneficial was her decision not to censor her non-French identity. On the contrary, she played with it, without fear of offering a modern exoticism to wary and hungry Parisian eyes. She introduced famous Portuguese blue tiles into her paintings that cleverly integrated Cézanne’s blue constructivist brushstrokes. These complex tiled spaces provided a tumultuous depth, a maelstrom of accelerating and decelerating curves and broken perspectives. By the same token, Vieira da Silva was also recalling

<sup>23</sup> Wols, *Aphorisms*, Wols Archives, Musée Pompidou Archives; Wols, *Aphorisms* (Amiens: Le Nyctalope, 1989).

<sup>24</sup> She soon had exhibits all over Europe (Paris, Stockholm, London, Basel, etc.) as well as the Americas, where she won a series of prestigious prizes: at the Bienal de São Paulo in 1953, the Biennial de Caracas in 1955, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh in 1958, and so on.



the beautiful, intimate red squares inhabiting the work of another giant of French art, the luscious Bonnard (she vividly recalled in several discussions his show of checkered tablecloths at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1928). This, allied with what she learned of spirituality in Bissière's studio, was literally too much to ignore for certain Parisian critics in search of a renewed expression of Parisian qualities.

Her art was miles away from political social realism or the depressing existential realism of Buffet. Vieira da Silva offered not so much a radical critique of Mondrian's utopian grid as an enrichment of it, more tactile, less visual. Her sophisticated and elegant grid corresponded to the desire of a part of the Parisian intelligentsia, always uneasy about Mondrian's dryness, to find a representation of contemporaneity between rigid realism and wild, unchecked, and unformed abstraction. Certain characteristics of her work described above explain why recognition came so early and so vigorously.



Jan Křížek  
*Statuettes*  
1954–59



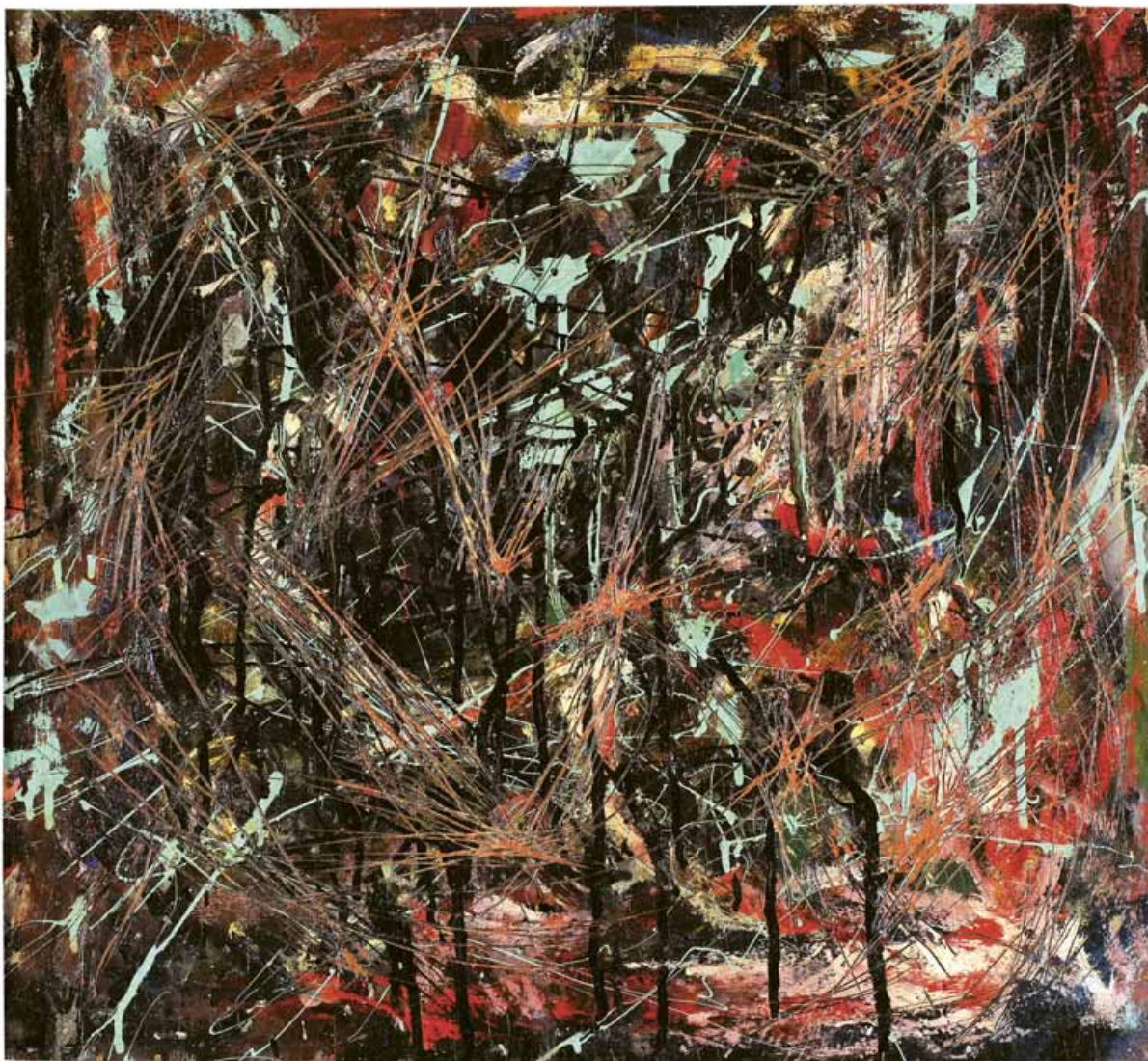
Fernand Leduc  
*Painting in Blue*  
1944





Jean-Paul Riopelle  
Untitled  
1945





Marcel Barbeau  
*Virgin Forest*  
1946





Serge Poliakoff  
*Composition*  
1946



Hans Hartung  
*T1947-14*  
1947

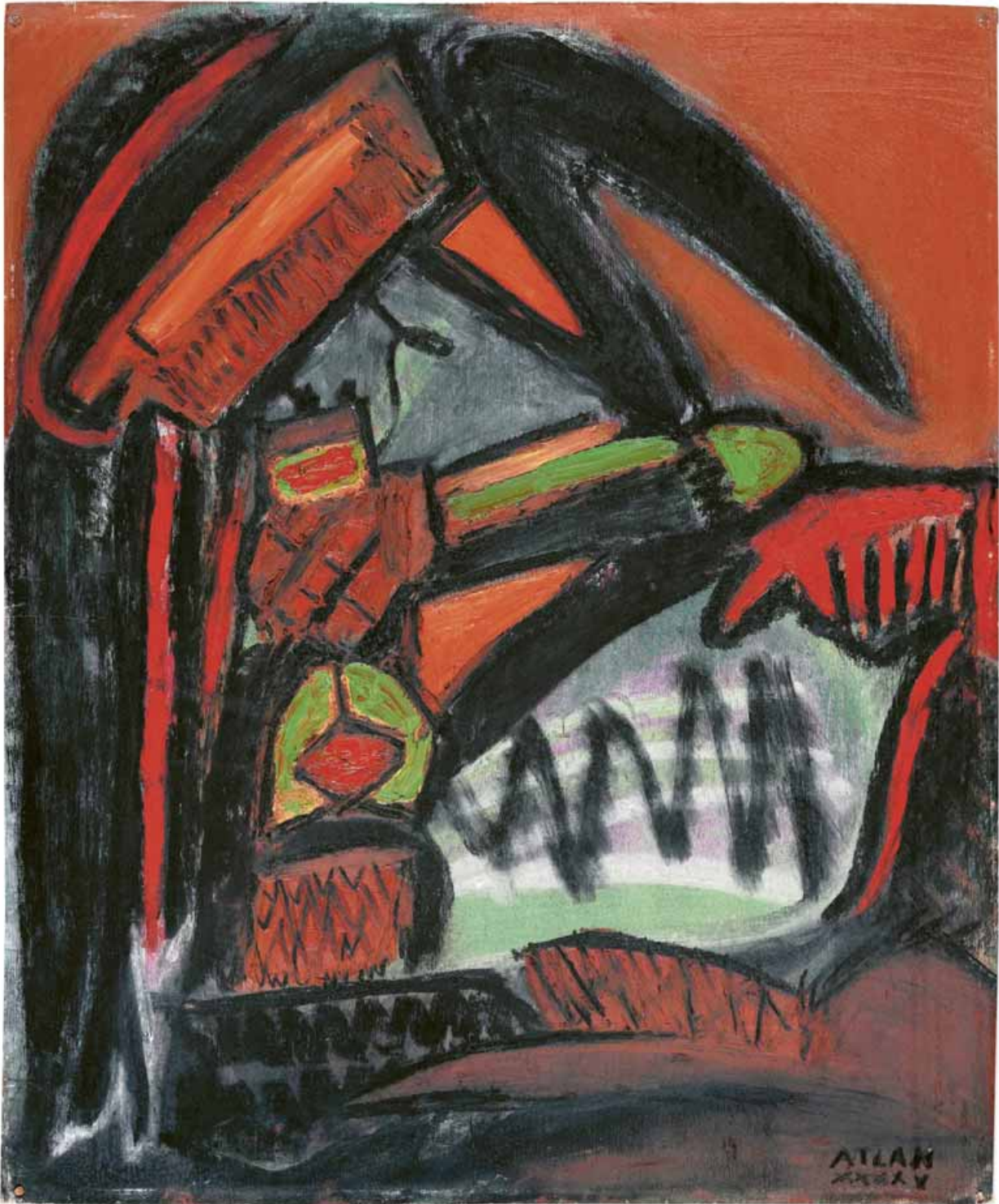


Wols (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze)  
*Composition*  
1948





Bram van Velde  
Untitled  
1951



Jean-Michel Atlan  
*L'épervier* (The Sparrowhawk)  
1945



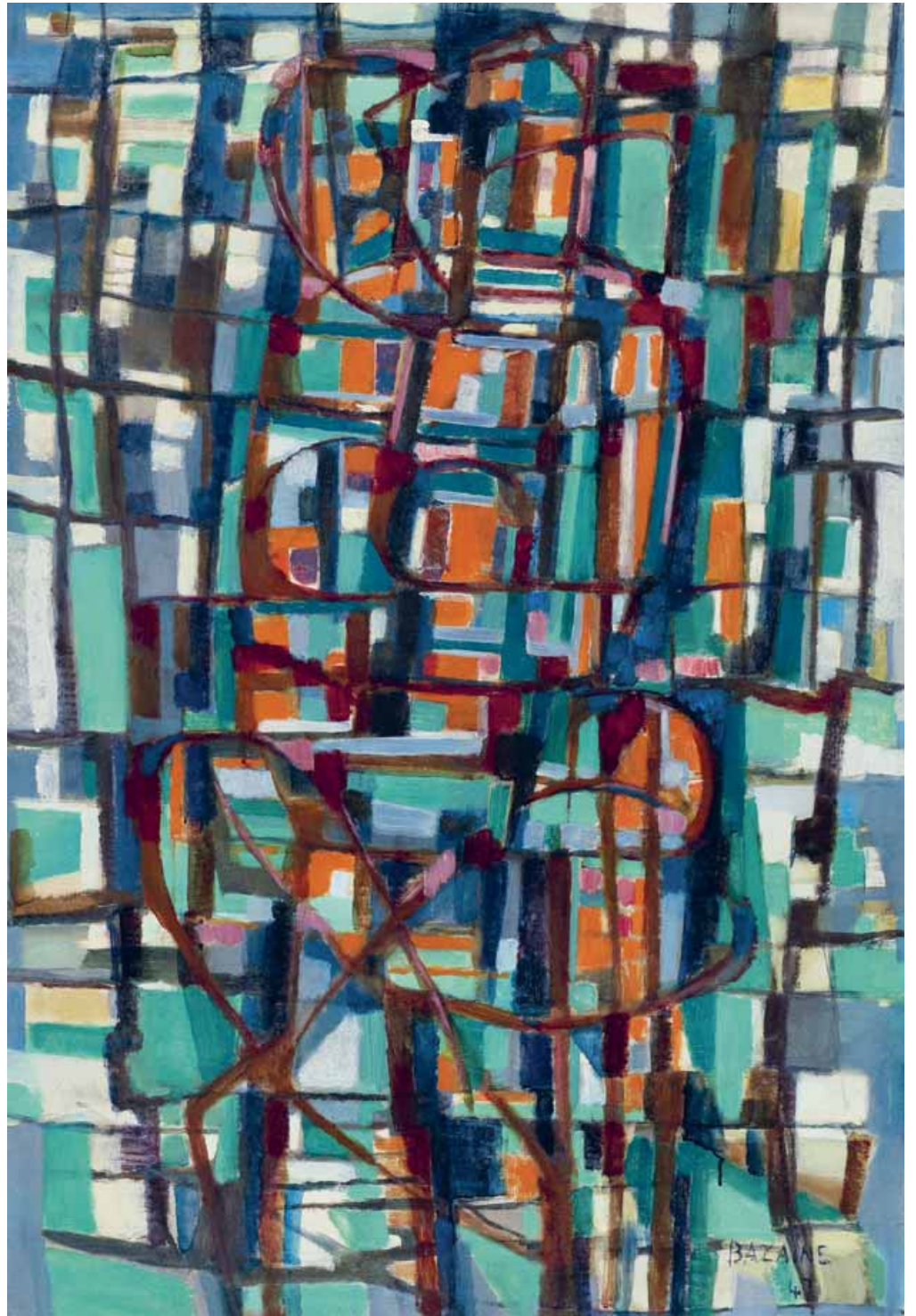


Roger Bissière  
*Vénus blanche (White Venus)*  
1946





Alfred Manessier  
*Soirée d'octobre* (October Evening)  
1946



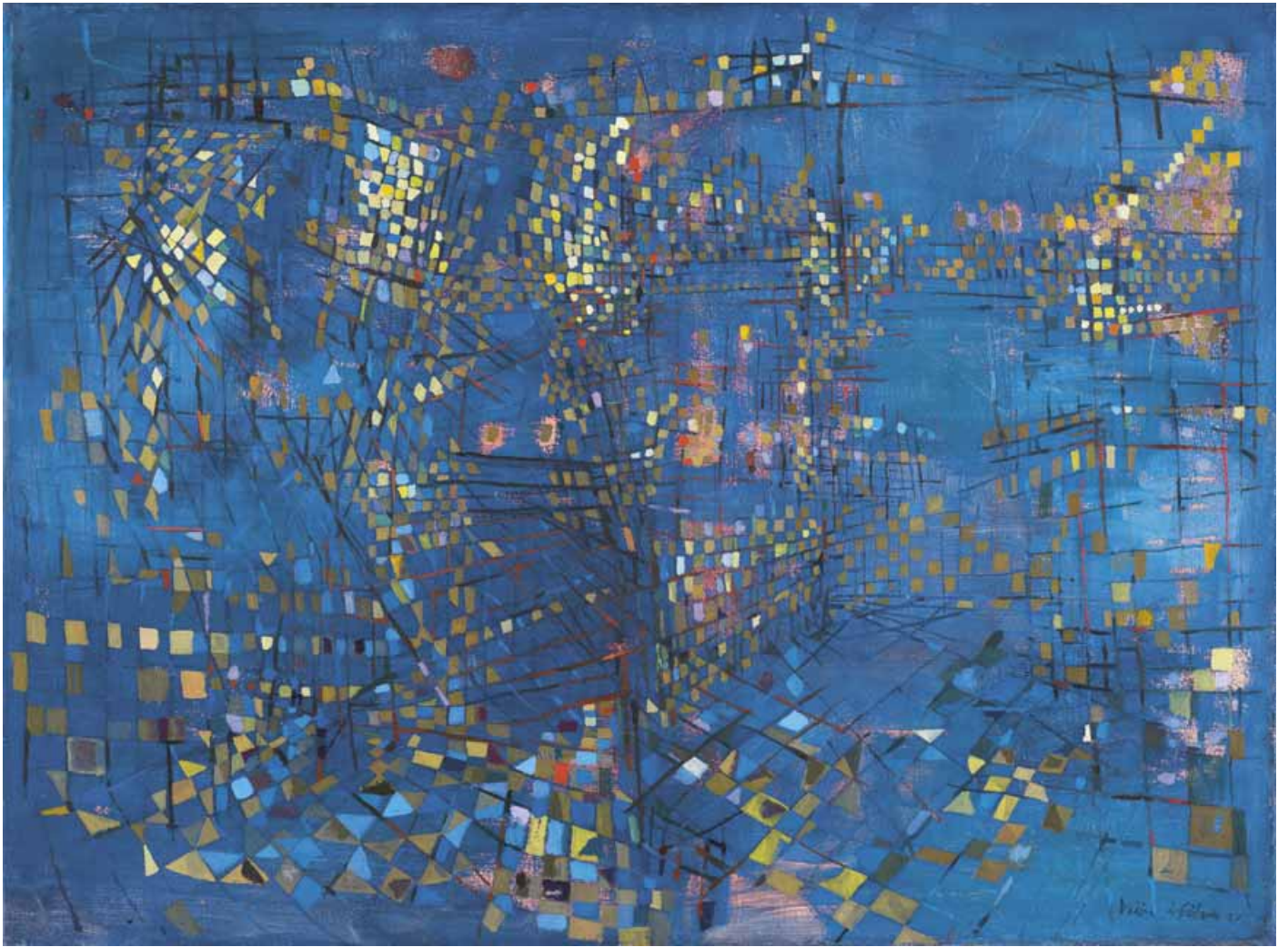
Jean Bazaine  
*Couple dans les bois* (Couple in the Woods)  
1947





Nicolas de Staël  
*Collage sur fond bleu* (Collage on Blue Background)  
ca. 1953





Maria Helena Vieira da Silva  
*Paris, la nuit* (Paris by Night)  
1951



Wifredo Arcay  
*Alroa*  
1950



Geer van Velde  
*Composition*  
1949





Ed Clark  
Untitled  
1954

## Artistic and Touristic Paris in the 1950s

This new approach was important at a time when traditional geometric abstraction was being rejected by the new generation of art critics. On the other hand, by 1951 the economy was improving and Western consumerist culture was showing signs of growth. The year 1951 witnessed the beginning of a new influx of affluent American tourists and artists to Paris.<sup>25</sup> Vincente Minnelli, with his very popular film *An American in Paris* of that year, was right on the money. Paris was represented, primarily through Hollywood sets, as the universal site for art production. But the image of the struggling American painter was in fact exaggerated, as many artists studying in the city were comfortably covered financially by the GI Bill. Minnelli, apparently unaware of the exciting new milieu of art production, depicted the art scene as a copy of that of the nineteenth century, with romantic and bohemian artists painting Parisian landscapes. For Gene Kelly, like the majority of American spectators, Paris was still the artists' "world Mecca," a place to study, to find inspiration and love. Hidden within the romantic story, a Franco-American cultural war was actually raging. What was modern in the movie, though, is the fact that the American artist—in the end—succeeds, not on the art scene, but in seducing a young French lady, taking her from her French fiancé. The United States was now beating the French at their own mythical game, destroying the old cliché of the superior skill of the Parisian seducer.

The American artists in Paris on the GI Bill (\$80 a month; \$850 in today's money) were, for a while, at the core of the growing foreign art scene in Paris. Some became very active, creating new galleries like Galerie Huit and Galerie Arnaud, which already in 1953 proposed an important and visionary magazine entitled *Cimaise*—bilingual French-English from 1955 to 1959, then printed in four languages (Spanish and German added) from 1959 to 1963, before returning to bilingual French-English again in 1963—with maverick art critics on its board (Jean-Robert Arnaud, John-Franklin Koenig, Michel Ragon, Herta Wescher, Roger van Gindertael, Julien Alvard).<sup>26</sup>

Galerie Huit, created in 1950, was located at number 8 on a small street, Rue Julien le Pauvre, a telling name for this collective, not far from Notre-Dame. Haywood "Bill" Rivers, an African American painter, was elected director of the organization whose role was to help young artists find a space to exhibit. The place was reminiscent of the happy bohemian life where nothing really matters but creativity and happiness. The proof was in the work shown there, produced by, among others, Oscar Chelimsky, Carme D'Avino, Sidney Geist, Al Held, Jules Olitski, Rivers himself, Shinkichi Tajiri, and Hugh Weiss.<sup>27</sup> For financial reasons, the gallery closed in July 1954 after having produced sixty exhibitions.

<sup>25</sup> The year 1951 also saw famous French personalities from California return with joy and anticipation. Photographs on the SS *De Grasse* show how happy Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, along with William Copley and Gloria de Herrera, who later became Henri Matisse's assistant, were at this moment.

<sup>26</sup> For a meticulous analysis of the history of the gallery, see Harry Bellet, "Cimaise 1952–1963," master's diss. (Université Paris 1, 1986). See also Jean-Pierre Arnaud, *John Franklin Koenig. Sa vie son œuvre / His Life and Work* (Angers: Éd. Maison de l'Europe, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> See the important catalogue *Galerie Huit: American Artists in Paris 1950–52*, exh. cat. Studio 18 Gallery (New York: Studio 18 Gallery, 2002).

Shinkichi Tajiri, in fact, documented all of this scene in a movie entitled *Vipers*, in which the Japanese American sculptor describes everyday bohemian life in Paris through the eyes of a reefer-smoking artist. But his most interesting work was the production of a series of sculptures constructed with trash found along the Seine. Works were produced with lost, abandoned, and forgotten material. His work, like sculptural collage, employed the leftovers of Parisian decay in order to find in those rejected materials hope, humor, and history. Once finished, and at times photographed by the Swiss photographer Sabine Weiss, they were left on the bank of the river for people to see and play with, allowing them to disappear over time. Trash became poetry before going back to oblivion. This was really a kind of action against the art world, a form of poetical “Art Brut” long before Conceptual Art, an art quite powerful in its critique, rapidly seen and understood by the CoBrA group, which was then lurking in Paris and with which Tajiri was in contact.

The international CoBrA group (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam), which, through the journal *Le Surréalisme révolutionnaire*, was attacking the Parisian art scene and the return of a seemingly depoliticized André Breton, who was then becoming interested in myth, launched their attacks on Paris from Paris. CoBrA was launched in November 1948 at the Café Notre-Dame by Asger Jorn, Constant, Karel Appel, Corneille, Christian Dotremont, and Joseph Noiret. Michel Ragon, who had popular anarchist roots, introduced to the group the art of the Trotskyite Atlan, who at that time was producing wild and violent semi-abstract paintings in which allusions to dangerous animals were creating powerful and aggressive types of abstraction. Coming from a popular milieu, Ragon saw in this approach—in opposition to the traditional classicism of museum structure—a new, free, and liberating art discourse. CoBrA and the new Belgian politicized *Surréalisme révolutionnaire* group were trying to reconnect, for a short while, with a strict Communist Party forcefully defending social realism. But Stalinism and Surrealism in the end could not cooperate, even if the importance of the class struggle was constantly recalled as the basis for their undertakings.<sup>28</sup> A new path to a modern critical discourse was nevertheless opening thanks to a Belgian key. It was necessary, Ragon thought at the beginning, to move away from a School of Paris already too programmed, formatted, and ankylosed in order to be able to express and develop what CoBrA was announcing: freedom through desire, experimentation, and creation, all things that the traditional Parisian criticism then no longer understood. According to the expression of the time, “Art Autre,” publicized by Michel Tapié in 1952,<sup>29</sup> a different—*autre*—approach was needed; a different approach was also articulated by members of the CoBrA group, who insisted on the importance of popular culture: “folk art is the only art which is truly international.”<sup>30</sup> It is through the “primitive,” CoBrA affirmed, that one could be international and, as Asger Jorn pointed out, dialogue across continents with varied cultures: “Its value does not reside in formal perfection but in the deep humanity of its products.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Édouard Jaguer and his friends wanted to carve a new position consisting of abstract/automatic artists working in tandem with the Communist Party. The split between Breton and the group was rapidly done. For an extensive discussion of this period, see Françoise Lalande, *Christian Dotremont, l'inventeur de Cobra. Une biographie* (Paris: Stock, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> Michel Tapié, *Un art autre* (Paris: Gabriel-Giraud et fils, 1952).

<sup>30</sup> Asger Jorn, “Le réalisme dans l'art populaire suédois,” in *Cobra 1948–1951* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1980), no. 1, 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



Michel Ragon subscribed to this idea, and, by presenting the work of Édouard Pignon and Atlan, began to reflect on the new possibilities of modern expression based on truth and experimentation, in opposition to technical prowess. The School of Paris was felt by many young artists to be a candle extinguisher of the creative flame; Ejler Bille wrote in 1948 for the exhibition *Høst* in Copenhagen, “We do not serve French cuisine. In recent years, interest in the School of Paris (justified interest) has risen so high that some go as far as to seek the Parisian trend before the artistic content.”<sup>32</sup> The power of a “school” was too often rigid and authoritarian. In the end it was the craftsperson, rather than the artist, who had become a slave to power and the establishment, that had the solution to restore art to its critical strength, lost for a long time in socialist, communist, and liberal utopias.

While established abstraction was being attacked right and left, so to speak, two fearless young people started a gallery that soon, in 1950, moved from a bohemian space—Jean-Robert Arnaud’s bookstore on the Rue du Four—to a sophisticated, avant-garde one: Galerie Arnaud. Arnaud, from Algiers, and his partner, the American painter Koenig from Seattle, decided to provide the space to the young generation of artists fascinated by new forms of abstraction. The first exhibition was devoted to the work of the American Jack Youngerman. Then every two weeks were introduced a series of new international abstract artists, such as Ellsworth Kelly, Serge Rezvani, Jean Tinguely, Karskaya, and so on. The diversity of exhibitions shows that the gallery was quite an experimental one, desperately needed in Paris. Pure clean abstraction was in concert with the dirty, imaginative, and strong work of Karskaya, who described herself as a trashcan: “I am a trashcan, I love to pick up useless things ... filthiness can be brilliant”<sup>33</sup> An original and forceful personality, Karskaya represented a specific kind of liberated mind in Paris, where she was even able to construct an abstract discourse with her own discarded hair.

By 1953, it was understood that in order to reach a large public an independent and critical magazine was needed. *Cimaise* was launched in 1953. It became one of the most productive spaces in Paris for the debate around the new and upcoming international modern forms, for art in the making rather than established practices.<sup>34</sup> Koenig, due to his central position in the underground art scene, moved from luxurious collages to large abstract paintings, echoing with force and subtlety contemporary cool jazz feelings.

Ellsworth Kelly and Ralph Coburn (late 1940s – early 1950s), working together in Paris and Sanary-sur-Mer in southern France, by performing as *flâneurs*, had the possibility of discovering by chance a series of shapes and forms and shadows of objects often ignored as insignificant. The everyday became inspiration. What they brought during that period to their works—

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>33</sup> Karskaya, interviewed by Vladimir Tchineaev, 1986, in Karskaya, *Et je parle* (Paris: Galerie Pierre Brullé, 1997; repr. 2005), 43.

<sup>34</sup> For a fascinating memoir of the gallery, see *Les Années de combat. Le Renouveau des arts vu de Paris* (Angers: Présence de l’art contemporain, 1999).

with, of course, differences—are forms triggered by a certain strong gaze at usually tedious forms in the everyday life environment. Kelly, for example, found in ostensibly boring objects like windows, shadows, reflections on the river, and marks on sidewalks the starting point of his creations, inspired by Matisse’s work.<sup>35</sup> From often discarded figures he reactivated interest in the banal. In fact, we can say that we are not talking about “abstraction” anymore but “extraction.” Reality gave the artists material to mine in order to allow space to dream, to reflect, to enjoy: a form of liberation—of freedom—given to the viewer. This idea was growing in the art milieu of Paris, a concept that would continue to be active until the late 1960s with participating production by kinetic artists, by GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel), or by the politically minded Narrative Figuration group. This sense of viewer participation was also what Coburn had in mind when, in 1950, in works like *Orange and White Abstraction*, he gives the possibility to the public to rearrange the order of presentation of four rectangles, which produces diverse rhythms and different assumptions and feelings. Interested in Jean Arp’s collage and use of chance, the notion of play again becomes liberating.

In an original way, abstraction here encourages involvement. Indeed, against the backdrop of Arp, who he discovered in Paris, Coburn’s choice over chance was a gesture of optimism as the artist becomes an active shadow, emboldening the viewer to recognize his or her power and responsibility.<sup>36</sup> This particular interest in giving the audience (often here the gallery owner) a chance to be in charge of the visual mechanical system, emphasizes the fact that the work itself has a multitude of possible presentations. The artist now is acting like a conductor and active partner.

<sup>35</sup> See the crucial study of Kelly’s work in Paris in Yve-Alain Bois, “Kelly in France: Anti-Composition in Its Many Guises,” in *Ellsworth Kelly: The Years in France, 1948–1954*, ed. Mary Yakush, exh. cat. Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris; Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (Munich et al. Prestel, 1992), 11–35.

<sup>36</sup> See Kirsten Swenson, “According to Choice” and Colin Lang “A Subtle Art of Participation,” in *Ralph Coburn: Random Sequence*, ed. Janine Mileaf, exh. cat. Arts Club of Chicago (Chicago: Arts Club of Chicago, 2017), 6–13, 48–55.



John-Franklin Koenig  
Original design of the poster for the exhibition of Rafael Canogar at Galerie Arnaud, Paris  
1956





Haywood Bill Rivers  
*Tailor Shop*  
1948



Hugh Weiss  
*Self-Portrait with Boat*  
1951



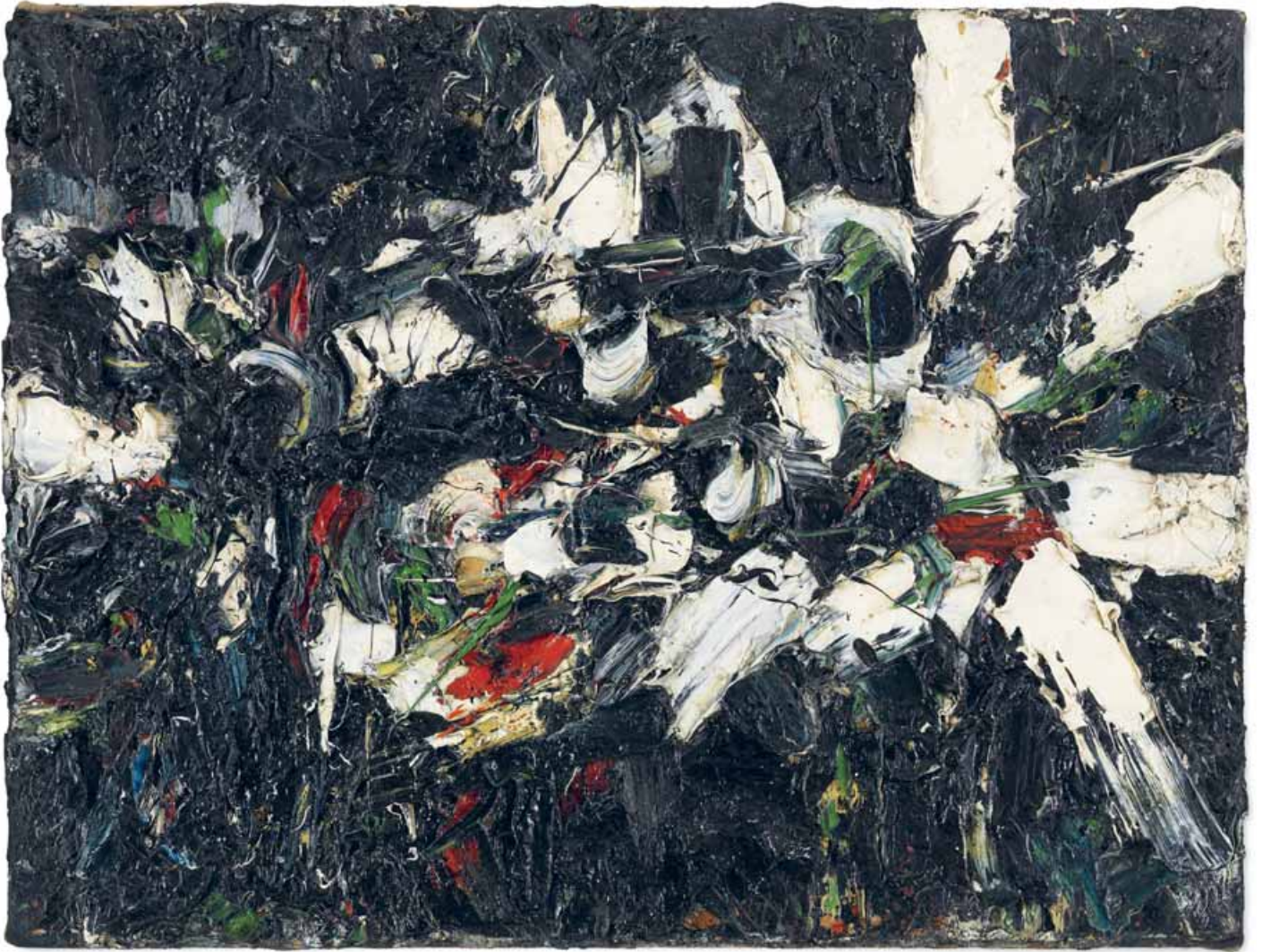


Lisa Larsen  
Tajiri on his way from Montparnasse to Galerie Huit (8)  
in Saint-Germain-des-Prés where work from ex-GIs was being shown  
1950





Shinkichi Tajiri  
*Lament for Lady (for Billie Holiday)*  
1953



Al Held  
Untitled  
1952-53





Karskaya (Ida Schraybman Karsky)  
*L'araignee* (The Spider)  
1960





Claire Falkenstein  
*Sun #4*  
ca. 1954

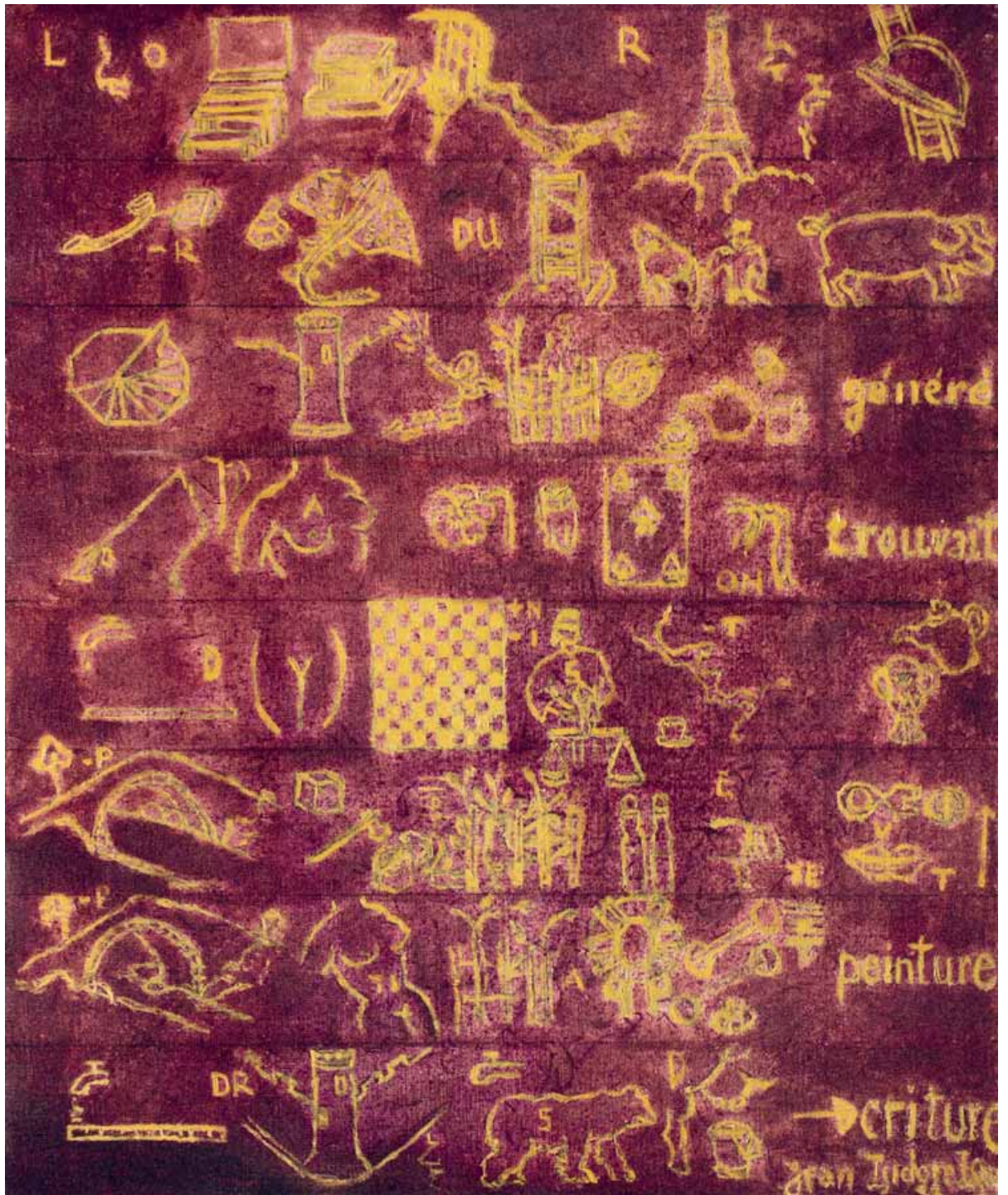


Unknown photographer  
Claire Falkenstein with sculpture  
ca. 1950



Stephen Gilbert  
Untitled  
1948





Jean Isidore Isou (Jean Isidore Goldstein)  
*Les nombres, n° 5* (The Numbers, No. 5)  
1952



Jean Isidore Isou (Jean Isidore Goldstein)  
*Traité de Bave et d'Éternité* (On Venom and Eternity)  
1951







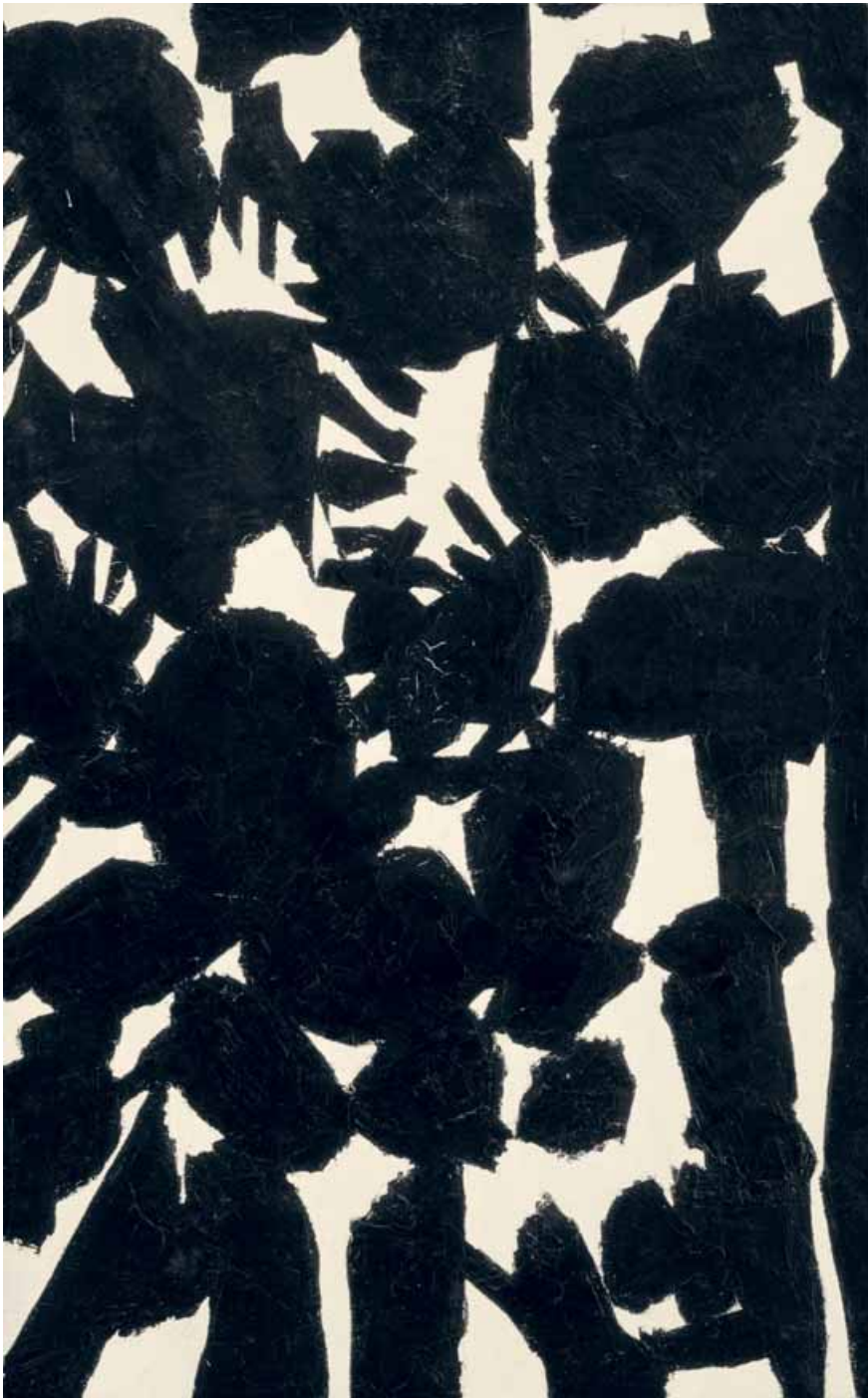


Asger Jorn  
*Den forhadte by (The Detested Town)*  
1951-52





Karel Appel  
*Wilde Pferde (Wild Horses)*  
1954

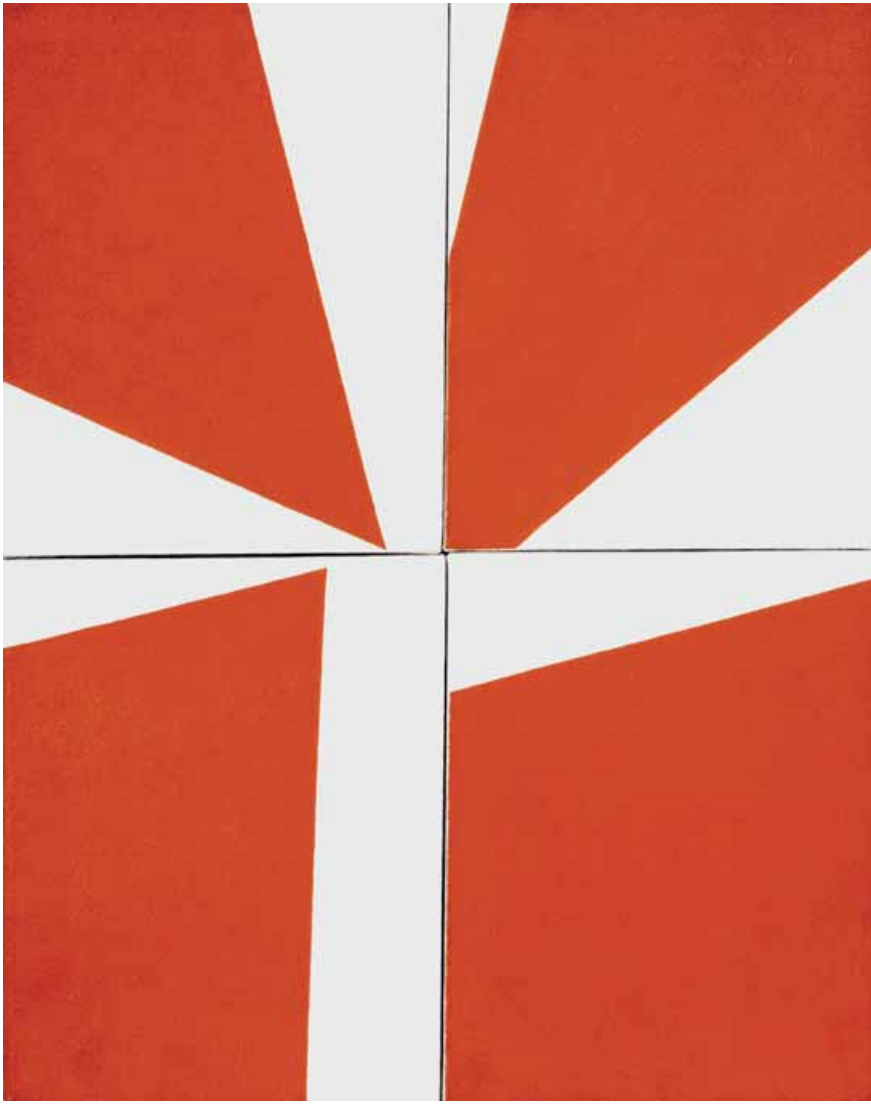


Jack Youngerman  
Untitled  
1955

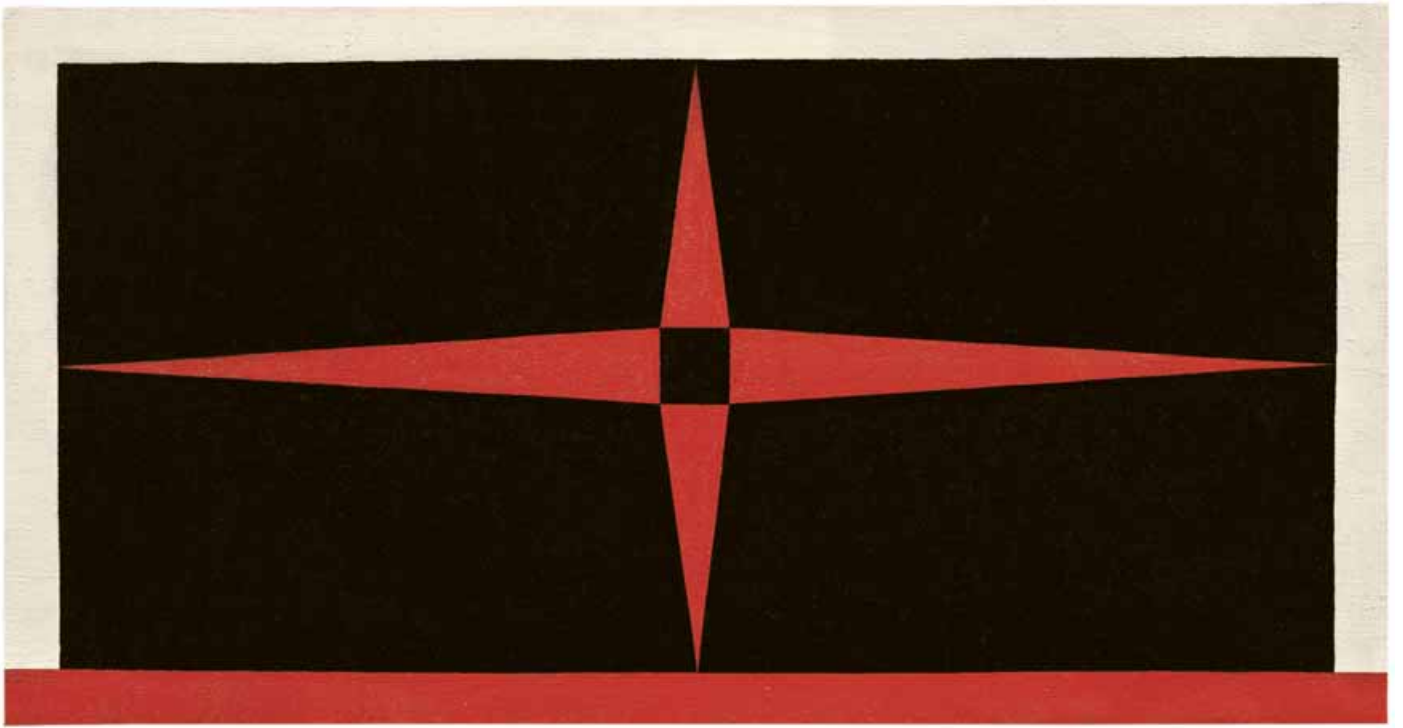




Ellsworth Kelly  
*La combe I*  
1950



Ralph Coburn  
*Orange and White Abstraction*  
1950



Carmen Herrera  
Untitled  
1949





Pablo Palazuelo  
*Alborada (Dawn)*  
1952



ROBERT R. M. COLE



Eduardo Chillida  
*El espíritu de los pájaros I* (The Spirit of the Birds I)  
1952



## “Art autre” and Lyrical Abstraction

One can say without hesitation that by 1953 abstraction had won a major victory in Paris. The acceptance of this new type of art, abstract and violently expressionist, seen as chaotic, was now becoming widespread and even hegemonic in France.

All these aesthetic battles, so important for the redefinition of French and Parisian art production, had developed between 1948 and 1954. Charles Estienne and Michel Tapié were (with Léon Degand until 1953) the two most visible and important art critics of the period. Tapié, trying to form a new School of Paris, amalgamated and consolidated an *Art autre*, “a different art,” as he called it, which would encompass individual artists, both French and international, under the umbrella of free expression in a rekindled Paris.<sup>37</sup> That was also the goal of Estienne, who wanted to define a national aesthetic, but who was also aware of the tradition of painting and was indeed interested in producing an art in relation to the past in a way that Tapié was not. Tapié believed in a total erasure of the past, in a total and orgiastic drowning of the artist in the present, in the complete liberation of the individual. Estienne used Surrealist concepts in order to recoup a forgotten basic human revolt. He saw in this, as he put it, “the only path between the ‘messianic political’ of the Communist Party and the pessimism of the philosopher of the absurd.”<sup>38</sup>

In 1953, Robert Lebel published a book entitled *Bilan de l’art actuel* in which the author investigated and compared the art produced all over the Western world. What the study made clear was that abstraction was everywhere to be seen, even if he thought that the victory had blunted some of its edges and aggressive quality: “Today, artists are to their prewar predecessors what troops of parachutists are to Icarus.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> “Devenir d’un art autre,” *Combat*, August 30, 1954.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Estienne, “L’heure de l’été. Bilan d’une année de peinture,” *Terre des Hommes* (September 29, 1945): 8.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Lebel, *Premier bilan de l’art actuel, 1937–1953* (Paris: Le Soleil noir, 1953), 14.

<sup>40</sup> This was followed in 1955 by an article by Julien Alvard in *Cimaise* contradicted rapidly by Michel Ragon in the same magazine, announcing that “L’école de Paris se porte bien” (Paris is in good shape), arguing that we should not worry because with a readjustment Paris will still reign. John Steinbeck was wondering about “What is the Real Paris?” in an article for the magazine *Holiday* (December 1955): 94.

While Tapié, Estienne, and Lebel were interested in proclaiming the triumph of a new abstract avant-garde over the forces of tradition, believing in a renewed supremacy of Paris, and while they were ready to reap the riches of this success, anguish invaded their writings. Was it not really a pyrrhic victory after all? Were all those rumors of New York’s achievement in painting to be taken seriously?

This doubt was obviously becoming a factor in the evaluation of postwar cultural supremacy. In an article published in the Catholic liberal magazine *Esprit* in 1953, Camille Bourniquel bluntly asked the question everybody was wondering about: “La Succession de Paris est-elle ouverte?” (Is the Succession of Paris open?).<sup>40</sup> Taking all kinds of precautions, trying to avoid the pitfalls of arrogant cultural power, Bourniquel displayed a keen understanding of the workings of international culture. Discussing the symbolic importance of avant-garde culture for recognition on the international stage, he ultimately

decided that nowhere in the world was such an important center as Paris at work. In so doing, he could not help sending a few barbs toward America and its “protectionist cultural behavior,” scorning what he perceived to be an American suspicion toward French artistic production. What he could see, though, was that the traditional reception of French culture by America as *the* universal culture—as he puts it, “a fact of civilization”—was evaporating. In this atmosphere, it was indeed difficult for a foreign artist to circulate in the Parisian labyrinth. Though some did succeed in penetrating the scene, many had to leave, and particularly African Americans, due to the misunderstanding of the art world. Clichés again were running the show, so to speak. African Americans were loved and courted if they were jazz musicians or writers, but it was difficult for the milieu to realize that they could also, like anybody else, continue and develop modern art. This was the case of Herbert Gentry, who went to live in Paris as early as 1946 to be able to be active and assimilated in a modern city as a modern artist. Things would not be as easy as the myth had led him to believe. Indeed, he quickly realized that in those days to be an African American artist in Paris meant one had to be either a wild novelist like Chester Himes or a great jazz musician fighting for a specific style: the “pure” New Orleans music of that hero to the French Sidney Bechet, or the evolving bebop of Kenny Clark or the celebrated cool Miles Davis, who had a public affair in 1949 with the liberated star singer of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Juliette Gréco. To survive as an artist, even after studying with Ossip Zadkine and Yves Brayer, teaching American newcomers at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, and having a one-man show at Galerie de Seine, Gentry had to run a jazz club/gallery in Montparnasse with his wife, the singer Honey Johnson, just to make a living. He showed artworks by day, and turned the place into a jazz club at night; Chez Honey was very successful, as personalities such as Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gréco, Orson Welles, and Jean-Louis Barrault would go to listen religiously to Art Simmons or Don Byas. Even Larry Rivers, who by 1950 was mingling in the jazz scene, jammed there with pleasure. The African American art scene was lively at the Café Tournon, where Gentry and his friend the painter Larry Potter, had a kind of club where they were able to meet with people like the famous cartoonist Ollie Harrington, who was too leftist for the tastes of the McCarthy era and had to send his cartoons every month from the safety of Paris to the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* for publication. By 1959, Gentry, after accepting an invitation to exhibit in Copenhagen, moved there for good, a vibrant place interested not only in jazz music but also in his art production. Gentry’s paintings were daring, mixing automatic expressive line with strong, at times violent, dreamy images of animalistic presence in the style of the CoBrA group.<sup>41</sup> Those original images had difficulty resonating with the different Parisian stylistic types then fighting for supremacy. Beauford Delaney, another friend of the group, also found it difficult to impress the media and galleries with his abstract, tight, and glowing “all over” works.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Gentry, through meetings at the brasserie La Coupole in Montparnasse, met painters from the CoBrA group.

<sup>42</sup> For a good description of the American scene in Paris, see Elisa Capdevila, *Des Américains à Paris. Artistes et bohèmes dans la France de l'après-guerre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2017).

One must also admit that by 1955, with the exhibition *Le Mouvement* at Galerie Denise René, abstraction was becoming tiring; as Michel Ragon commented, “Abstract art, of course I still like it, but I preferred it when it was still fresh. It begins to smell badly. Of course this does not at all mean that figurative art smells like a rose. Quite on the contrary, it decomposes slowly towards abstraction.”<sup>43</sup> What was becoming tiring was not only the informal look but the fact that this individualistic and existential approach did not echo with the new developing consumerist culture. Let’s remember that French culture was moving then into what Jean Fourastié called “les Trente Glorieuses,” thirty years of economic growth and the arrival of consumerism, not always welcomed, as Jacques Tati expressed with intense humor laced with nostalgia in his 1958 film *Mon Oncle*.<sup>44</sup> This was a new time fueled by the arrival of Charles de Gaulle and André Malraux, his first minister of culture. Malraux tried to revive French culture by insisting on its universal power and by attracting foreign artists and intellectuals. In 1956, 1,500 cultural grants were offered, growing to 2,400 in 1959, and 5,900 by 1969. But this form of cultural charity was problematic for someone like Pierre Gaudibert, who created a new critical space called ARC (Animation-Recherche-Confrontation) in 1967, refusing manipulation and pushing the idea of permanent insurrection through contemporary art.

When Denise René opened the *Le Mouvement* show in 1955, the audience was ready for an art dealing with new technologies like plastic, engines, and so on, as well as relaxing, fun experiences.<sup>45</sup> France was then open for a new approach to the world, for anything new:<sup>46</sup> Welcome to the *Nouveau Roman*, *Nouvelle Vague*, and *Nouveaux Réalisme*.<sup>47</sup> The move from existentialist painting to proto Pop and Op in art was paralleled in the haute couture industry—the cultural sign par excellence—by a move from the tight Dior New Look to Balenciaga’s Sack Dress: from controlled sexiness to baggy free *informe* (unformed or shapeless). The times they were a-changin’ alright!

Soon, several artists in this new era wished to document the new Western technology of consumerist culture (its machines, its spirit, its effects), but they also sought to articulate a critique of the loss of the self, an identity confronted with so many manipulative forces. Kinetic art in the late 1950s, a movement composed of many Latin American artists in Paris, seemed to permit space for critique, allowing, through the participation of the viewer, a way to fight the then prevalent alienation of the individual. This position was a difficult one to defend, because numerous attacks—by artists and art critics, from the filmmaker Jacques Tati to the philosopher Jacques Ellul<sup>48</sup>—against those visual devices decried them as a mere manipulation of the public, offering fun experiences, games detached from the alienating world, becoming at times, as Sarah Rich comments, a “passive-aggressive dynamic of consumer culture.”<sup>49</sup> Latin American artists in Paris in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Carlos Cruz-Diez and Jesús Rafael Soto from Venezuela;

<sup>43</sup> Michel Ragon, “A Little Balance-Sheet for Everyone’s Use,” *Cimaise* 5, no. 1 (September – October 1957): 8.

<sup>44</sup> See writings by Henri Lefebvre, Jean Baudrillard, Louis Althusser, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Guy Debord.

<sup>45</sup> The brilliant exhibition put together well-known artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, and Robert Jacobsen as well as emerging ones such as Israeli Yaacov Agam, Swiss Jean Tinguely, Belgian Paul Burry, Hungarian Victor Vasarely, and Venezuelan Jesús Rafael Soto. Remember also that this fad went on and on. Plastic was a modern, desirable thing. See the famous swimming pool scene in the 1967 film *The Graduate* directed by Mike Nichols. An essay on the subject was also included in Roland Barthes’ 1957 book *Mythologies*.

<sup>46</sup> Something new for France was also their first nuclear bomb test, in Reggane, in the Sahara Desert.

<sup>47</sup> As a sign of an economic boom, annual immigration jumped from 66,400 between 1946 and 1955 to 248,000 between 1956 and 1967. See Martha Sesín, “Playing their Game: France, Latin America, and the Transformation of Geometric Abstraction in Postwar Paris” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2008), 128. See also James F. Hollifield, “Immigration and Modernization,” in *Searching for the New France*, ed. James F. Hollifield and George Ross (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 113–50.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Tati, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, 1953; Jacques Ellul, *La Technique ou l’enjeu du siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1954).

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Rich, “Allegories of Op,” *Artforum* 45, no. 9 (May 2007): 322; cited in Sesín, “Playing their Game,” 138.



Julio Le Parc and Martha Boto from Argentina) were under the vital influence of the geometric abstraction of their homelands, but managed, to a certain degree, to politicize their work by breaking from the utopian social platform shaped by the older generation of geometric abstract painters.<sup>50</sup> The Op and kinetic artists practicing in France during the 1950s tried on the one hand to be transcendental, without forgetting on the other to deal with the everyday. They were interested in connecting to the purity, utopian aspirations, and intellectual rigor of a tradition of geometric abstraction, while at the same time engaging with the ways in which everyday life was besieged by consumer culture and new technologies.

In 1960, the Centre de Recherche d'Art Visuel was created and soon transformed into the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), an interesting change of words pinpointing their new interest. They were moving from "Centre de recherche," usually meaning a place where individual work was produced, toward the word "Groupe," insisting on the concept of communality, quite the opposite of artistic life based on individuality. The group wanted action and change by appealing to the public too often held on a leash by art institutions. For the 1961 Paris Biennale, they produced a tract called "Assez de mystifications" (An End to Mystification) to alert the public to the controlling effect of art, telling them "that there must be a cessation of exclusive production for: the cultivated eye, the perceptive eye, the intellectual eye, the aesthetic eye, the dilettante eye."<sup>51</sup>

The GRAV, a collective, went to work in 1966 on the streets of Paris rather than in the bourgeois environment of the avant-garde gallery.<sup>52</sup> The street that the Situationists had such a keen interest in,<sup>53</sup> the street that workers used every day, was the place to remind people that life could be more fun than their boring daily activities. Going to work you were suddenly confronted with moving sidewalks, and penetrable plastic raining tubes, labyrinths, and, most of all, people like you wondering why they did not do all this, every day, in their lives. This was a new activism that would be accelerated all the more in 1968.

<sup>50</sup> For crucial and original discussions, see Isabel Plante, *Argentinos de París. Arte y viajes culturales durante los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013); and Estrellita B. Brodsky, "Latin American Artists in Postwar Paris: Jesús Rafael Soto and Julio Le Parc, 1950–1970" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> "Assez de mystifications!" (1961), in *Stratégies de participation: GRAV—Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel 1960–1968*, ed. Yves Aupetitallot, exh. cat. Le Magasin/Centre d'art contemporain de Grenoble (Grenoble: Le Magasin, 1998), 72; cited in Sesín, "Playing their Game," 171. See also Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> GRAV was created in 1960 but active in 1961, with Argentinians—Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Julio Le Parc, and Francisco Sobrino—and three Frenchmen: François Morellet, Joël Stein, and Jean-Pierre Yvaral, the son of Victor Vasarely.

<sup>53</sup> "The Theory of the Dérive" by Debord was republished in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 2 (December 1958).



Jean-Philippe Charbonnier  
Untitled (Juliette Gréco and Miles Davis)  
1949



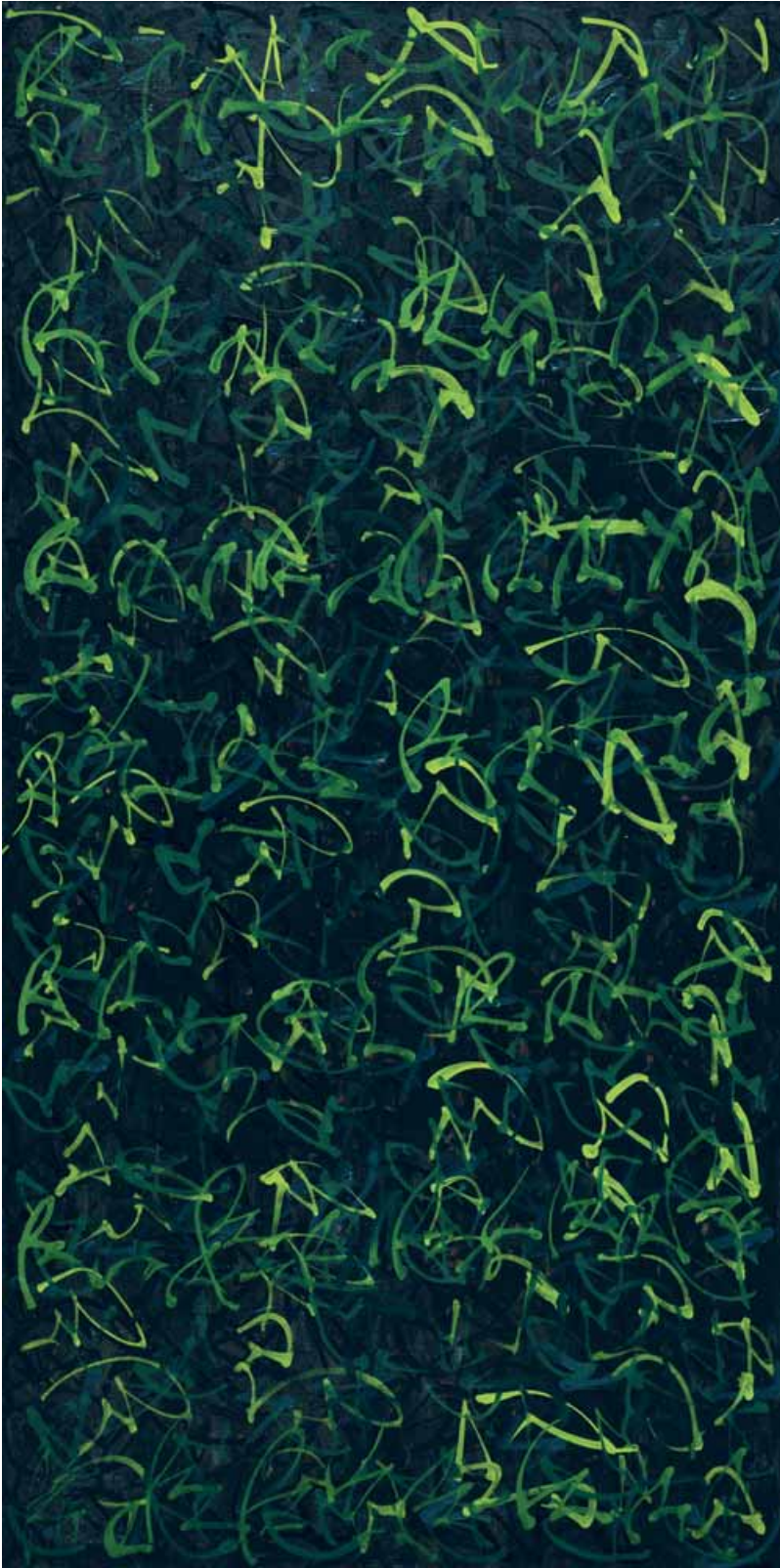
Hebert Gentry  
Untitled  
1959-60





Beauford Delaney  
Untitled  
1957





Brion Gysin  
*Ivy*  
1959



Kimber Smith  
*Blue Bird*  
1960





Paul Jenkins  
*Phenomena Breakwater*  
1962

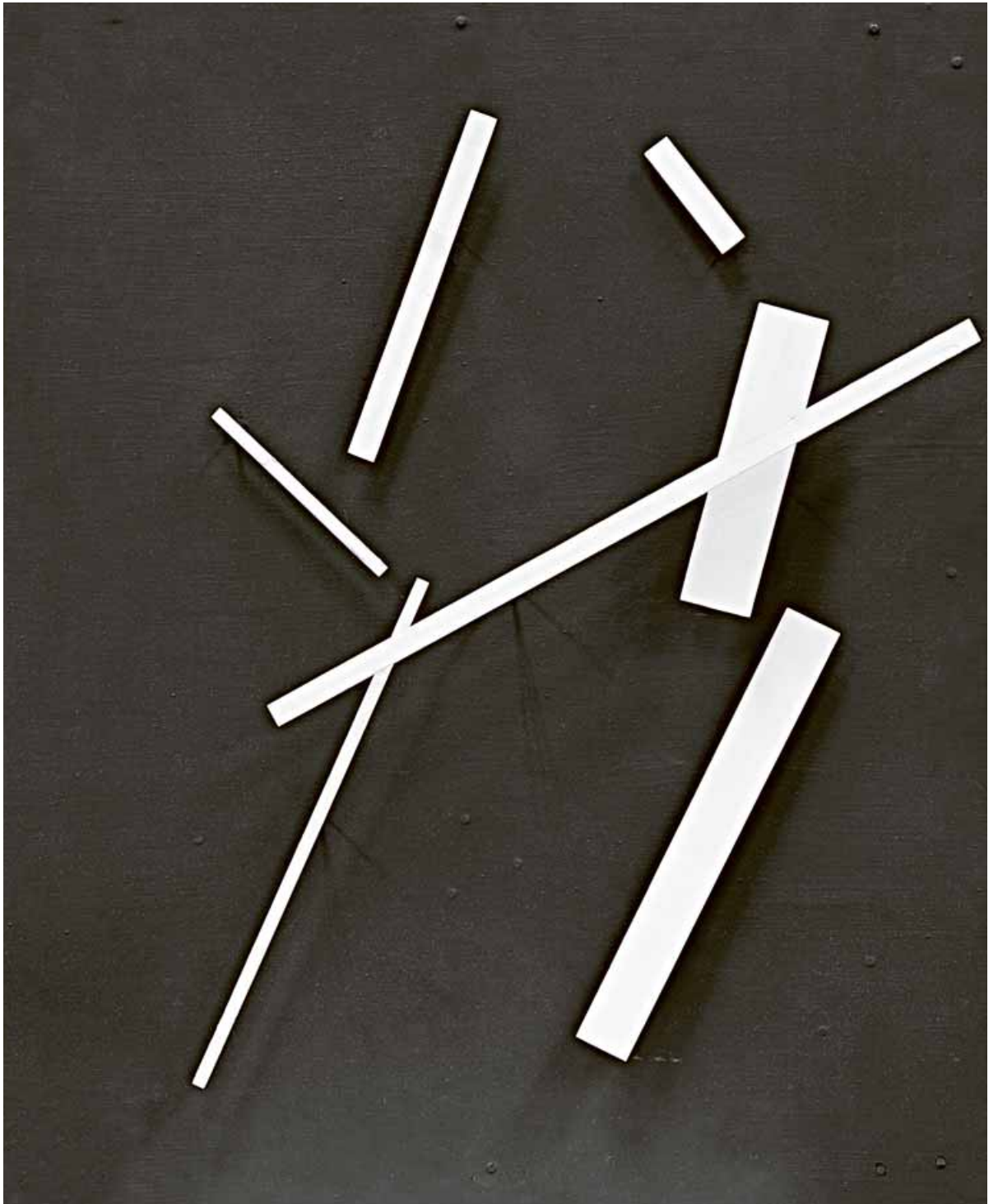


Henri Goetz (Henri-Bernard Goetz)  
Untitled  
1953

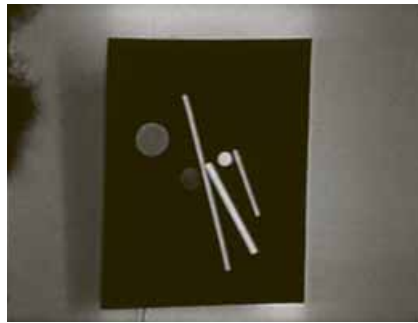
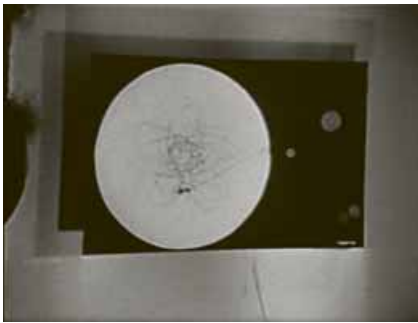
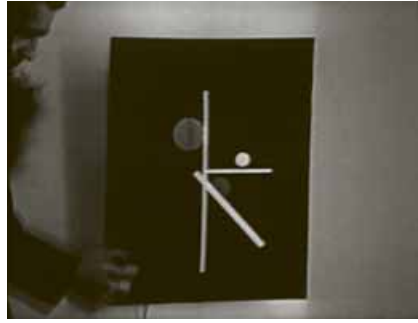
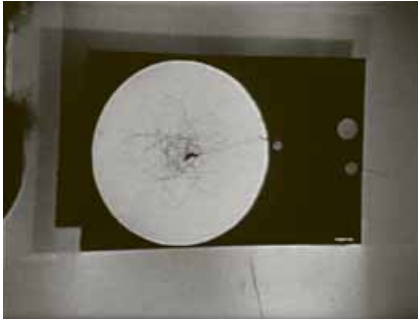
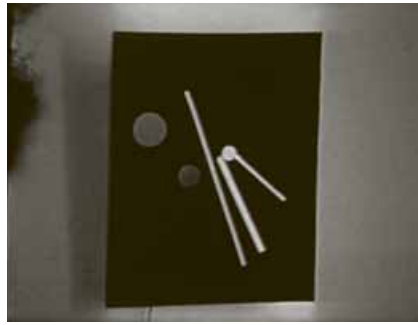
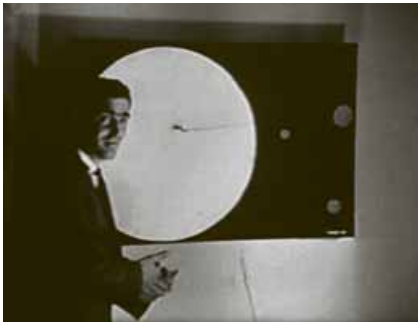


Victor Vasarely  
*Oeta II*  
1956

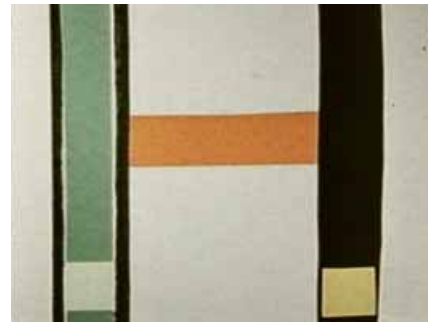
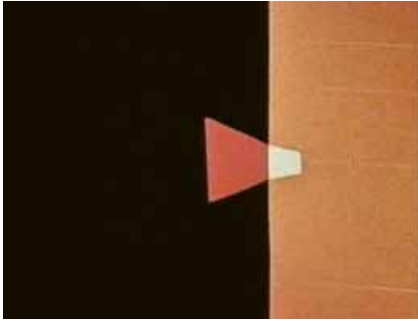
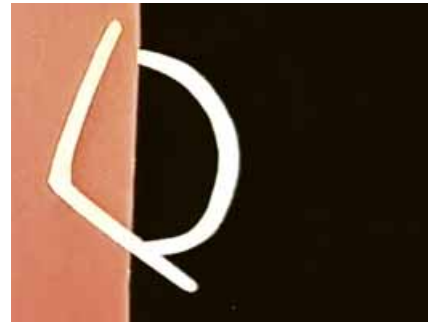
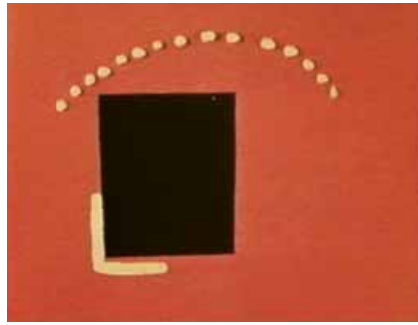
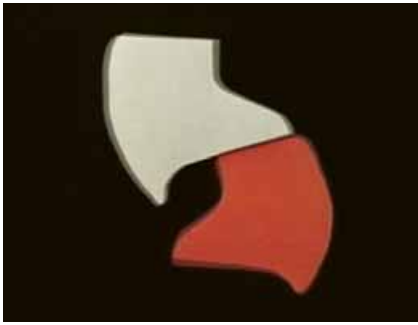




Jean Tinguely  
*Méta-Malévich*  
1954



Robert Breer and Pontus Hultén  
*Le mouvement* (The Movement)  
1955

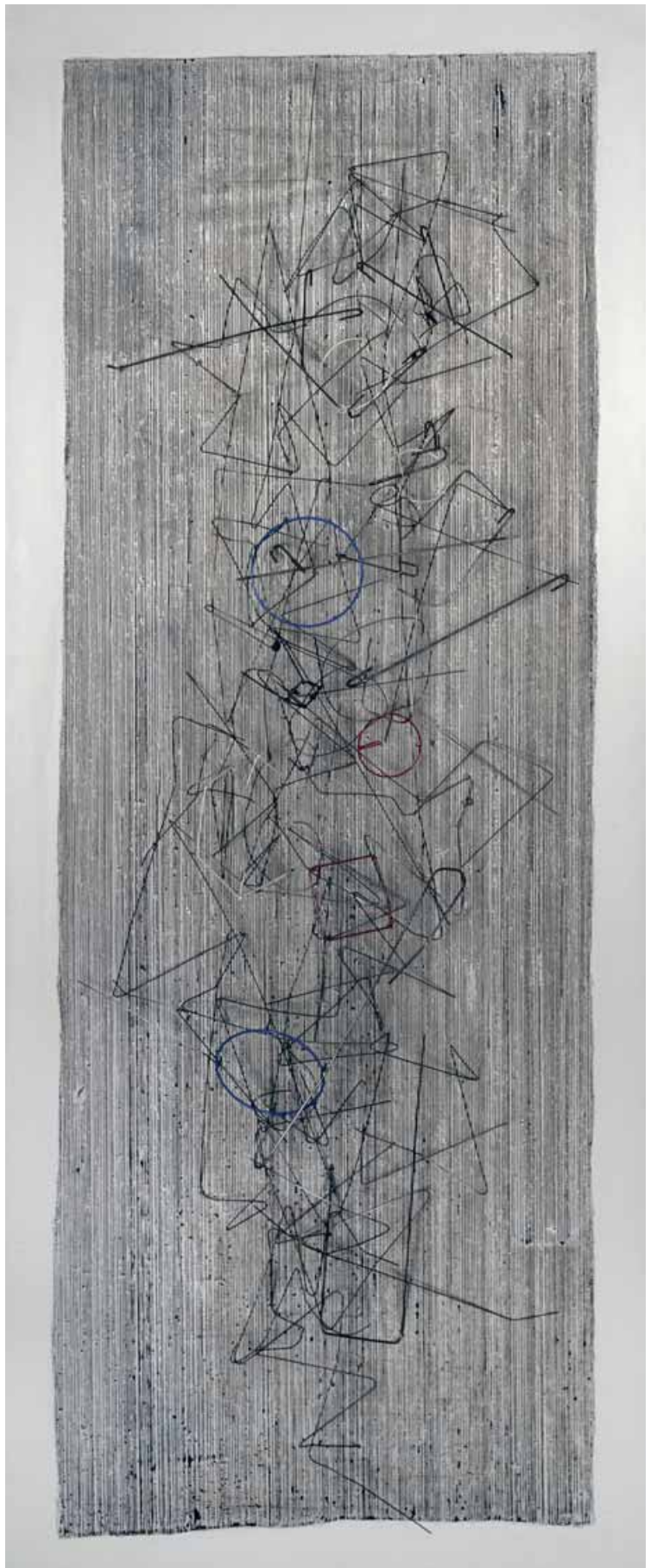


Robert Breer  
*Phases Form IV*  
1954





Alina Szapocznikow  
*Jeu de galets* (Set of Pebbles)  
1967



Jesús Rafael Soto  
*Vibración III* (Vibration III)  
1960-61



Loló Soldevilla  
Untitled  
1955





Eusebio Sempere  
*Relieve luminoso móvil* (Mobile Luminous Relief)  
1959



Julio Le Parc  
*Continuidad luminosa móvil* (Mobile Luminous Continuity)  
1960-61

## Breaking the Silence: The Algerian War

All this creative flux, expansion, and sharp critique was interrupted by discourses surrounding the Algerian insurrection that began in November 1954, when there were a series of attacks organized by the then little known FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) in several areas of Algeria. At first considered only a disturbance in a part of the French state, it quickly became clear that it was more serious than that, and that the deep utopian connection to France was in jeopardy. Algeria itself became divided between revolutionaries (MNA, the Mouvement National Algérien, and FLN) who wanted independence and the long-rooted French people living in Algeria (*Pieds noirs*). The atmosphere of civil war was palpable.<sup>54</sup> By December 1954, Picasso, who according to Françoise Gilot was glued to the radio every day for news about the rebellion in Algiers, furiously started a series of studies called *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Women of Algiers), which would culminate in several paintings in 1955. The still communist Picasso took as his target the symbol of nineteenth-century imperialism: Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger*. If Delacroix, through the enslavement of the woman in a harem, was softly dealing with colonialism, Picasso was deliberately changing the contemporary gaze. The numerous drawings and paintings produced by Picasso between 1954 and 1955 show how he was captivated by such a complex situation. In the first place, it is clear that the large series of works takes the opposite side of the unsure Communist Party when confronted with the decolonization of a French Department. Picasso, by taking to task Delacroix, was making a clear statement: the overtly liberated and sexual representation of women in Picasso's painting announced the liberation from the shackles of the colonial harem. His pleasure in deconstructing Delacroix was connected, as often in the case of Picasso, with his private life. Indeed, Picasso had just met a new lover, Jacqueline Roque, who, according to the painter, reminded him of Delacroix: "At first sight, her resemblance with *La Femme au Narguilé* et *Les Femmes d'Alger* de Delacroix impressed me. It was incredible. The same type, the same face! I even had the feeling that she also had the neck a bit too long similar to the one I observed in the painting *La Femme au Narguilé*. I saw her as a *Femme d'Alger*, I fell in love right away."<sup>55</sup> Of course, biography should be taken cautiously, but here the sudden integration of elements—like love, history, desire, antagonism, politics—helps to understand the excessive production of this specific topic with multicolor shades produced by an artist letting himself go.

<sup>54</sup> See Charles-Robert Ageron, "Aux origines de la Toussaint 1954," in *La France en guerre d'Algérie. Novembre 1954 – juillet 1962*, ed. Laurent Gervereau et al. (Nanterre: Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, 1992), 20–29. Also in the first issue of the magazine *Internationale Situationniste*, June 8, 1958, the last article was called "A Civil War in France."

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Georges Tabarud, *Mes années Picasso* (Paris: Plon, 2002), 151.

Just as he had previously irritated the French bourgeoisie with his use of African sculptures, here he exposes the contemporary situation with a certain violence and freedom, breaking the silence and calm contained in images inherited from Delacroix. Using his own desire and pleasure, his tactic was to connect with what several female artists and writers were actually doing then on the French scene. Let's remember that in 1954 the very successful and controversial book by the eighteen-year-old Françoise Sagan, *Bonjour Tristesse*, was published, a novel in



which the author describes the liberating free ride of a young woman breaking all the rules of a still very traditional and religious French society.<sup>56</sup> It seems that Picasso, by having pleasure at liberating the body of women by blowing up the exotic and controlled Delacroix environment through a chaotic, explosive series of drawings, was also getting high by, simultaneously, getting on the nerves of both the French bourgeoisie and Communist Party, whose position on Algeria was very ambiguous.<sup>57</sup> For Picasso, private life and politics always went hand in hand.

Already by 1955 investigative journalists from *France Observateur* and *L'Express* were unveiling atrocious tortures covered up by the government,<sup>58</sup> while in 1956 the cartoonist Siné published a book of sarcastic drawings about the Algerian situation entitled *Complaintes sans paroles* (Laments Without Words). By 1958 the issue of torture in Algeria was, despite efforts by the government to conceal it, becoming well known. Henri Alleg published a book in February 1958 entitled *La Question*, which was quickly censored (on March 27, 1958), in which he detailed his own suffering at the hands of the French army. Regarding this, the Chilean artist Matta (Roberto Matta) produced that year one of the most powerful images of dissent against state violence: *La Question*. Using his traditional surrealist language he managed to create a horrific and violent atmosphere that brought surrealist fantasy into contemporary reality. The focus on the painting is a red body shape ready to be punched, waterboarded, and sexually violated. To get answers, the mechanical machinery of the police is surrounding the suffering red body with morbid gray-colored wires and robotic shapes, producing a hellish environment that violently shakes the viewer in such a personal way that one cannot remain unresponsive.

In 1960, a young FLN activist, Djamilia Boupacha, was arrested under suspicion of preparing a crime against occupied forces. She was sequestered by the police in Algiers and over several days was repeatedly raped. The fact that torture seemed to have been tacitly accepted by the French government triggered a series of outcries. On September 6, 1960, the newspaper *Le Monde* announced that there was a petition running around France not only against torture but also for the right to refuse to serve in the French army in Algeria, in other words, in defense of insubordination. That was a rare position to take in France, but the time was ripe for a rebellion of the youth being ignited by Jean-Jacques Lebel (twenty-four years old) and Alain Jouffroy (in his thirties) in a new magazine that they published entitled *Front unique*. The manifesto featuring 121 signatures entitled “Déclaration sur le droit à l’insoumission dans la guerre d’Algérie,”<sup>59</sup> published in issue number 2 in October 1960, was a long diatribe against colonization (written with Maurice Blanchot), ending with a call for support: “The cause of the Algerian people, which contributes decisively to the ruin of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men and women.”<sup>60</sup> One night, while having a conversation with friends in a Milan trattoria, the idea came to Lebel to create a kind of visual conversation about those hot issues. A collective

<sup>56</sup> Total liberation came in 1956 when Roger Vadim produced the movie *Et Dieu... créa la femme*, in which Brigitte Bardot broke all the French taboos, described as a liberating moment for women by Simone de Beauvoir in a 1959 article for *Esquire* magazine entitled “Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome.”

<sup>57</sup> To realize what Picasso was actually attempting here, it is important to recall that in the Musée Picasso archives in Paris, one can find around 400 documents, support letters, and actual financial support to different groups of women struggling during the postwar period in France and Spain.

<sup>58</sup> See Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, “Un tableau collectif contre la torture,” in *Grand tableau antifasciste collectif*, ed. Laurent Chollet (Paris: Dagorno, 2000), 39.

<sup>59</sup> This text, also called “Manifeste des 121,” was first published in an issue of a magazine entitled *Vérité liberté*, which was censored and seized by the government. The list of signatories is published in Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Les Porteurs de valises. La Résistance française à la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979), 395–96.

<sup>60</sup> Translated from the original in French: “La cause du peuple Algérien, qui contribue de façon décisive à ruiner le système colonial est la cause de tous les hommes libres.” See Dorléac, “Un tableau collectif,” 37–62.

painting projecting in public the horror and violence of the time seemed not only appropriate but necessary. The large painting (four by five meters), produced by six artists working in Paris (Lebel, Erró from Iceland, and the Italians Gianni Dova, Enrico Baj, Roberto Crippa, and Antonio Recalcati, with the support of the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam), presents a large aggressive message about the nightmarish quagmire of the political period from which the viewer cannot escape, via a compilation of violent images, printed texts, and decaying material.<sup>61</sup> The painting created in the studio of Roberto Crippa, which was shown at the Brera gallery (Arturo Schwarz) in Milan (June 5–30, 1961) with a large group of international contemporary artists chosen by Lebel and Jouffroy, was quickly removed by the Italian police and then left for twenty-three years in the basement of the Milan police station rolled up against the wall.

Though the representation of tortured bodies and horrible violence covers the entire surface of the painting, the reason given for its removal was apparently not about politics, but pornography and sacrilege: the fact that an image of the Virgin Mary and Jesus appeared glued into the mouth of one of Baj's creatures, which was inviting the spectator to visually penetrate into the painting. The rape of Djamila Boupacha, clearly visible at the top left of the painting, was apparently ignored. The *Grand tableau antifasciste collectif* (Great Collective Anti-Fascist Painting) with its very visible swastika was indeed talking about hypocrisy, but mainly about viciousness, censorship, and sexual violence, things that were very much rampant during this period in France and Italy. The painting was directly addressing these conundrums. The surface is treated not like a traditional painting, but like a screaming statement, flatly and directly confronting the viewer through a succession of different scenes in different styles like a series of echoes producing blaring waves. The viewer could not escape his or her own knowledge and responsibility. Several open screaming or sad mouths armed with cutting teeth rhythmically cover the entire surface. Phallic shapes and vaginas are distributed throughout, so that no one can forget what happened to Djamila. A juxtaposition of her body wide open to a vertical phallic form does not leave any doubt about the violence she encountered. The painting produces in the viewer a sensation of both responsibility and disgust. This call for action, this howling rejection of the Gaullist-controlled society, was unacceptable to the powers that be in Italy and France.

While the public debate over the Algerian War was creating arguments in the French press, other underground channels were used by people wishing to help the FLN, namely what the police called "Les porteurs de valises," or the suitcase carriers. A young art restorer from California, Gloria de Herrera, the partner of painter William Copley who arrived together with her in France in 1951 alongside Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, became involved in a very complex and powerful support group around Francis Jeanson who, in addition to publishing a book analyzing the birth of the FLN, was the leader of a large underground network.<sup>62</sup> She was so involved in the defense of the Algerian

<sup>61</sup> The situation was so complicated that in a 1960 speech de Gaulle was forced to acknowledge, tiptoeing around the status of Algeria, what was at stake: "Il y a une Algérie, il y a une entité algérienne, il y a une personnalité algérienne" (There is an Algeria, there is an Algerian entity, there is an Algerian personality). The notion of an Algerian state, for so long rejected, enters into the French unconscious when, a few weeks later, General de Gaulle announced ambiguously: "Algerian Republic, a Republic which will one day exist but which has never yet existed." Cited in Serge Bernstein, "Une guerre sans nom," in *La France en guerre d'Algérie*, ed. Gervereau et al., 37.

<sup>62</sup> In June 1960, Francis Jeanson published a book about Algeria entitled *Notre guerre*, which was quickly censored on grounds of provocation and disobedience.

people that she went there to document the fate of Algerian families. She produced a series of photographs of Algerian children in a wretched environment, in decaying clothes, playing with toys that are in fact pieces of bomb shrapnel. Those photos, in their simplicity and directness, were extremely powerful and damaging to the image of France.<sup>63</sup> De Herrera, who was a designer and assistant to Henri Matisse when he was working on his *papiers découpés* from 1953 to 1959, was arrested and imprisoned at the Petite Roquette prison in Paris in 1960 for having used her apartment as a “safe house” for FLN reunions.

In the mid-1960s, with the inability of Paris to either preserve or reconstruct a strong School of Paris, things changed dramatically. In June 1963, the Argentinian artist Marta Minujín, after spending several years on Impasse Ronsin with an avant-garde community composed of foreigners like Jean Tinguely (Swiss) and Larry Rivers (American), decided to produce a very symbolic piece. She burned in public some assemblages she made with mattresses. The burning piece symbolized her interest in inspiring the public to action rather than producing artworks that ended up in museum “cultural cemeteries.”<sup>64</sup> This action, undertaken before she returned to Buenos Aires, was a loud statement about the rejection of the old, all-powerful, and controlling Paris and the opening up of a free space in which Argentinian identity could be constructed even as Argentina was at the center of neocolonial desires.<sup>65</sup>

In the international art scene, America was gaining ground. If France could sell their Renault Dauphine cars across Latin America, the sale of French art (Pierre Soulages, Georges Mathieu, Philippe Hosiasson, and Gérard Schneider), which was until 1958 still the favorite of US collectors, on the other hand, suddenly collapsed, as described by dealer Samuel Kootz and collector Richard Brown Baker.<sup>66</sup> It took that long for American collectors to realize that the New York School had become respectable and the French avant-garde, according to the new tendency, weak, effeminate, and passé. The long article published by Clement Greenberg, “American Type Painting,” in *Partisan Review* in the spring of 1955,<sup>67</sup> was the basis for this readjustment. Also, let’s not forget that de Gaulle’s policies, in particular the closing of American bases in France, were not particularly agreeable to rich and proud American art lovers.

In Paris it was the market for modern art that was declining; to such an extent that Daniel Cordier, who ran one of the most active contemporary galleries, left Paris for New York in 1964, while the Grand Prize in Painting at the Venice Biennale was awarded to Robert Rauschenberg, to the surprise of an outraged and helpless Parisian art scene. In June 1964, Cordier announced in an open letter of departure, “Lettre pour prendre congé,” that since the School of Paris had abandoned its mission, the painters were becoming too expensive, and museums were not doing their job, it was time to jump ship and go to the United States.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The Getty Archives have two color photographs she took of two dead men on a sidewalk, bruised and cut, after torture. One is even attached to some tree branches as if he had been crucified. The images are very hard to look at. It is her involvement in those matters that had her sent her to jail. Gloria de Herrera Papers, The Getty Research Institute, Research Library, Accession no. 980024. This series of photographs was difficult to locate, which in turn has made it hard to identify the author. It is quite likely that several of them were taken by the French photographer Dominique Darbois, one of de Herrera’s collaborators, who was also committed to the Algerian cause.

<sup>64</sup> Discussion in work-in-progress by Jacqueline Witkowski, “From Myth to Mayhem: Latin American Identity in Postwar Paris,” in a special seminar given at the Terra Foundation, Giverny, in May 2016.

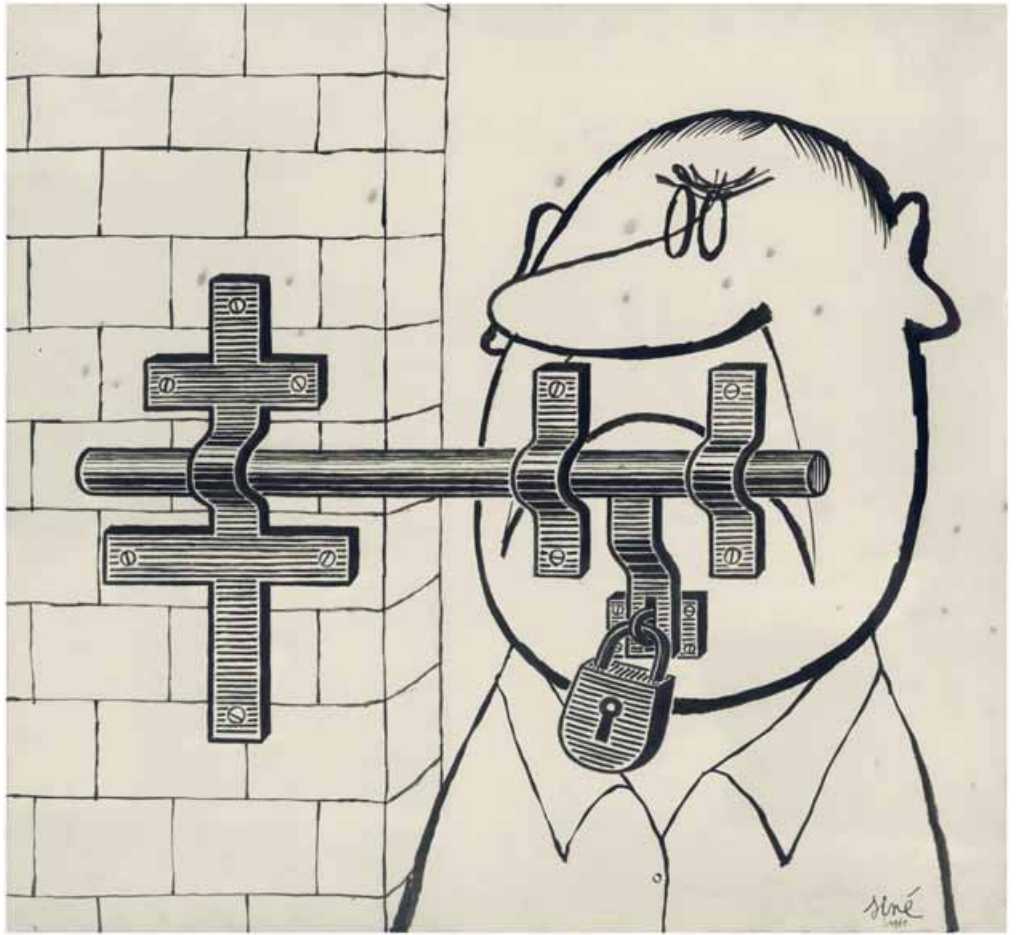
<sup>65</sup> This is the time when de Gaulle made an important trip to Latin American countries to try to convince them that, by tradition, France was a historically friendly nation, compared to the United States, that also wished to cooperate during this period of Cold War differences. As a result, Renault Dauphine cars invaded Argentina.

<sup>66</sup> See Richard Brown Baker, journal entry, Yale, March 10, 1958, in *Get There First, Decide Promptly: The Richard Brown Baker Collection of Postwar Art*, ed. Jennifer Farrell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 49–80.

<sup>67</sup> See Clement Greenberg: “American Type Painting” (1955), in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O’Brian, vol. 3: *Affirmation and Refusals, 1950–1956* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 217–35.

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Michel Ragon, *Vingt-cinq ans d’art vivant* (Tournay: Casterman, 1969), 324.





Siné (Maurice Sinet)  
Untitled  
1962



Dominique Darbois  
Untitled (Algeria and Algerian War)  
ca. 1960



Gloria de Herrera  
*Algeria and Algerian War*  
ca. 1960





Enrico Baj, Roberto Crippa, Gianni Dova, Erró (Guðmundur Guðmundsson), Jean-Jacques Lebel, and Antonio Recalcati  
*Grand tableau antifasciste collectif*  
(Great Collective Anti-Fascist Painting)  
1960



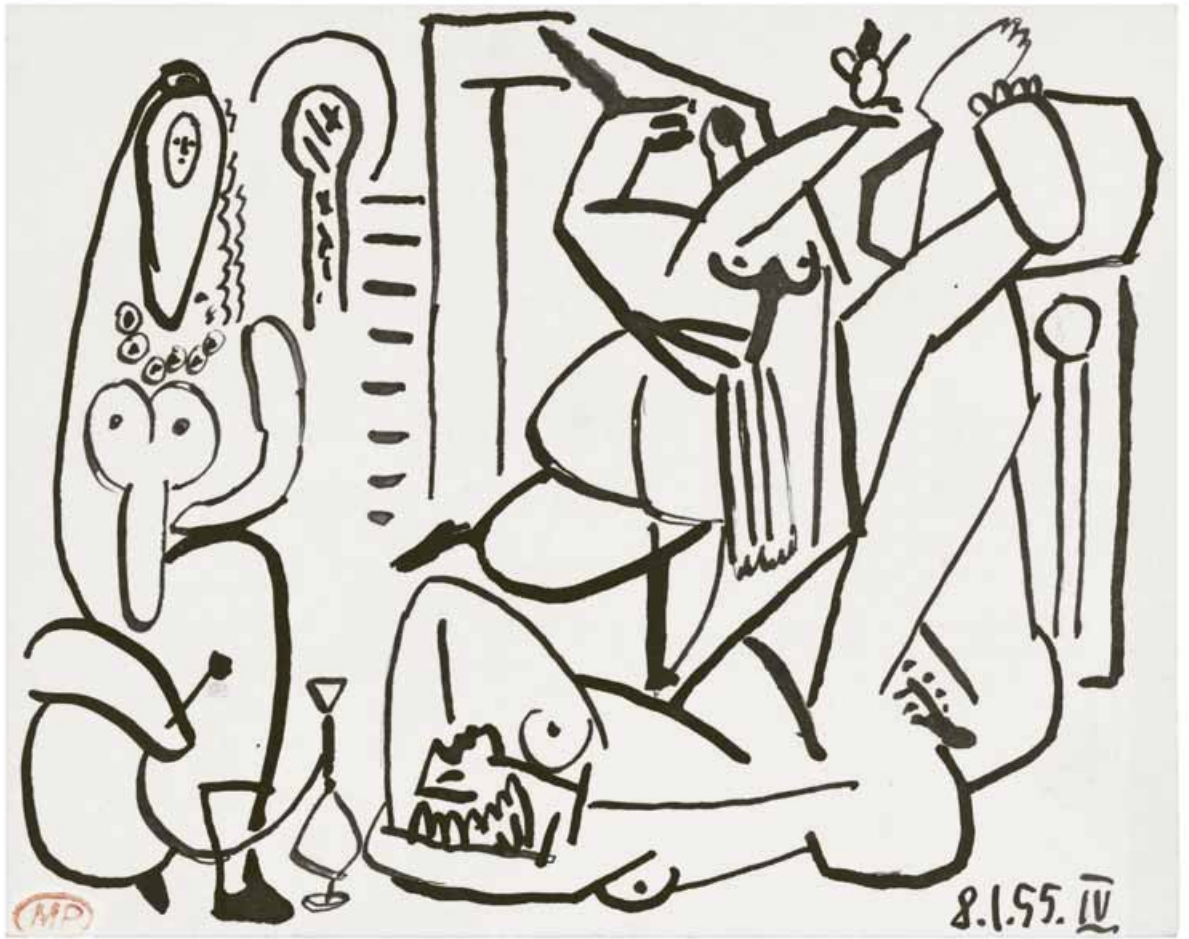






Matta (Roberto Matta)  
*La question (The Question)*  
1957





Pablo Picasso  
*Étude pour "Les Femmes d'Alger;" d'après Delacroix* (Study for "Women of Algiers," after Delacroix)  
January 8, 1955



Rafael Canogar  
*Composición* (Composition)  
1956





Anna-Eva Bergman  
*La grande montagne d'argent n. 4 - 1957* (Large Silver Mountain No. 4—1957)  
1957





Luis Feito  
*N.º 16 B*  
1957





Simon Hantai  
Untitled (*Panse* [Paunch] series)  
1964



Minna Citron  
*Measure of Fate*  
1955





Kumi Sugai  
*Shiro (White)*  
June 1957



Nancy Spero  
*Homage to New York (I Do Not Challenge)*  
1958



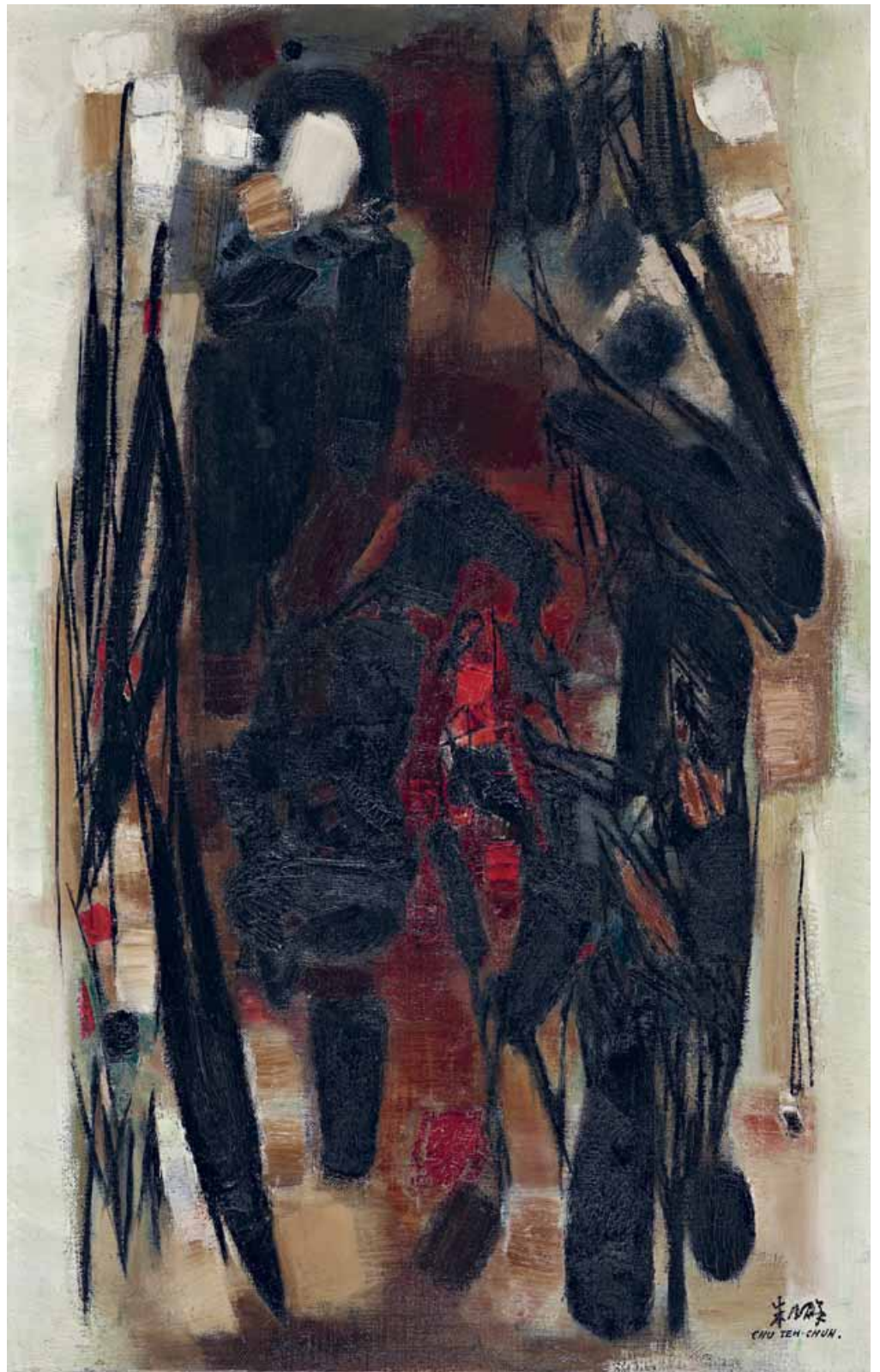


Rufino Tamayo  
*Mujer en gris* (Woman in Gray)  
1959



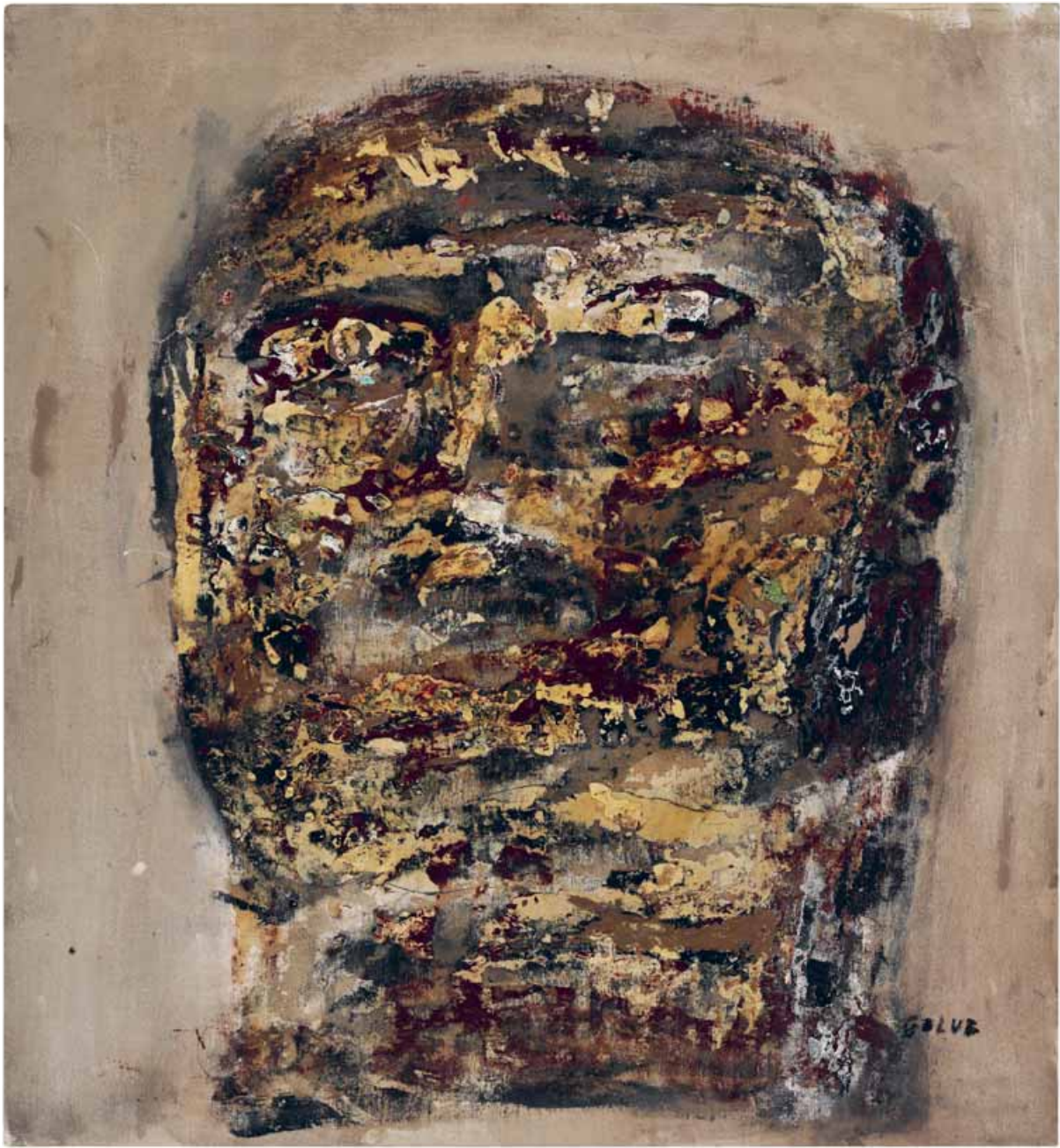


Mohammed Khadda  
*Kabylie*  
1960



Chu Teh-Chun  
*Composition n° 22*  
1959





Leon Golub  
*Head IX*  
1960





Zao Wou-Ki  
30.10.61  
October 30, 1961



Sam Francis  
*Composition bleue sur fond blanc* (Blue Composition on White Background)  
1960



## A New Look for Figuration

By 1958, the art scene in Paris had already been changing rapidly due to an economic and technological boom. While the beatniks were leaving their hotels on the Rue Gît-le-Cœur, wealthy tourists were invading Paris thanks to relatively quick transatlantic air travel, to the point that Boris Vian, the king of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, said that the individuals running around in Paris were no longer real people. The art scene changed drastically, becoming more politicized, while anger about the rise of American art was growing. Confronted with not only the success of Abstract Expressionism but also the development of Pop Art seen as a celebration of capitalism, a group of rebellious international artists would take over the Parisian art scene. Erró criticized the American way of life, their food, and their automobiles using cartoonish influences. By 1959, he was already poking fun at the antagonistic debate between the two capitals: a prehistoric animal is dripping on a canvas watched by a horrified monster protecting the School of Paris symbolized by two opposite types of abstraction by Hans Hartung and Auguste Herbin. A strong sense of humor, parody, and at times irony covers a large part of the production of this new generation who realized that action painting should now, due to contemporary events like Algeria and Vietnam, become political action. This interest in the critique of consumerist culture will infiltrate the entire new generation and was articulated by shows like the 1964 *Mythologies quotidiennes*, which was influenced by Roland Barthes' series of articles in *Paris Match* about contemporary life (published as a book in 1957). This new form of engaged art was commented upon by G erald Gassiot-Talabot and by Alain Jouffroy, who in 1964 published *Une r volution du regard* (A Revolution of Seeing) in which he insists on the importance of the moment when artists everywhere try to alert the audience of the manipulative essence of our contemporary culture: "Tous [artistes], ils ont en commun de vouloir changer dans notre esprit notre vision du r el, et tous s'adressent pour cela davantage   notre 'mat re grise' qu'  notre r tine." (All [artists] share the desire to change our vision of reality in our mind, and to do so all speak more to our 'gray matter' than to our retina).<sup>69</sup> Gassiot-Talabot, who became through his magazine *Opus international* (created in 1966) the radical voice of the time, pinpointed the disappointing world in which he was entering: "Le monde ou nous vivons, que l'on nous   fait, et que nous continuons de faire, suscite la naus e et le sarcasme beaucoup plus que l'adh sion." (The world we live in, that has been made for us, and that we continue to make, arouses nausea and sarcasm much more than it does enthusiasm).<sup>70</sup> Joan Rabascall was, in his way, using news and publicity images in his collage, participating in this "mise en question" of contemporary consumerist society, as was Antonio Berni, when

<sup>69</sup> Alain Jouffroy, "Pour une r volution du regard" (1963), in *Une r volution du regard* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 195.

<sup>70</sup> Cited in *Face   l'Histoire, 1933-1996. L'artiste moderne devant l' v nement historique*, ed. Jean-Paul Ameline, exh. cat. Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 472.



he was literally using objects and trash to document with humor the injustice of everyday life.<sup>71</sup>

What is interesting to note is that by the mid-1960s, Paris was criticized, left for dead as a center of modern art, but at the same time revived by the critical work produced by a large new generation of foreign-born artists. Eduardo Arroyo, Erró, Peter Klasen, Christo, Rabascall, Berni, Soto, Jaume Xifra, among many others, were reshaping the old Paris into a vibrant critical space that would very soon produce the street revolt of 1968. This new Parisian international group was in fact making the City of Light shine internationally again in 1967. On a proposition by Wifredo Lam, the Cuban government invited the Parisian Salon de Mai group to restage their show in Cuba. They also invited approximately one hundred European artists and writers to participate in the creation of a vast collective mural on July 17 in a plaza in the center of Havana. The new Parisian avant-garde, in its majority, by going to Cuba, projected a positive artistic image of union and revolutionary hope. The large collective mural in the shape of a spiral ideated by Arroyo had tried to be democratic, with each painting space allotted by chance. The result was a bizarre and fun juxtaposition of styles and topics that, according to Jouffroy, was the “first map of the contemporary subversive imagination” a step ahead of Surrealism.<sup>72</sup>

As Jean-Jacques Lebel has pointed out several times, though, the experience was interesting but too much glued to a controlling Cuban regime. What we were experiencing was a new wave of critical creativity concentrated in often controversial and subversive actions like those of the ARC, which had an important impact on the renovation of the Parisian art scene. Pierre Gaudibert, looking for a new “engaged” middle class, was opening up spaces for interdisciplinary discussions, mixing plastic art with music, dance, and theater. This controversial site, in sync with the new production of the art magazine *Opus*, launched a very active and reframed art scene, quite different from that in New York, which was by then too politically sanitized. Everything was lining up in Paris to welcome a new rebellious period. Paris had lost a battle indeed, but some thought that they were in fact winning the war. Paris was no longer like the cliché described by Vincente Minnelli, but rather in a critical stage put in shape by Godard in his movie *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her) from 1966, where the new development of the Parisian outskirts, which would soon become desolated and isolated projects, indicates the destructive result of savage capitalism. This deconstruction of modern life is unveiled through the life of desperate women forced into prostitution in order to be able to survive in their block buildings made of concrete. Godard’s critique, in

<sup>71</sup> See the important article by Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Juanito and Ramona in Paris: Everyday Myths or Third-World Icons,” in *Antonio Berni: Juanito and Ramona*, ed. Mari Carmen Ramírez, exh. cat. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Malba, Buenos Aires (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 83–104.

<sup>72</sup> In the complicated world of revolutionary positions, the voice of Jean-Jacques Lebel was clear. Confronted with the Cuban artwork, he disagreed with his friend Jouffroy: “this structure smacked of ‘bureaucratic Marxist Leninism.’” See Jill Carrick, “The Assassination of Marcel Duchamp: Collectivism and Contestation in 1960s France,” *Oxford Art Journal*, no. 1 (2008): 21.

concert with the new type of critical narrative figuration appearing at that time, was preparing a precarious future. Indeed, this experience, this revolutionary excitement, enlightened what was to come: the Atelier Populaire in May 1968 at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris.

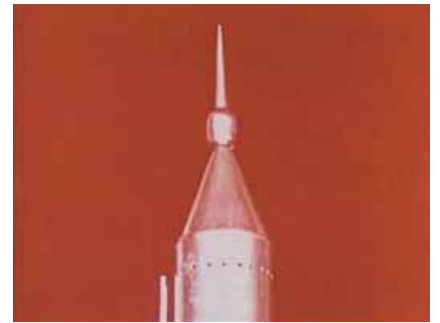
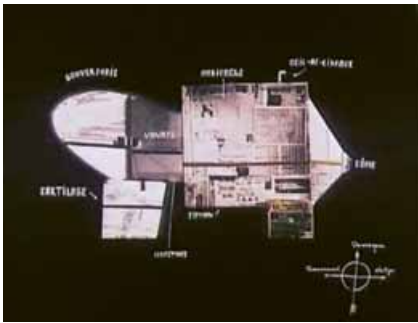
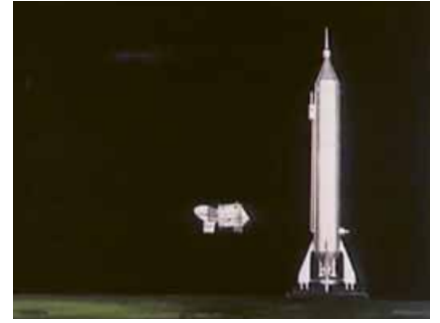
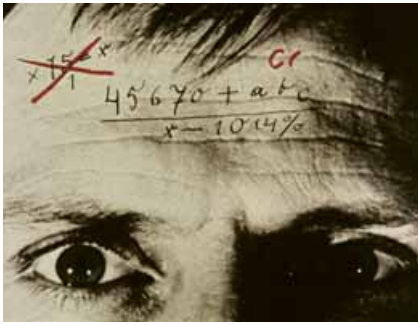
In an ironic twist of events, the huge revolutionary painting produced in Cuba by a large constituency of foreign artists working in Paris, which was supposed to be exhibited in the French capital, was stopped in its tracks by the events of May 1968. Maybe life was not changing after all.

# CHOSSES QUE J'ESAIS D'ELLE

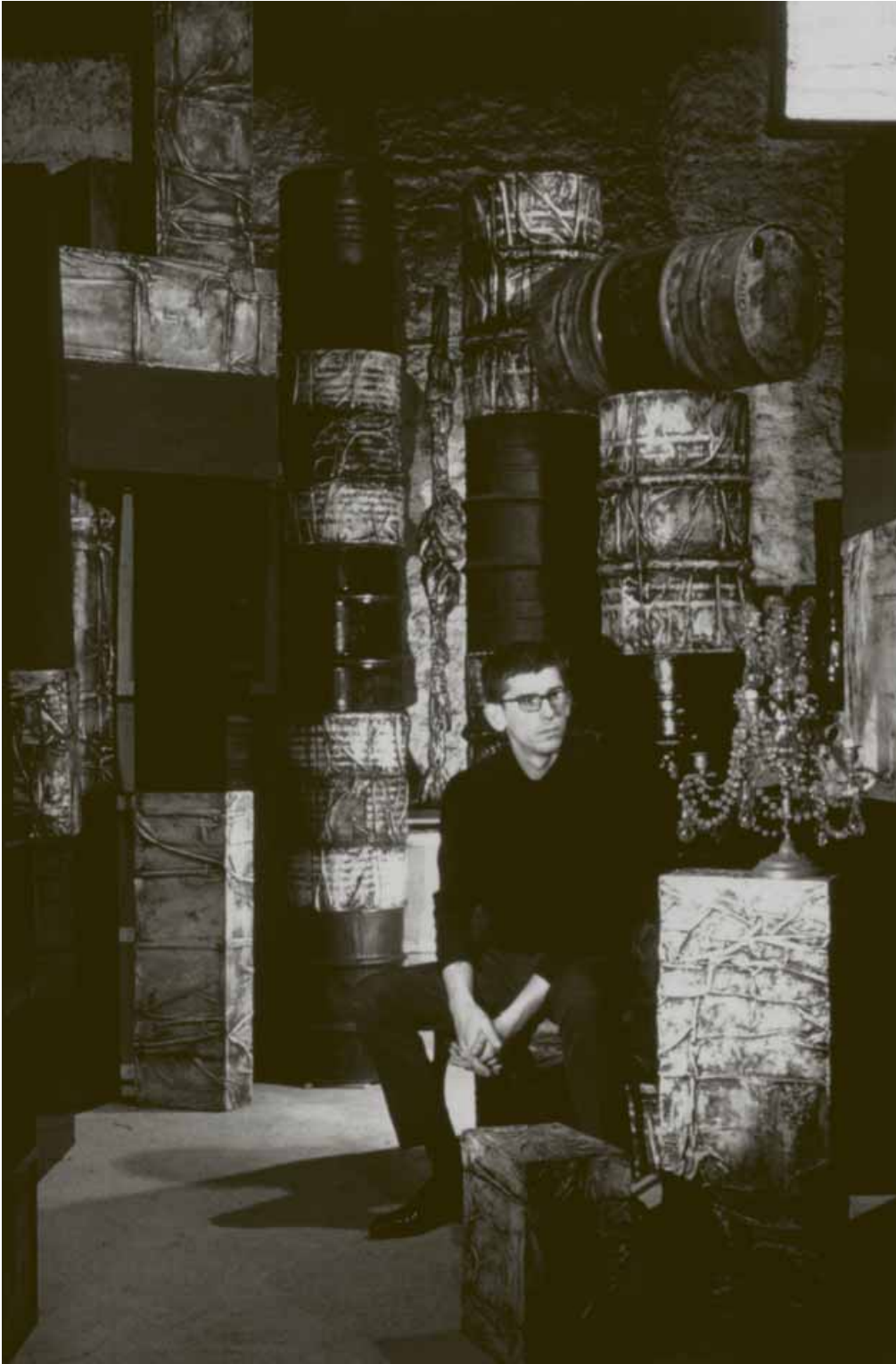


Jean-Luc Godard  
*2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her)  
1967

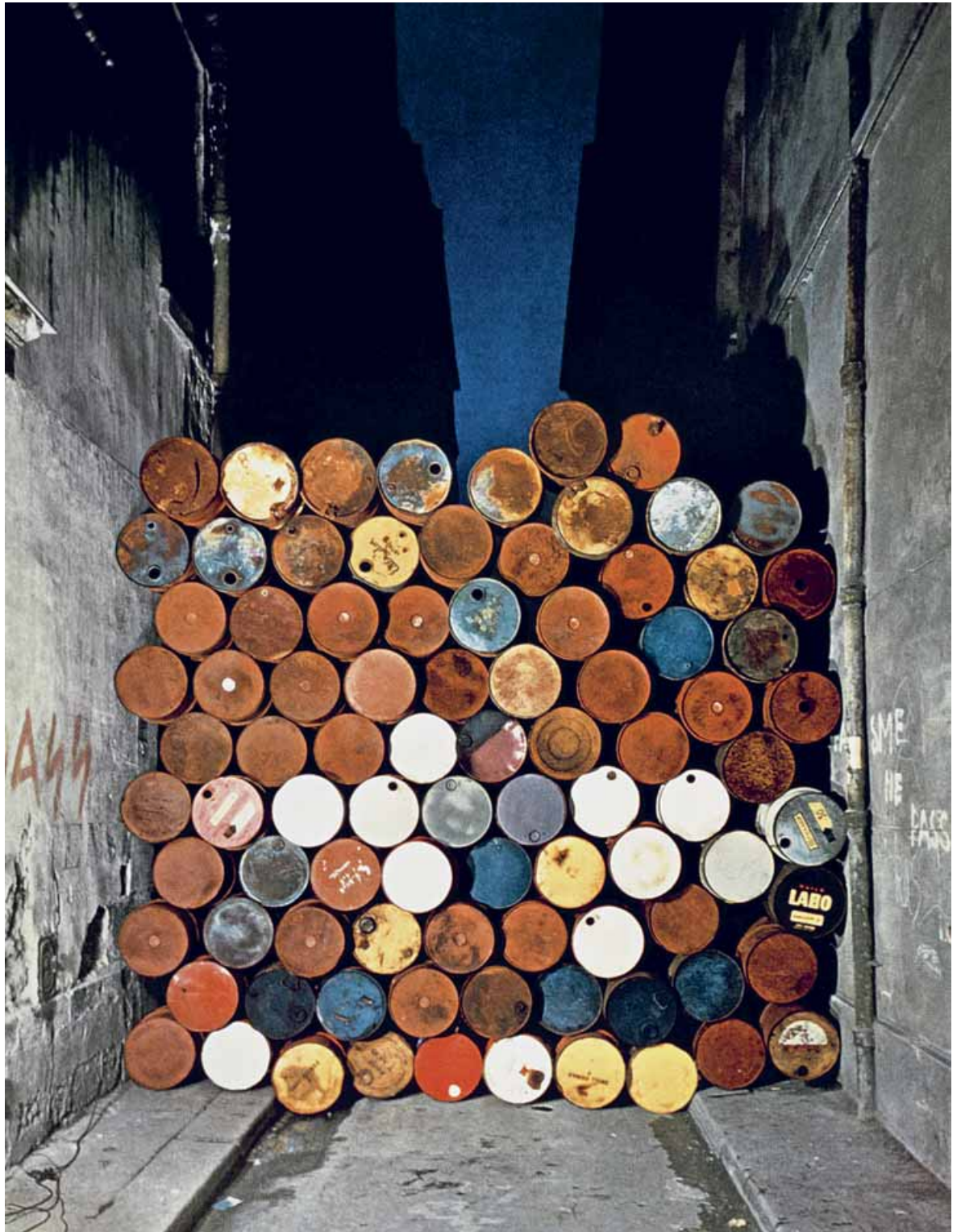




Walerian Borowczyk with the collaboration of Chris Marker  
*Les Astronautes (The Astronauts)*  
1959



René Bertholo  
Christo in his storage room in the basement at 4 Avenue Raymond Poincaré, Paris  
1960



Christo and Jeanne-Claude  
*Wall of Oil Barrels – The Iron Curtain* (photo: Jean-Dominique Lajoux)  
Rue Visconti, Paris, 1961–62





Larry Rivers  
*French Money II*  
1962



Erró (Guðmundur Guðmundsson)  
*The School New-Par-Yorkis*  
1959





Eduardo Arroyo  
*Los cuatro dictadores (Mussolini) (The Four Dictators [Mussolini])*  
1963





Eduardo Arroyo  
*Los cuatro dictadores (Hitler) (The Four Dictators [Hitler])*  
1963



Antonio Berni  
*Juanito va a la ciudad* (Juanito Goes to the City)  
1963









Gianni Bertini (Giovanni Bertini)  
*Le procès d'Andromaque* (The Trial of Andromache)  
April 7, 1962



Peter Klasen  
*Femme-objet (Object-Woman)*  
1967



Hervé Télémaque

*Petit célibataire un peu nègre et assez joyeux* (Little Bachelor Slightly Negro, and Quite Happy)

1964





William Copley  
*The Cold War*  
1962



Jaume Xifra  
*Pochoir Objets (Object Stencil)*  
1966



Antonio Saura  
*Narración* (Narration)  
1964





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## THE HOUR OF SLACK TIDE: REPORT ON A YEAR OF PAINTING<sup>1</sup>

Charles Estienne

This year opened, after the Salon d'Automne, with the Kandinsky exhibition. I hope I will be forgiven for seeing this as more than a chance occurrence and better a symbol. Kandinsky with Klee, the pioneer of visual abstraction. Picabia may have made the first abstract "painting," but for temperaments as different as Magnelli, Lansky, and de Staël. Kandinsky is still a lesson, or at least an indelible example. The miracle of this very Russian art (emerging, in the words of the painter himself, from old Russian religious painting) is that it acquired from the outset a universal human value: this dazzling ballet of irrational (but not gratuitous) forms produces a cerebral and sensual intoxication strangely related to that produced, for example, from the sight and reading of *Un coup de dés*. It is a very meaningful encounter that says a lot about the supposed isolation of abstract painting. The humor of Klee's approach is more of an interior humor, tinged with feeling (like that of Jean-Paul). It cannot be imitated from the outside. Witness, alas, what Dubuffet made of it. Reichel, a minor painter, is more faithful to this very German Romantic spirit.

In comparison, there is little to say, or nothing opportune, about the Surrealist group at the Salon d'Automne. This painting is currently at an impasse, (voluntarily) cluttered with too many impurities not to date, at a time concerned with purity of both means and end. From a photographic realism for romantic or lecherous schoolboys, it would be better to move on to photography and film in which Surrealism has a lot or perhaps everything to say. And if Ernst or Tanguy have proved their current right to be heard, the situation is very different for their younger colleagues.

This has led some fine minds to conclude rather hastily that art today is in a serious, perhaps mortal crisis. But though the season has been confused, it certainly hasn't been mediocre. The retrospective of Le Douanier reminded everyone—bourgeois connoisseurs and slightly new revolutionaries alike—that nothing can beat modesty before nature, the authenticity of inspiration, and each one's patient invention of their own language and craft. Miró, who is so different, dispenses almost the same

lesson, even where the fire of inspiration seems to have reduced everything to ashes. Finally, the Cubists of the Galerie de France emerged as beautiful as classics: and the eighty masterpieces of the Louvre as well as the *musée de la fresque* ["fresco museum"] proved the possibility of a dialogue between formidable ancestors and the young French painting.

About the almost general decadence of the Salons, I agree: providing we recognize at the Salon de Mai (that for the painters of this century) the merit of an (awkward) attempt to develop. And if there is chaos in all this, it is no doubt the kind that comes before births.

Either way, from this maze of motley, often hasty, or rather reserved exhibitions, two tendencies emerge: toward pure color, and toward abstraction. Taking into account the previously mentioned Surrealists, we can now see three or four main groups emerging.

1. The great elders: Bonnard and Matisse, Braque, Léger, Picasso and Rouault, of whom it can be said that by now they have delivered most of their message. The same can be said for Villon, a lone wolf all the same, at the meeting point of Cubism, pure color, and some mysterious space.
2. Other painters reflect, in their own way, the turmoil of the times. Goerg remains an excellent illustrator, but Gromaire repeats himself more and more. Güber [*sic*], alas, and Marchand are just waffling.
3. The so-called painters "of color," the famous battalion of the *12 peintres d'aujourd'hui* (Galerie de France 43) is now split: the Carré, Bazaine, and Lopicque group (wonderfully complementary), and then Estève; the Drouin group, where we must isolate Le Moâl, as a minor note but so rare and so right, and encourage the efforts of Singier and Manessier toward authenticity; but we are reticent about the rest of the team: Is heightening your colors and distorting in the Romanesque or Byzantine manner really enough to make you contemporary?
4. Finally, the abstractionists. Here we have burned the bridges with external reality and internal reality is visually manifested in pure and totally new forms: we see the link with Surrealist poetics, but also with a very classic—Cubist—concern with simplification and organization.

Painters of this tendency were exhibited some time ago at Drouin under the title *Art Concret*. Today, R. Cogniat calls



this epithet a “fake nose”; he deplores that the artists in question have lost “human contact with reality” (contact established by anecdote) and regrets the absence of that “human presence that exists in Picasso and Matisse.” By this yardstick, he says, the great artists of the past are mere illustrators. As we can see, here we are right at the heart of the plastic variant of the problem of the day (and even the Season), that of meaning.

Nothing, of course, is more desirable than being of one’s time. But even so, we must not confuse a transient ditty with profound music, and at extreme times we should avoid insisting on a formalist intellectualism that defines man from the outside.

The “great artists of the past” were not “illustrators”: their century could be narrated; ours, all excess, must be expressed. Is it really necessary to recall that the inner man, and what he dreams or creates, like Prometheus apparently from nothing, really does exist? All that is human is ours. And why, today, should we grant Matisse and Picasso that certificate of humanity we refused them twenty years ago? Thus, around 1920, Debussy was pitted against Stravinsky. In 1946, the construction of an anecdote is not based on any inner necessity, and therefore fails to be authentic. We should not be afraid to say it: “do like” Poussin or Velázquez, which is, literally, to abstract oneself from life, to work in death and refuse the concrete, that is to say, all the riches of the human microcosm. And if an art, by apparently abstract means, ends up with that perfectly autonomous concrete object, then does not the art object have a strict right to the epithet in question? I’ll stop there. To close the debate (or rather, to situate it), I cannot resist quoting a text by H. Charpentier on Mallarmé (another abstractionist). This text truly constitutes—for such a contested form of expression—a kind of consecration, and establishes its prestige.

Having noted that Mallarmé’s poetry does not narrate and proves nothing, H. Charpentier continues: “It is enough for me today to see in print and to hear these works of art, which do not touch the heart or feed the logical and reasoning faculty in any way, to know that Mallarmé was justified in writing them. And yet it is this intellectual faculty that they satisfy by offering it a kind of cerebral philter, an incomparable, aimless intoxication, that no other literature, to my knowledge, can offer.” (Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, Éd. Pléiade, p. 1469).

Could anyone put it better? I am extraordinarily moved by this encounter between the great solitary figure of *Igitur* and the cutting edge of today’s art. And I believe that man only “destroys” himself in this “solitude” (to speak like R. Cogniat) so as to better regain his true likenesses.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as “L’heure de l’étale: Bilan d’une année de peinture,” *Terre des Hommes*, no. 1 (September 29, 1945): 8–10.

## THE NEGRO IN PARIS<sup>1</sup>

James Baldwin

In Paris nowadays it is rather more difficult for an American Negro to become a really successful entertainer than it is rumored to have been some thirty years ago. For one thing, champagne has ceased to be drunk out of slippers, and the frivolously colored thousand-franc note is neither as elastic nor as freely spent as it was in the 1920’s. The musicians and singers who are here now must work very hard indeed to acquire the polish and style which will land them in the big time. Bearing witness to this eternally tantalizing possibility, performers whose eminence is unchallenged, like Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong, occasionally pass through. Some of their ambitious followers are in or near the big time already; others are gaining reputations which have yet to be tested in the States. Josephine Premice, who was just beginning to be known when I left New York, is here now singing in one of the Right Bank’s more elegant establishments; Gordon Heath, who will be remembered for his performances as the embattled soldier in Broadway’s *Deep Are the Roots* some seasons back, sings ballads nightly in his own night club on the Rue L’Abbaye; and everyone who comes to Paris these days sooner or later discovers Chez Inez, a night club in the Latin Quarter run by a singer named Inez Cavanaugh, which specializes in fried chicken and jazz. It is at Chez Inez that many an unknown first performs in public, going on thereafter, if not always to greater triumphs, at least to other night clubs, and possibly landing a contract to tour the Riviera during the spring and summer.

In general, only the Negro entertainers are able to maintain a useful and unquestioning comradeship with other Negroes. Their nonperforming, colored countrymen are, nearly to a man, incomparably more isolated, and it must be conceded that this isolation is deliberate. It is estimated that there are five hundred American Negroes now living in this city, the vast majority of them veterans studying on the GI Bill. They are studying everything from the Sorbonne's standard *Cour de Civilisation Française* to abnormal psychology, brain surgery, music, fine arts, and literature. Their isolation from each other is not difficult to understand if one bears in mind the axiom, unquestioned by American landlords, that Negroes are happy only when they are kept together. Those driven to break this pattern by leaving the U. S. ghettos have effected not merely a social and physical leave-taking but have also been precipitated into cruel psychological warfare. It is altogether inevitable that past humiliations should become associated not only with one's traditional oppressors but also with one's traditional kinfolk.

Thus the sight of a face from home is not invariably a source of joy, but can also quite easily become a source of embarrassment or rage. The American Negro in Paris is forced at last to exercise an undemocratic discrimination rarely practiced by Americans, that of judging his people, duck by duck, and distinguishing them one from another. Through this deliberate isolation, through lack of numbers, and above all through his own overwhelming need to be, as it were, forgotten, the American Negro in Paris is very nearly the invisible man.

The wariness with which he regards his colored kin is a natural extension of the wariness with which he regards all of his countrymen. At the beginning, certainly, he cherishes rather exaggerated hopes of the French. His white countrymen, by and large, fail to justify his fears, partly because the social climate does not encourage an outward display of racial bigotry, partly out of their awareness of being ambassadors, and finally, I should think, because they are themselves relieved at being no longer forced to think in terms of color. There remains, nevertheless, in the encounter of white Americans and Negro Americans the high potential of an awkward or an ugly situation.

The white American regards his darker brother through the distorting screen created by a lifetime of conditioning. He is accustomed to regard him as either a

needy and deserving martyr or as the soul of rhythm, but he is more than a little intimidated to find this stranger so many miles from home. At first he tends instinctively, whatever his intelligence may belatedly clamor, to take it as a reflection on his personal honor and good will; and at the same time, with that winning generosity, at once good-natured and uneasy, which characterizes Americans, he would like to establish communication, and sympathy, with his compatriot. "And how do *you* feel about it?" he would like to ask, "it" being anything—the Russians, Betty Grable, the Place de la Concorde. The trouble here is that any "it," so tentatively offered, may suddenly become loaded and vibrant with tension, creating in the air between the two thus met an intolerable atmosphere of danger.

The Negro, on the other hand, via the same conditioning which constricts the outward gesture of the whites, has learned to anticipate: As the mouth opens he divines what the tongue will utter. He has had time, too, long before he came to Paris, to reflect on the absolute and personally expensive futility of taking any one of his countrymen to task for his status in America, or of hoping to convey to them any of his experience. The American Negro and white do not, therefore, discuss the past, except in considerably guarded snatches. Both are quite willing, and indeed quite wise, to remark instead the considerably overrated impressiveness of the Eiffel Tower.

The Eiffel Tower has naturally long since ceased to divert the French, who consider that all Negroes arrive from America, trumpet-laden and twinkle-toed, bearing scars so unutterably painful that all of the glories of the French Republic may not suffice to heal them. This indignant generosity poses problems of its own, which, language and custom being what they are, are not so easily averted.

The European tends to avoid the really monumental confusion which might result from an attempt to apprehend the relationship of the forty-eight states to one another, clinging instead to such information as is afforded by radio, press, and film, to anecdotes considered to be illustrative of American life, and to the myth that we have ourselves perpetuated. The result, in conversation, is rather like seeing one's back yard reproduced with extreme fidelity, but in such a perspective that it becomes a place which one has never seen or visited, which never has existed, and which never can exist. The Negro is forced to say "Yes" to many a difficult question, and yet to deny

the conclusion to which his answers seem to point. His past, he now realizes, has not been simply a series of ropes and bonfires and humiliations, but something vastly more complex, which, as he thinks painfully, "It was much worse than that," was also, he irrationally feels, something much better. As it is useless to excoriate his countrymen, it is galling now to be pitied as a victim, to accept this ready sympathy which is limited only by its failure to accept him as an American. He finds himself involved, in another language, in the same old battle: the battle for his own identity. To accept the reality of his being an American becomes a matter involving his integrity and his greatest hopes, for only by accepting this reality can he hope to make articulate to himself or to others the uniqueness of his experience, and to set free the spirit so long anonymous and caged.

The ambivalence of his status is thrown into relief by his encounters with the Negro students from France's colonies who live in Paris. The French African comes from a region and a way of life which—at least from the American point of view—is exceedingly primitive, and where exploitation takes more naked forms. In Paris, the African Negro's status, conspicuous and subtly inconvenient, is that of a colonial; and he leads here the intangibly precarious life of someone abruptly and recently uprooted. His bitterness is unlike that of his American kinsman in that it is not so treacherously likely to be turned against himself. He has, not so very many miles away, a homeland to which his relationship, no less than his responsibility, is overwhelmingly clear: His country must be given—or it must seize—its freedom. This bitter ambition is shared by his fellow colonials, with whom he has a common language, and whom he has no wish whatever to avoid; without whose sustenance, indeed, he would be almost altogether lost in Paris. They live in groups together, in the same neighborhoods, in student hotels and under conditions which cannot fail to impress the American as almost unendurable.

Yet what the American is seeing is not simply the poverty of the student but the enormous gap between the European and American standards of living. *All* of the students in the Latin Quarter live in ageless, sinister-looking hotels; they are all forced continually to choose between cigarettes and cheese at lunch.

It is true that the poverty and anger which the American Negro sees must be related to Europe and not to America.

Yet, as he wishes for a moment that he were home again, where at least the terrain is familiar, there begins to race within him, like the beat of the tom-tom, echoes of a past which he has not yet been able to utilize, intimations of a responsibility which he has not yet been able to face. He begins to conjecture how much he has gained and lost during his long sojourn in the American Republic. The African before him has endured privation, injustice, medieval cruelty; but the African has not yet endured the utter alienation of himself from his people and his past. His mother did not sing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," and he has not, all his life long, ached for acceptance in a culture which pronounced straight hair and white skin the only acceptable beauty.

They face each other, the Negro and the African, over a gulf of three hundred years—an alienation too vast to be conquered in an evening's good will, too heavy and too double-edged ever to be trapped in speech. This alienation causes the Negro to recognize that he is a hybrid. Not a physical hybrid merely: In every aspect of his living he betrays the memory of the auction block and the impact of the happy ending. In white Americans he finds reflected—repeated, as it were, in a higher key—his tensions, his terrors, his tenderness. Dimly and for the first time, there begins to fall into perspective the nature of the roles they have played in the lives and history of each other. Now he is bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh; they have loved and hated and obsessed and feared each other and his blood is in their soil. Therefore he cannot deny them, nor can they ever be divorced.

The American Negro cannot explain to the African what surely seems in himself to be a want of manliness, of racial pride, a maudlin ability to forgive. It is difficult to make clear that he is not seeking to forfeit his birthright as a black man, but that, on the contrary, it is precisely this birthright which he is struggling to recognize and make articulate. Perhaps it now occurs to him that in this need to establish himself in relation to his past he is most American, that this depthless alienation from oneself and one's people is, in sum, the American experience.

Yet one day he will face his home again; nor can he realistically expect to find overwhelming changes. In America, it is true, the appearance is perpetually changing, each generation greeting with short-lived exultation yet more dazzling additions to our renowned façade. But the ghetto, anxiety, bitterness, and guilt



continue to breed their indescribable complex of tensions. What time will bring Americans is at last their own identity. It is on this dangerous voyage and in the same boat that the American Negro will make peace with himself and with the voiceless many thousands gone before him.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as "The Negro in Paris," *Reporter*, June 6, 1950, 34-36.

## **FOREIGN COLONIES IN PARIS FOR AMERICANS PARIS IS AN EXPERIENCE<sup>1</sup>**

Georges Boudaille

There is in Paris a whole life, a whole American society whose activity is not limited to the world of "American Express." There is the A.T.C., the experimental theater company in Montmartre. There is the American Student and Artist Center on Boulevard Raspail where they founded a little newspaper a few months ago, and there is now an American gallery in the shadow of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, whose significance reaches well beyond its exiguous premises.

When Bob Rosenwald abandoned the tiny shop that served as his studio to visit the south of France, his friends decided to turn it into a center for cultural exchanges and formed a cooperative to show their works. Thus the youngest artists, such as Rivers, D'Avino, and Chelinsky, whose determination was rewarded when the Musée d'Art Moderne purchased one of each of their works, represent the functioning wing of American art in Paris.

They come from all over, and their situations and positions are highly diverse, but the great majority have yet to pass the forty-year mark. An American painter who has made a name for themselves in their state or city does not seem attracted by travel, or at least does not want to risk their personal confidence in a dangerous confrontation with European art. However, it does seem that anyone in America who is young and ambitious, is dying to learn, to travel, to know, to better themselves. This notion of improvement, naive as it may seem, is very touching and very flattering.

And yet, what difficulties await them here, difficulties unknown at home! Housing, most of all. Indeed, one wonders if there would be so many of them in Paris were it not for the help and even the encouragement of their government. For there is no shortage of opportunities to come and complete their training in France. The GI Bill allows all veterans to devote as many years to education as they sacrificed to the army, to the war, and to serving their country. Many art school students therefore ask to come to France. There were 341 of them in December 1949 and 417 in April 1950 dispersed in private academies, from the Grande Chaumière to Léger's studio, from that of André Lhote to Académie Julian or the Académie Frochot, where one can find gifted, talented figures like Kelly Williams and James Tibbs (sic), who deserve to be singled out.

A certain number of them have grants from the Franco-American Fulbright agreement, which stipulates that the revenues from the liquidation of army surplus should be spent in the country where it was sold for the benefit of university and professional exchanges. They have the privilege of spending a minimum number of hours per week at the Beaux-Arts. But that hasn't stopped eleven of them from mounting an exhibition in the hall of the embassy's cultural relations section that, for all its interest and quality, was not at all academic.

For they are all first and foremost experimenters. What they have come to seek in Paris is less the teaching of our masters: those whose advice they seek avoid the responsibilities or tyranny of the teaching profession (some of them asked me, "Why doesn't Brancusi have an academy?"); and it is less the examples they can find on the walls of our museums (they have their own, and American collections can certainly bear comparison with ours), than the exaltation they get from the intellectual climate of our capital. And if one thing attracts them, it is the fact that this is totally lacking where they come from, and it is the masterpieces from the great periods of our architecture, be it Versailles or Chartres, be it our châteaux or our cathedrals. "That is worth the journey and the lengthy stay," says Winslow Eaves. For ten months now, he has been living on a grant in Montreuil with his wife, and a month ago he became the father of a little boy. A former student of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Detroit, when he got back from the South Pacific he was a professor of sculpture and ceramics in Utica,

New York. For another year he will be studying drawing in Gaumond's atelier at the Beaux-Arts and, above all, working alone before returning to the United States. But, before he does go back, he would like to visit Italy.

Chelimsky, too, has come "to see." What? Everything! But it is life in Paris itself that has really helped him to understand the development of painting since Cézanne, to enter into "his mind" and into Rembrandt's, and he dreams of integrating this into his American ideas.

Tajiri was driven by the same curiosity. He is about to start his third year of life in Paris. But if the thousand impressions of each street delight him, he admits to having been disappointed by the young French artists, especially by the sculptors. After Brancusi, Arp, Laurens, Giacometti, and apart from the isolated exception that is Gilioli, he looks in vain for the future of French sculpture. It's a strange destiny, Tajiri's: he is the nephew of a Japanese painter who came to the attention of the French public with a plaster composition at the Salon de Mai in 1949, and whose development many are now following with keen interest, while he himself dreams of going to study the Spanish primitives.

These are merely a few random examples out of a hundred. But the remarks you will hear from all their compatriots will be very similar, as we shall see, whether it is Rubington, Kinigstein, Geist, who makes mysterious totems, or anyone else. "In the United States we feel isolated, solitary. In Paris we feel freer, from every point of view. The trouble is that we often have to spend several months and a lot of money finding a studio." Add to this that they find life much cheaper in France.

That is why the plan to create a Cité des Arts attached to the Hôtel d'Aumont was greeted with such enthusiasm by those who have heard about it. That foreign artists could be fed and housed in a large architectural ensemble and have artistic exchanges with other artists of different nationalities, without being under any constraints, such as compulsory attendance in the worship of an official master, and thus be free of any material contingencies: this is an idea for which they struggle to find words strong enough. "That's great!" said Chelimsky when he heard about the project. "When will this Cité be open?" they all ask. Alas, the only answer I could give them was a rather evasive one. I saw their expressions cloud over. It won't be tomorrow. Another

thing that upsets them about this project is the thought of "being divided up by nationality." But now everyone is hopeful and waiting for the day when they can come back in such conditions of comfort, and let us reassure them, too, for it is unlikely that the Cité des Arts will choose classification by nationality, which is hardly in line with the organizers' intentions.

But scholarship recipients and veterans are not the only ones in Paris. There are all those who came by their own means, who "found a way"—people like Paul Arlt, a painter of landscapes that are at once surrealist and naive, who are working on the Marshall Plan, those who, like Donna M. Hill, have joined the administration and who, in exchange for a certain number of hours spent at the embassy, are free to look, learn, and paint, and those who have been seen among us for so long now that we have come to think of them as Parisians, like Martin Craig, like Anna Neagoë, who had already spent twenty years in Paris before the war, like Day Schnabel, who has just set off to show his works across the Atlantic before coming back to work in Paris, not to mention all those I forget and all those I don't know, and not to mention the Conservatoire américain in Fontainebleau, which constitutes a sizable colony of American artists.

For all of them, the discovery of Paris represents a milestone in their life and in their work. For the arts in France, it is a new catalyst, a touch of the exotic that should not be neglected.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as "Colonies étrangères à Paris: Pour les Américains... Paris est une expérience," *Arts*, August 18, 1950, 5.

## **PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS OF TODAY ATLAN<sup>1</sup>**

Michel Ragon

Atlan's studio is part Berber camp and part stall in the Casbah: a pile of frames, stretchers, of canvases turned to the wall, of chalk, paint tubes, of strange instruments, miscellaneous items... Among all this is a tree, a big leafless tree that inexplicably found its way to this first floor of a building in Montparnasse. Cats come and go

between the chairs. Those venturing for the first time into this lair will find the whole thing pretty confusing. One might think that these canvases turned to the wall are a stockpile for some future exhibition, but not at all. Atlan only ever has two or three canvases with him. The canvases turned to the wall are unfinished or rejected paintings. To his honor, Atlan, like his work, is very demanding, but we often find ourselves regretting his intransigence. If he cannot show his visitors more than a few paintings, this is obviously because many of them are traveling and that others are sold, but also because he is constantly questioning his painting and his paintings. Sometimes the studio floor, the furniture, the walls, are covered with hastily executed drawings. This is when Atlan is searching for new forms. He then destroys nearly all these sketches. From there, he will execute about ten paintings and then keep only one.

And yet the connoisseur looking at a painting by Atlan will be struck by the spontaneity of the line, the exuberance of the forms. Atlan's painting gives an impression of primitiveness, which is in fact the result of long, hard work.

I have been visiting Atlan's studio for several years now. And in that disordered and uncomfortable studio there is always a crowd. Of the most diverse, most cosmopolitan visitors, ranging from an Algerian laborer to Marcel Arland, from a young novelist to a Latin teacher, from a model from the nearby Atelier de la Grande Chaumière to Jean Paulhan, Arthur Adamov, and Clara Malraux. And all these people, who often have so little in common, come together harmoniously in the studio of this strange little man with curly black hair whose eyes sparkle with intelligence under a single eyebrow.

Starting in his early days with a totemic form of expression that could just as well be compared to Dogon masks as to pre-Columbian motifs, Atlan went on to explore a more informal flora that, in 1947, even came to crystallize in an abstraction for which he was not cut out. Then he arrived at a fauna dominated by sawtooth forms and beaks. Today, he seems to be making a synthesis of these different experiments. His dominant colors have also gone through certain phases. I have seen him in a red period (when the fauna was dominant) and a blue period. Sometimes the forms are organized on a rough gray-white surface. Sometimes they are surrounded and as if framed

by a hesitantly drawn black band. But the texture is always rich, a mixture of oil, chalks, and pastels.

These fantastical animals of which Henri Michaux wrote—"whose way of moving you cannot guess, with legs and appendages in all directions," that beast "raising its hind leg and revealing at the center of a tuft of red hair a perfidious, wicked green eye that believes in nothing; or there are entire collars of eyes in the neck that turn feverishly all around"—can indeed be made out in Atlan's painting, but that is because the viewer's imagination comes into play. In fact, Atlan yields the initiative to the forms and colors but never strays from a predetermined subject.

Is it Expressionist painting? Yes, no doubt, but an Abstract Expressionism. Is it abstract painting? Yes, no doubt, because no usual form can really be identified. But could we not also say that this is Surrealist painting, because it expresses an essentially fantastic universe? In fact, and this is one of its originalities, Atlan's work is connected to all three of these major movements in contemporary art while standing outside any school. Atlan is an isolated painter. His work is like no other.

#### Biographical note

Jean-Michel Atlan was born in Constantine, Algeria, on January 23, 1913. After excelling in philosophy at university in Paris, he was forced to cease all activity during the war. Accused of having participated in an attack, he escaped deportation by faking madness and was interned at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne and was released only upon the Liberation. Solo show at Galerie Maeght in 1947. Group shows: Gal. Maeght (*Le Noir est une couleur, Sur Quatre Murs*), Galerie de France, Salon de Mai, etc.... Illustrations for: *Description d'un Combat* by Kafka (Maeght, 1946); *Discours de Saint-Just* (J. Kober, 1949); *L'Architecte et le Magicien* by Michel Ragon (Rougerie, 1950).

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as "Peintres et sculpteurs d'aujourd'hui. Atlan," *Cimaise*, no. 1 (November 1953): 13–14.



## CLAIRE FALKENSTEIN<sup>1</sup>

Michel Tapié

The recent work of Claire Falkenstein lies at the very heart of the adventure which is today's art, that *art autre* which, after the structural terminus of the Classic spirit that Cubism was, and after the cognizance of its total liquidation by Dada, came to life about fifteen years ago beginning, in the United States, with Tobey and, in Europe, with Fautrier. In a movement begun in an atmosphere of total anarchy—and it could not have been otherwise at that time—among several isolated (and alas quickly imitated) individuals, the very slight distance we have come has already put several hundred, soon perhaps several thousand *autre* works of indisputable value at our disposal. Any confusion now can only lead to an academism of anarchy, almost here already. But this sterile trap, the greatest danger that attends the art of our time, can be avoided by setting free as soon as possible—a *posteriori* with regard to existing works—the bases of an aesthetic itself *autre*, without any retrospective tie to classic aesthetics (and hence without systematic opposition), an aesthetic at last on the scale of authentic new works and on that of the new philosophico-scientific necessities which obtrude unavoidably on psycho-sensory reflexes.

At this historic point, we can see to what extent Claire Falkenstein's recent work is situated in the new zones of efficacy. I wish to cite her complex and vigorously fired surfaces, and especially the series of SUNS which, as ultimate outposts of her techniques, suggests a possible future synthesis.

Claire Falkenstein joins to her rich and vivid intuition a sort of pantheistic governing wisdom which springs no less from a deep intellectual apprehension of the structural problems essential to our time. Starting from extensive research on forms structured not only from the Pythagorean geometries and rhythms, but even more clearly from the organic and the most freely dynamic, she has made the crucial element of her forms *continuity*, that concept which is one of the bases of present-day topology, by which the whole perception of spatial and formal relations has been challenged.

Her extraordinary SUN series deeply interests aestheticians, philosophers, architects, at the same time that it attracts the subtle antennae of true collectors and art lovers, because these works, bearers of a mysterious magic issuing from forms and spaces conceived on the plane of our needs, reveal to us the current problems of tensorial calculus, of the dynamic logistics of contradiction, problems of abstract space, of complex relations decipherable only by the most contemporary notions of what "number" can be (infinitesimal, real, transfinite, hypercomplex...). All these things concur to endow the new forms with sensory efficacies so rich that, by them and through them, it will one day be necessary to reconsider the Human Adventure, Eroticism, Drama, Love and Life which, if these forms are not vitiated by futile academism, must be the basis of their content. Claire Falkenstein is probably the artist who has led sculpture closest to the artistic needs of today.

Of all the changes that have taken place since Dadaism nothing startles art lovers more than sculpture of the *structures autres* genus: this reaction is the best proof, were such evidence still necessary at the present time, that only problems of structure are essential. All liberties are permissible, everything goes, the unexpected wins lyrical praise as does every form of monstrosity (the most shallow examples of representational art as well as the outbursts of post-Cubism or other violent isms) but beware of bringing up the subject of structures: curses will be called down upon your head—you have evidently touched on a subject which arouses fear or that is not considered a proper topic for discussion. Claire Falkenstein's sculpture has long had this disturbing quality. She, together with the young painter Serpan, are in the extreme vanguard of that very purposeful structural research, a *sculpture autre* at last that is the logical outcome to be expected after Galois, Jourdan, Cantor and many others besides, who, during the past hundred years, developed the idea and reached a point of abstract generalization where its very meaning underwent a change of potential. But the humdrum public still continued to work itself up over the old Platonic type of structures and those dream traditions now formally and symbolically desiccated, the initiates obviously became aware of this fact. None of the old criteria will work any more, or at least no more than they can when a fairly large number of new works, matched to present-day

criteria by judges of the aesthetic, will have oriented people's sensory reflexes in a different direction. Structural work completely *autre* is thus potentially deeply committed to the future. Where such steps are taken intentionally, with full understanding of their implications, many futile intermediate stages can be eliminated. Such is the work that is being done by four or five artists at most, Claire Falkenstein among them. Until 1950 she worked in San Francisco and taught sculpture at the California School of Fine Arts for several years—at the time when Clyfford Still was teaching painting there. She experienced day by day the development of West Coast art, the greatest contribution made so far by the United States to modern art and its most authentically original expression. She has worked in Paris for the past five years without bothering much to exhibit; she has also worked in Rome. She is experimenting all the time, using every raw material that can be worked, always on the look-out for new textures. Since 1951 she has worked almost exclusively with metal webs that can be used for very complex structures where the space enclosed plays as important a role as that outside. In her hands these webs become almost a new raw material, created to fit her needs, that she either hollows out, or hammers, or welds along the lines of stress and at essential points with great architectural lyricism and baroque profusion of inventiveness. Since her 1944 construction of carved and polished wood—*Vertebra*— where, starting from an organic pretext she went on to topological forms, she has never ceased to enrich her themes. The *Sign of Leda* gave her the opportunity to push this experience to its extreme limit; after this she began work in an infinitely more abstract domain with her series of *Suns* that follow each other as architectural structures showing lucidity of thought and a happy thrust towards formal expression in a field where functional systems of any sort are out of place. Sculpture completely *autre* is a rarity: painting, with its complete freedom, lends itself far more easily to the convulsive experiences of informal expression. Claire Falkenstein's work appears to defy the difficulties inherent to the contingencies of sculpture. She strides forward with full awareness in this inexhaustible field of structures, the most generalized ones of true abstraction where liberty preserves and increases its opportunities of investigation and expression.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as the foreword to the catalogue of Claire Falkenstein's exhibition (Paris: Galerie Rive Droite, January 1956), 10. Subsequently published in English in *Claire Falkenstein* (Rome: De Luca Art Monographs, 1958), 5–10.

## SCHOOLS OUT FOR PARIS<sup>1</sup>

Julien Alvard

This School of Paris is like the *Arlésienne*, everyone talks about it, nobody has ever seen it. One would think that it was born like *Dulcinea de Tobosa*, out of the imagination of a certain number of *Don Quixotes* whose *Sancho Panzas* are extremely clever in passing this respectable mantle quickly onto the shoulders of whoever is adroitly posed up on the pedestal. whether the pretext be a “summing up” or some sort of group.

But in spite of the obstinacy of the individuals presenting a list of painters under this banner, there is nonetheless no School of Paris, and they are strictly talking about nothing. It is entirely evident that Paris profits much more by what is delivered to the door than what it bestows in advantages in return for the instruction received. It is always ridiculous to contest with someone his origin, especially after he has accepted a “world-wide vocation,” as the concierges are like to say; he is no longer likely to bargain about his nationality:—the reputation of Paris is not founded on civic status.

Besides, this has nothing to do with the question. Really everything is a complete misunderstanding when such a concept is allowed to take form, though it be merely by complaisance, when precisely in Paris the new schools are abolished as soon as they try to deposit their birth certificate. That there have been since the Impressionists so many contradictory and antagonistic movements proves to what a point the myth of Paris is incompatible with the notion of a School.

There is in the issue of a movement an instant of reason where the approximative date and the more striking aspects are able to be fixed and defined. None of these instants of reason must survive and all must constantly come back to the origin.

## DESCARTES' WISE VIRGINS

One will perhaps say that it has no longer anything to do with a School properly so-called. That it is a long time since anyone believed in the virtues of education; that if one must define the Parisian influence it has more to do with the Cartesian climate and the idea of moderation that... which...

I have nothing to say about those who affirm that Descartes personifies both France and Reason. This is a sort of truism which makes even the most peaceful of characters bark. Above all, the idea of “French moderation” gives a particularly creamy picture of the mediocrity and imbecility of this unhappy country. It is more the opinion of the baker boy told by the grocer’s wife to the goose girl.

One should nonetheless have the right to ask why these Frenchmen so smitten with reason never have been able to come to an agreement on adopting on all circumstances the most sensible solution. There must be in any case one, for the eyes of Reason, otherwise all comes tumbling down. Apparently this country swarms with antagonistic reasons with particularly stubborn views and which feel loathe to capitulate even in the name of superior interests, and as by chance, in general the most insane ideas have the most success. There exists rather a sentiment of distrust particularly in regard to the great men who are generally held in poor esteem, also the sense of the ridiculous which turns away the alleged grandeurs; this French moderation decidedly does not work by the metric system. Let us add for memory that the cult of originality and the sense of social oppression have been pushed so far, that the slightest collective infatuation is interpreted as a depravation and an attack on individual personality.

## THE WHOLE TOWN'S TALKING

It isn't easy under these conditions to cultivate peacefully one's little reputation. In truth, Paris is an open city, open to the point of indifference. It is thus that we commonly see the madmen trample down the sages. Here the adventurers are fondled and flattered more than anyone else. But it is clear to see that they are excellent bit players for a theatre where the major roles must before all amuse the spectators.

As for the artistic resources, they are rather slim. Paris offers neither the best museums nor the best galleries, far from it. And there is no lack of people who will affirm that in this field the French are less than nothing. The public authorities consider, with the sanction of a particularly narrow-minded middle-class, that it is entirely needless to encourage the current trend of imposition. So much so that the Museum of Modern Art of a country which otherwise chirps with lovely tremolos about its reputation, extorting rather nice profits from it, is forced to insure its existence with a budget which would lead the most bemired enterprise of France to bankruptcy.

As for the patrons of the arts, the picture is disheartening! With the exception of a handful of barefoot boys who have a hard time as it is to find enough to keep a bird alive, and who cut the grains of rice in two to keep the buddies from starving, you can count on the fingers—of only one hand—the few persons who try to bring a bit of material aid to the artists. The rotten French middle-class with its characteristic “Nana” tastes, it patronizes Martine Carol and apes the 18th century marquises in buying Renoirs, Corots and Fragonards each one more fake than the other.

At least, perhaps Paris remains the city of consecration? One would ask by what mystery, seeing that so many means of diffusion are in a precarious state and condemned by all that is written.

You must see it to believe it. Not only the shows cause generally no sensation, but a crusade must be started in order to convince a critic to write about what he's seen. You're still lucky if you're dispatched in three lines somewhere between the Stock Exchange and the Death notices. Besides, you mustn't condemn the critics; when an article is longer than 15 lines nobody reads it. You must take it or leave it; what is said and what is repeated count much more than what is written: the best organized publicity is impotent to disarm the sweet tongues.

On the whole, a catastrophic situation, and which legitimately gives you something to think about. In France, however, one wouldn't dream of it: these things have been in this state for so long now that there is no reason not to leave them that way. But in other countries, the tendency toward commercial estimations and a certain chauvinistic optimism lead towards an evaluation of the chances of survival of the myth of Paris. It is hence



that about everywhere they're lighting up the Japanese lanterns getting ready for the joyful arrival of the funeral ceremony. "Background Paris, Foreground New York" writes superbly Mr. Thomas Hess, who esteems that from now on, thanks to lyric abstraction, the American virtues are going to be highly appreciated on the market.

How could it be otherwise when, as he sees it, Paris is just a vast necropolis comparable to the Rome of 1800, when the last blazes of Tiepolo and Guardi passed by. Mr. Hess seems not to be aware that Ingres and Delacroix preserved in France a certain reminiscence of Italian art and that abstract expressionism before it changed its citizenship to American had nonetheless some relations in Germany.

### **DIDEROT**

Painting in general and present painting in particular keep on asking those 64 dollar questions at each moment, putting at stake about everybody's skin, and you must be quick-witted to keep going. It is here that Paris begins to be interesting. This town is unconscious of reputations, and there are hardly any authorized voices (it's only the authorities who believe that they exist). However this is not solely a manifestation of a deplorable tendency for destroying even before having created; it is also, nonetheless, the expression of an interest that is never determined and which is constantly bringing up the question again on everything.

This situation is not new. Intellectual questions always have had much success in France. It is for this reason that interest in painting only developed slowly. Even in the 17th century the interest of the undertaking wasn't seen, as it wasn't numbered among the adornments of the mind. The art of imitation or of magnificence—there is nothing there except a desire to please, and its sole recall suffices to dry up Pascal's joyful tears.

It is to Diderot that we must give the merit of having introduced the discussion on painting. If he has only a few original ideas in the beginning, he at least knows how to impassion the debate by the vehemence that he throws into his quarrels. Also with music, he takes sides with the Bouffons, who represent in his mind the struggle for an art of expression, the same when he makes himself, with regard to painting, the champion of nature, or more exactly, of natural movement. Several years later, he is

sonorously finding fault with sensitivity: he is disgusted with Greuze, he has become the friend of Chardin, he is one of the rare persons who at the time perceived the enormous grandeur of Rembrandt. The thing which characterizes the contribution of Diderot is a way of discussing without ever refusing anything that would come into his mind, even if his argument were to perish by it. He is not contented solely with writing—he wants people to listen to him: you see him everywhere, in the salons, in the cafes, in the street. He is an untiring divulger. Actually, he gives the first draft for what is to become the most attractive side of Paris. In introducing a modern criticism, he opens the way to modern painting.

### **DIOGENES' BARREL**

The animation caused by Diderot has lost nothing of its spirit: the movement is there. Reputations are quickly made, and are undone even more rapidly. It doesn't suffice to make lovely phrases or to throw roses; one must attack, propose and answer. Beauty, good taste, seriousness are constantly knocked about, jostled and run over. Nothing resists, neither the facilities of fashion, nor the prestige of trends, nor the graveness of philosophy. More than that, the undertaking sweeps away all the other considerations, and a blinding atmosphere is created which allows the passing-by of the worst of conditions: sordid garret rooms, dirty hotels, undrinkable brews, back-shop swindles, nasty tricks, delusions of persecution. Evidently Diderot didn't foresee Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the right to dishonor, the possessed, all the Dostoyevsky atmosphere come to contribute to the triumph of the spirit over ugliness. But he amply aided in creating this intemporal space where everyone has the right to discover his Diogenes' barrel, to establish himself in it, and to lead, right up to the end, the most extraordinary careers of failures.

1st P.S. A new document for the evidence: the painter Calcagno joins the shrugs of his shoulders to the circumstantial appreciations of Mr. Hess. Begged by "Time" magazine to give his estimations on his woeful Parisian experiences, Calcagno specified that "today a growing number of U.S. expatriates are coming home convinced that there is no longer much contemporary European painting worth the compliment of imitation (sic)."

That on the other hand the obstacles erected by the French against the group show of his brother Left-Bank expatriates were so considerable that they were obliged to organize it themselves, for finally “the French sponsors backed out”.

Calcagno seems to forget that it is because of the internal (and eternal) quarrels of the group that not only the French sponsors but also the American sponsors were dissuaded from giving their aid. Let’s recall, on the contrary, that it was thanks to a French director of a French gallery that this show nonetheless took place.

Drawing his conclusion, Calcagno esteems that as far as Paris is concerned: “In another hundred years it will be just another dead museum city.”

2nd P.S. Sensational events arrive at a terrific pace: with the latest news it seems that Vienna is going to take New York’s place in a few days.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in English in *Cimaise*, 3rd series, no. 10 (October – November 1955): 4–6. The text has been lightly edited to correct obvious mistakes and typographical errors.

## **KARSKAYA<sup>1</sup>**

Herta Wescher

Born in southern Russia, studied medicine in Belgium and Paris, former hospital intern. During the war, concentrated on painting.

Solo exhibitions:

1943: Montpellier, Bergerac.

1946: Galerie Pétridès, Paris (preface by Carco).

1949: Galerie Breteau (prefaces by Francis Ponge, Jean Paulhan, Marc Bernard, Maurice Nadeau, Francis Carco); Mexico.

1950: Galerie Calligrammes, Paris.

1954: Galerie Colette Allendy. 1956: Galerie Arnaud, with [Jeanne] Coppel and [John-Franklin] Koenig; Galerie Grange, Lyon, with [Luis] Feito and Koenig.

Group exhibitions:

Exhibitions of “collages,” Galerie Arnaud, Paris, 1954; Galerie Aujourd’hui, Brussels, 1955; Rose Fried Gallery, New York, 1956; Salon Comparaisons, 1955–56; Divergences “3,” Galerie Arnaud.

Tapestry exhibitions in Brussels, 1954. Tapestry Prize of the City of Paris.

You’ll always find the door open when you go [to] Karskaya’s place. You go up the staircase worn by use, leading up from the courtyard of one of these old houses, whose spacious extent can hardly be guessed at, when you see one of them in coming up the narrow Rue St.-Jacques. It’s a romantic street where some noble old façades, inserted in between the shops and poor lodgings, evoke the long suite of generations that have lived in this quarter, neighboring the Sorbonne. When you’ve passed through Karskaya’s door, this perfume of French urban tradition melts away before the strange, dense atmosphere of another world, into which you are introduced by a pathway full of creeping vines, that seem to grow in their natural habitat. Then you penetrate into a curious labyrinth of rooms, furnished in a heterogeneous and surprising fashion: drawings of renowned artists, photos and books, small art objects such as this Indo-Chinese sculpture of a seated couple with their backs turned to you, because Karskaya has had enough of seeing their faces. You also discover a curious gate made of forged iron, a ghostly separation of filigree that she put up herself between two rooms, in order—she says—to keep the noise out. From time to time, she feels the desire to apply herself to manual tasks in order to embellish her surroundings: to paint her ceiling, or construct a large table whose iron legs she dug up Lord knows where. On the wall, a beautiful tapestry made after the design of the artist; and piled up on the floor or scattered a bit all over are quantities of different materials, ready to serve in her collages—materials that she gathers in the street, or out in the country, soiled papers or torn-down posters, strings, ribbons, splinters of wood and bits of leather. On each visit, you come across something new that no one except her ever took for an element capable of bringing a contribution to a work of art. Perhaps you will find on the worktable an assemblage of strange mosaics that she [is] in the process of making, each of them having a particular character: melancholy messages or astonishing images,

tightly-woven fabrics, or hidden writings. All of these compositions, as improvised as they might be in the beginning, are carefully elaborated—elements changed, harmonies established, accents of color added—before being finally determined. Then the different materials are transformed into factors of expression, their specific substances being distilled into tone values that nonetheless remain discreetly impregnated with remembrances of the real world.

What is valid for the collages, is valid for the paintings, the gouaches, and the drawings as well. Each of Karskaya's works shows the decision that was taken, the battle that may be won or lost when she engages herself in art. Her mastery of technical means is well-known, and she applies herself with the furious obstinacy of the good craftsman who wants his work to be solid. She knows that the inner balance of the compositions must be established in order to keep the improvisations from crumbling into vagueness, and the themes suggested by the slightest of indications of form and color are always linked to vigorous structures. This discipline alone permits her to advantageously show her fine sensitivity in the nuances of tone that in the end determine the radiance of her painting.

Karskaya's canvases are often created in series, for they take place through certain pictorial ideas whose transposition she seeks through multiple and simultaneous variations. Her imagination often turns about concrete subjects, of things seen in faraway countries, in a special light, of which only she remembers the outlines or the color scale. Such souvenirs live, latent, in her memory, only to reappear suddenly before her eyes. Then she throws overboard this spiritual ballast through the means of vehement sketches that become crystalized almost by themselves alone during the process of working, which is intense and conscious. Sometimes too, her need for communication attaches itself to poetic themes surpassing all spoken syntax.

Lately, it was the series of "Unanswered Letters" that are read and seen as heart-rending calls sent out to the world to try to shake off its indifference. Over the impasto grounds of the canvases, signs are written, categorical or nervous, in strips or dispersed spots of color, held together nonetheless by the sorrowful harmony of the tones. The blacks and the greys dominate, chanting the most somber of scales; however, blues and yellows may creep in among

them, softening the tragic aspect, brightening it with a sudden gayness, that comes from her confidence in the happy conclusion to all dramas.

Karskaya's art is a passionate art, directed by a spirit of rebellion against the commonplace and the gratuitous, by the mind of a searcher who is not contented with easy answers, and sure of the existence of riches that are hidden everywhere, waiting only to be brought to light. Artistic activity plays an essential role in her life, for it is this that has helped to overcome the throwbacks of fortune, in assuring her the necessary independence, even if it were gained at the expense of her personal happiness. To maintain the value of her creative work, she requires much of herself, destroying readily everything that doesn't satisfy her completely. She goes through periods of discouragement and self-doubt that cause her to be inactive up until the moment when her creative will gains her again, showing her a new way. Her character doesn't facilitate her relations with other people. Her extreme frankness delights itself in an unconcerned aggressiveness, and one must be aware of her qualities of sincerity in order not to be hurt by it. In talking of her Russian compatriots, she describes their peculiar character in order to explain her own to us: the ability to be at the same time roguish and candid, mistrustful and confident. One feels with her an exceptional open-heartedness, but at [the] same time a certain prudence in order to keep from throwing herself away on others. On her expressive face, often strained and tormented, a smile is always ready to break out, and the tyrannical maxims that she loves to pronounce, turn almost inevitably into gay banter. I was amused the other day to hear her friends salute her with "Hello, Cossack," and I secretly gave her [the] nickname of "pony of the steppes," finding with her this untiring energy that surpasses that of the stronger races; the joy of galloping, but also the taste of the wind over the vast expanses that probably blew around her cradle, and tinged her skin both on the outside and the inside.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in English in *Cimaise*, 3rd series, no. 6 (May 1956), 5–6. The text has been lightly edited to correct obvious mistakes and typographical errors.



## SCHOOL OF PARIS INFLUENCE OVER AMERICAN PAINTERS VITALITY OF PARIS<sup>1</sup>

Herta Wescher

If we admit the fact that in today's painting, the American School and the School of Paris are engaged in a battle to decide how the future will go, the two sides may be symbolized, perhaps, by an unlimited format opposed to a limited format. To illustrate this thesis, we will call up two factors: the group of American inspiration that came together with the idea of showing, at the Salon des Surindépendants, canvases at least two yards square, and the show "In Praise of the Small Format," at the Galerie La Roue, that was a rather important event this year.

Today's art, that tends towards the abolition of the concretely defined subject, can express itself, according to the personality of its advocates, in a more or less expansive or intensive manner. American painters, with their dynamic need of expressing themselves, worry little about the finishing of their canvases, whereas painters here in France, on the contrary, relinquish the idea of a careful elaboration with difficulty, considering that this gives their compositions a more consistent internal concentration.

It is not surprising that Americans living in Paris undergo the influence of their surroundings, and that we can notice in their works certain turning-points that seem to result from these encounters. It is thus that Riopelle, after his immense canvases that were based uniquely on structures and rhythms, has given us recently more modest compositions, where each formal element takes on again its particular meaning. The monotonous calligraphy that Chelimsky brought with him is in the process of articulating itself more and more, the uninterrupted processions breaking up, and a dramatic action taking hold of the detached fragments. Shirley Goldfarb, though enlarging her formats, augments the density of the strokes, wishing to give to her canvases a tightened consistency.

As far as techniques are concerned, when at the present time the "drip" and the impasto are in equal favor among the artists—each having their followers in the American and French camps—the "drip" style corresponds perhaps better to the easy-going side of the Americans of the Rothko and Sam Francis type, whereas the Paris school

prefers, for a while yet at least, thick paint, capable of being a more precise instrument.

The refinement of John-Franklin Koenig's vocabulary is difficult to imagine outside of France. He makes his paint undergo all sorts of treatments: grinding, scraping, dilution, and pressure, in order to obtain the most delicate of substance values and color tones. And their application on the canvas is done so prudently, that even from the direction of the different layers of color, finely-knit structures come forth, where the woof and the web spin subtle variations. The themes are written here in built-up impastos and reinforced tonalities, without their taking on precise contours, leaving them like snow-flakes that change into a driving rain, or cracks in the pavement that we suddenly perceive because of an unusual lighting. If the subject matter is nowise stable, presenting themselves to us more so as fleeting apparitions, the precise moment of their passage is apprehended, that reveals their secret to us.

Space is more opaque, and the temperature is hotter in Downing's canvases, where the tangling of the elements is pushed farther. Nervous lines make their way ceaselessly through the composition, their rhythm seemingly dictated by the beat of the heart. But what the unconscious mind brings to light, Downing gives it a conscious interpretation, directing the graphism, and captivating it in masses of color. If the visions sometimes unveil themselves in luminous clearings, the jungle around them remains impenetrable. We lose ourselves in unknown continents.

In intercepting the echoes from far-off countries that resound through today's painting, we well realize how much Paris is again the center of all of the cultural networks. Those of the Orient especially come to us from across the two hemispheres. After the remembrances of Mongol folklore brought to us by Kandinsky, after the Oriental myths that seep through the work of Klee, China and Japan now send us their messages across the Atlantic and the Pacific. Alcopley's drawings transmit the Japanese spirit of calligraphy, for which he felt a chosen affinity, keeping the suppleness of its signs. Fink, on the contrary, makes the fragmentary characters of a forgotten writing undergo an essential pictorial transposition, from which the influence of Paris is not absent. He gathers them about an imaginary axis that is established by prominent colors

in the center of a neutral background, or he plants them in a carefully elaborated ground of multiple impastos.

The reflections of Asiatic art that we also find in Childs' work are at the same time more evident and more united into a personal style. They belong to the very diverse images that give him the inspiration for his pictures, which he then submits to the process of his work, slowly elaborated, that is done in the aim of an internal enlightenment. To the elements of nature that live in them still, he imposes the laws of a solid construction, which he acknowledges as the exaction of the Paris School, readily accepted by all. His canvases suggest countless screens placed one on top of the other, each one having its proper place in the vast scale that leads into the distance, from the palpable to the imperceptible.

Far more Parisian than American, because of her taste for an extremely well-finished painting, Anita de Caro is to be found at the opposite pole from an "informal" art. The ideas for her canvases slowly ripen in her mind, taking a clear form before she goes to work. From the cities and the landscapes she has seen, she retains souvenirs distilled from the freshness and the calm of morning, the brilliance of sunlight, the fluctuations of wind and water. She translates them into rhythm and colors, showing us her joy or melancholy. Her painting is filled with this intimate poetry that gives fruit so well in the atmosphere of Paris, for which the romantic types among the American painters like to settle down here.

In the end, if the young Americans bring to today's art a fresh vitality, and delight in an unleashed violence, the French distinguish themselves from them by their greater sensitivity for painting values, acquired through a long tradition, backed up by a distinct sense of moderation and discipline.

American painters bring slips of exotic plants, that they confide to the earth of Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in English in *Cimaise*, 4th series, no. 2 (November–December 1956), 45. The text has been lightly edited to correct obvious mistakes and typographical errors.

## IS THE SCHOOL OF PARIS DESTINED TO DISAPPEAR? ARTS DOES A SURVEY OF FOREIGN PAINTERS<sup>1</sup>

Alain Jouffroy

14 artists answer no • 3 answer yes

Does the heart of art still beat in Paris? Some doubt it. Others claim that it beats in other capitals. The foreign painters who have come to Paris since the turn of the century and who gave the School of Paris its international prestige, the Chagalls, Picassos, Zadkines, Giacomettis, and Max Ernsts, keep the attention of art lovers the world over focused on Paris. But what will the situation be like tomorrow?

The American critic Greenberg has declared that "painting in New York is at least eight years ahead of Paris." He is presumably not aware that many young painters have come from countries all over to work and live here. Are the reasons why the masters of modern art came here the same reasons why the young are coming today?

During the war, New York was the refuge for some of the greatest painters of the School of Paris. They implanted a spiritual genre that made New York Paris's most dangerous rival. Apart from Marcel Duchamp, they all returned to Europe.

But it was important to ask foreign painters living in France themselves to define the reasons for their choice. Both the "masters" and the young.

Last week, Chagall, Survage, Zadkine, Severini, Matta, Borès, Tamayo, Campigli, and Leonor Fini unanimously declared that Paris remained the universal center of art.

This week, when the young artists are responding, that consensus is less in evidence.

### 7 QUESTIONS FOR A CLEARER VIEW

1. — Did you come to Paris for practical, intellectual reasons? What practical reasons, what intellectual reasons?

2. — What did you find here that was different from your own country? Did it help you in your work? Or do you

consider that you could have developed your art in the same direction elsewhere than in Paris?

3. — Can you precisely define the spiritual influence that Paris (of France in general, if you prefer) has had on you?

4. — Do you intend to go back to your home country one day? Or do you leave Paris from time to time? Why?

5. — Are you continuing a “national” tradition in your work in Paris, have you broken free of it here, or were you outside any tradition, even before you came to Paris?

6. — Is Paris still the artistic center of the world in your eyes? If not, why, and do you think it could be again?

7. — What, in your view, is the new element introduced by the foreign painters who have come to France since the turn of the century?

[SERGE] CHARCHOUNE (Russian, arrived in 1912):  
Paris is the heart of the world

1. To make a life, become a painter.
2. Freedom. Training closely corresponding to my aspirations. Anywhere else would have been different.
3. The innately French Cartesian atmosphere enabled me to put down roots in life.
4. I have never been back to my country, but in the future I can't say.
5. I have no national pictorial tradition. Nevertheless, I am Russian.
6. Paris is the artistic heart of the world.
7. Foreigners have broadened the conception of art, introduced new solutions, given free rein to the participation of lyricism, music, and rhythm.

—  
FRANCISCO NIEVA (Spanish, arrived in 1950):  
New York cannot replace Paris

1. I have had no qualms about breaking, for the moment, my most superficial links with Spanish life: if my country has kept its artistic prestige very much alive, that is thanks to all those faithful deserters.

2. In a certain sense, today's Paris has brought me nothing, and I doggedly maintain hostility between its current representatives and myself; but the spirit of classical France constitutes a necessary reactive for my temperament. This classical spirit, which I usually find away from the company of my colleagues, among cultivated and somewhat deliberately withdrawn people, seems to me a rich and generous soil where the ideas and forms they adopt develop most naturally.

3. Paris, nowadays, has too many foreigners at the head of its artistic dealings and speculations, and so it rather struggles to dispense its particular genre of culture and fully satisfy those who, like myself, enjoy Poussin and Diderot rather than trying to make money by painting with their feet like a peasant from the Danube. My quite bare Castile remains my only spiritual horizon, but the true France, the one that still strives to love life as it is, is becoming a necessary and stimulating contrast for me.

4. Every year I go to Spain once or twice to wash myself of a dangerous cosmopolitanism. And although I could never go back there for good, I hope that after my death I deserve the Spain of Heaven or of Hell, the two colonies that my Iberian civilization has been most successful in founding.

5. One cannot continue a tradition too consciously. I don't give it much thought. But I have just said that in France there is still something that is able to welcome and adopt certain riches from a very difficult transaction.

6. Paris, after the war, clearly seems to have demonstrated a vehement desire to cease being the artistic center of the world and even of Europe. Today, Paris should refrain from certain kinds of excess and prodigality and cultivate pride. So-called decadent Spain managed to produce figures of real importance in universal culture, for she knew how to be disdainful and to adapt with dignity to new situations. A people can rest from its civilizing feats by taking the pose of a prince or a tramp.

7. It was Paris that brought something to artists from all around the world who were bereft of their old capital, Rome. It is cultures that make artists, and not the other way round. El Greco was made by Toledo. I think New York still has a very long way to go before it can pick up the scepter.



NICOLAS SCHOFFER (Hungarian, arrived in 1936):  
Paris is a catalyst

1. Intellectual reasons. Continuation of studies at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Contacts with various movements.
2. An atmosphere conducive to creativity thanks to the numerous and significant exhibitions of living art, thanks to the museums and to the environment rich in prestigious amazelements.
3. Paris is a catalyst that induces a liberation and a psychic and intellectual relaxation in artists, enabling them to make the very most of their potential.
4. Perhaps.
5. No, I was and will always be far from all tradition.
6. Yes.
7. I do not think I can distinguish between foreign and French artists. The new elements that have arisen over the last half century result from this phenomenon of catalysis mentioned earlier, which acts without distinction on all those who have something to say.

[CONSTANTINE] ANDREOU (Greek, arrived in 1945):  
Studios are needed

1. For practical reasons, I obtained a grant from the French government; intellectual, because I felt that Paris was the only place where I could carry out my ideas.
2. a) A greater number of artists than in my own country.  
b) Yes, because of the emulation.  
c.) No, only in Paris.
3. I could better understand the artistic movement of our day here.
4. a) No.  
b) Yes, for my exhibitions abroad.
5. In Paris I was able to completely free myself of my country's traditional art.
6. a) Yes.  
b) And it will continue to be, providing that artists can find rooms and have studios.
7. They helped make Paris the center of the arts.

[GIANNI] BERTINI (Italian, arrived in 1950):  
More "nerve" in New York

1. Practical? No kidding! And I always thought that in Paris people lived like savages!
2. If you want to talk about the help provided by the milieu, I believe that Paris alone (when you live confined to Saint-Germain or the Deux Magots) would not offer much more than another capital. But as a crossroads, a meeting place for people who have things to say to each other, it has much greater value. Anyway, when I can I like to travel, because sometimes, even in so-called dead cities, I find details that I would not come across if I remained a prisoner in Paris.
5. Feeling Parisian does not mean I have lost my roots. My tradition (which is, after all, a very important tradition, because it comes from the Renaissance) exists, and I would be very foolish to try to stifle it. For me, whatever you do, you're always marked by the place where you spent the first fifteen years of your life.

Besides, if all the people who come to Paris for something very well defined tried to camouflage themselves as Frenchmen, Paris would lose its interest. Also, I wouldn't gain much from swapping the young spirit prevailing among the Italians for the old spirit of the French.

6. Given that I am very European, in spite of it all, I believe that Paris can remain a very big artistic center for a long time to come. And that is not a blessing; for all their inarticulacy, I think the artists in New York (for example) have a bit more nerve.

That being said, there are still more Americans who come to Europe and in particular to Paris than Europeans who go to America. And this exchange of currents is, in the end, what most interests me.

BONA [TIBERTELLI DE PISIS] (Italian, arrived in 1947):  
Here, the bourgeois can discard their airs

1. The first time I came to Paris I was with my uncle de Pisis, with whom I'd been living for some years. I came back shortly afterward, when I married André Pieyre de Mandiargues.
2. The possibility of getting away from the bourgeois milieu I belonged to, and therefore a feeling of freedom, which didn't seem possible in Italy. Discovering Surrealism, what with the love I already had for metaphysical painting, was

very important for me. I am sure that Paris has had a big influence on me, but I could not say that my work would have been different if I lived elsewhere.

3. Not exactly, but I am happy to see that people here can like an artist's work without worrying about their nationality.

4. I go often to Italy and also to other countries because I love to travel and in the end I need nature.

5. I hate the word "national" and I don't much like traditions (the Greek, Roman, or Renaissance ones that would be mine). I leave that concern to the professors.

6. Yes, although official critics overestimate certain values. But I think there are others that people in Paris don't recognize and that are very grand and very important.

7. If there is something new that has been brought to France by foreign painters since the turn of the century, it is probably the spirit of revolt and humor (as in Max Ernst), which are inseparable from poetry.

—

[ALICIA] PENALBA (Argentina, arrived in 1948):

The French School no longer exists

1. When I left my country, in 1948, I went looking for another meaning for my life: I found that meaning in Paris.

2. I found the climate that enabled me to launch off into the prospective space of creation, in an adventure without limits.

3. I do not feel capable of formulating a precise position. I do not even believe that this is possible.

4. I do contemplate going back to my country, but I will never leave France!

5. My country is richer in its future than in its past. The traditions that I sensed there all come from outside: from France, from Mexico, etc., but above all from France. In coming to Paris I went deeper into these traditions and at the same time broke free of them.

6. Paris is still the focal point of all living visual experiences. Though it is still the meeting place for artists from all around the world, it is no longer the very source of creation, as it was forty years ago.

The French School has ceased to exist as a collective movement, but it still has some remarkable artistic personalities.

This, obviously, can serve as a springboard for a new departure. Providing French artists don't retreat into sterile nostalgia for the great visual tradition of their past.

7. Foreign artists—artists that is, not just painters—have introduced into plastic art a dimension of detachment and irony with regard to more imperative traditions. This power of negation from outside was taken up by French artists in the most fruitful and authentic way.

[LEONARDO] CREMONINI (Italian, arrived in 1951) :

New York is the equal of Paris

1. I came to Paris in 1951 on a French study grant and with the obvious intellectual reasons that make a young painter want to know Paris.

2. In Paris I found more freedom and respect for all aesthetic approaches than I had found in my own country. In Paris I also had the impression I could more fully know my times and my contemporaries.

3. It is not a spiritual influence but rather a climate of intellectual and physical freedom that is conducive to work.

4. I spend several months a year on islands in the Italian Mediterranean because I also love to work in a quiet place where I can recapture, with detachment, the spirit of my country.

5. I am not trying to continue a national tradition or free myself from one. I think I have kept involuntary, almost physical, links with my country. These connections don't bother me at all in my work in Paris but form part of my freedom.

6. I think there are now two artistic centers in the world: Paris and New York. Paris is certainly still the artistic center of Europe.

7. A European painting, perhaps?

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as "L'école de Paris est-elle condamnée? Enquête auprès des artistes étrangers," *Arts*, no. 656–657 (February 12–18, 1958): 13.

## US GO HOME AND COME BACK LATER<sup>1</sup>

Pierre Restany

We Frenchmen, in the long run, we like Americans. They're always a little slow to warm up, and like to be asked twice, but once they're started, the least you can say is that you notice them. Finally, once your enthusiasm and curiosity is satiated, you see that they're badly behaved, and they bother you, and you wish they were back where they came from. But you don't want it to be for good, for even with all the bother they give you, you feel that from their contact something good remains.

What, yesterday, was limited to cars, jukeboxes and K rations, has spread out all over today; the proof of this can be seen with the present exposition at the Musée d'Art Moderne.

Jackson Pollock, and New American Painting. God knows how much we've heard about this American Painting. How many times our mouths have watered, tantalized by the distant fascinating myths. How many little untalented wise guys here used Pollock to try to justify their bad cuisine; at least, on the other side of the water, his compatriots, a bit more honest, perhaps, generally let him alone. Pollock, unchallenged chief, had no school around him in the States.

For it is he, without the slightest doubt, who is the great, the out-size personality, with all the faults of originality and greatness, his startling irregularities, and his sublime pinnacles. His mature period seems limited in time, between 1946 and 1953, with extraordinary high points in 1948–50. But what does it matter, what happened before or after? Before 1946, it was an undrinkable cocktail mixed from the oddest scraps of Cubism à la Picasso, Surrealist automatic writing, the symbolistic semantics of Miró and Masson, and the sunny Expressionism of Hofmann. After 1953, his violence was toned down, his attitudes were more conventional.

But during seven years of splatterings, this man is astounding, stunning. Some of these dripping paintings, with their intrinsic monumentality and spaciousness, create fascinating masterworks capable of defying time.

And I don't want to hear anything about American painting here, just Painting, and great Painting.

"American" painting is to be found with all of the followers trailing behind de Kooning (who is, for that matter, badly represented): the Neo-Expressionists such as Brooks, Tworkov, Grace Hartigan—or with the surrealist formalists of the Gorky Suite: Baziotes and Gottlieb. With the geometrical Newman and the Neo-Constructivist Tomlin we have the inevitable leftovers of this presentation of grand quality, spirituality, and high tension.

One of the aspects of the American pictorial verity is the daring within the revolt, the obsessive violence of the gesture creating the new situations of spaciousness. The writer, Pavia (in "It Is"—Spring 1958, No. 1, page 4) remarked this: "A new sense of space came ... from the persistence of this particular notion: that the revolt was not basic enough." And it's certain that Pollock's space arrived at a new power, and showed a sense of new proportions. Revolt created here the most remarkable kind of excesses.

But this fundamental aspect is not the only one. There exists another kind of American climate from which revolt and defiance are absent, where the pictorial gesture attains new spatial norms, but using pathways that are secret and internal. This space of diffused spirituality and mysterious inwardness, can specially be found with Tobey, whose absence from this ensemble is highly regrettable. Also with Rothko and Still who seem "strangers" on these walls. Sam Francis, who is something apart, becomes the instrument of the miracle that links Rothko to Monet. And this space can also be found in the heart of the gigantic calligraphies of Kline, in Guston's "Mirror" and "Clock," perhaps also in Stamos' "White Field." It's these adventures that we should retain, to meditate or discover. On their limits they seem to meet Pollock's space, far beyond the violence that they turn away from, that he exhausted. On this level we become aware of the new evidence that is also common to our European masters of "informal" painting. And from here on, how can we help but to repeat along with Pollock that "the fundamental problems of contemporary painting are not the prerogative of one single country."



This Yankee rendez-vous was not useless. It gave proof to those who didn't know or who didn't want to know, that from now on there exists on the other side of the Atlantic a spiritual climate that is capable of bringing some original solutions to the essential necessities of Art. So go back home, Americans, and come back to see us when you have something new to astonish us with: for instance, a second Pollock.

<sup>1</sup>Originally published in English in *Cimaise*, 6th series, no. 3 (January–February–March, 1959), 36–37.

## 1964 EVERYDAY MYTHOLOGIES<sup>1</sup>

Gérald Gassiot-Talabot

The history of art is nothing more than a succession of actions and reactions more or less controlled by those who claim to govern them. After the preeminence of Abstract Expressionism and lyrical abstraction, we are witnessing on both sides of the Atlantic a wave of “objectification.” Be it Nouveau Réalisme, with its wholehearted embrace of the object in the raw, or Pop Art, with its uncompromising snapshots of daily life through processes often derived from the mass market, and even the “New Tendencies” of Neo-Gestalt, as they say in Italy, which introduce movement into constructivist compositions and often present solutions that are very close to those that emerged in the heyday of geometrical abstraction: we are faced with an aesthetic attitude that has more to do with observation than with creative subjectivity. The stylistic excesses, the paroxysm of the object as practiced by European Nouveaux Réalistes and American Neo-Dadaists, the deadpan concoctions of Pop Art and constructive kineticism all inform choices that seem to leave less and less leeway for the artist. However, among these tendencies vying for prominence in the antechamber of the avant-garde, Pop has the merit of putting the accent on the mundane necessity to reintroduce the human phenomenon into contemporary art, if only by the simple product designation of urban civilization enlarged to the scale of a monstrous icon or advertising

sign, which, given the current confusion of values, signifies exactly the same thing. At the same time, the onslaught of the American School, powerfully supported by the concert of galleries, has caused a certain number of European artists, most of whom belong to the School of Paris and subjected to the demands of solitary work, to feel the need to take into account an increasingly complex and rich everyday reality that combines the games of the city, the holy objects of a civilization dedicated to the cult of consumer goods, the brutal gestures of an order founded on strength and cunning, the clash of signals, movements, and injunctions that each day traumatize modern man. These artists, who are not unaware of the precedents of Picasso, Dubuffet, Matta, and Michaux, and who are often close to their sensibility and experiments, have in common the fact that they refused to be mere indifferent or jaded witnesses, on whom reality imposes itself by its own inertia, by its invasive and obsessive presence. They have all sought to relate to it in such a way as to retain the flavor, the particular charm, and the power of conviction of all that stems from confidence or cry, celebration or indictment. That most of them go no further than mocking or accusatory testimony should not surprise us. The world we live in, that has been made for us, and that we continue to make, arouses nausea and sarcasm much more than participation, but we must note that to their credit they have not simply walked up and down its more comfortable paths, isolated a few symbolic objects, and added to the crushing effect of urban imagery the oppressive impassiveness of anonymous panels that sensibility refuses to integrate into the emotive and unpredictable domain of art. Most of the time, humor, mischief, and a lucidity that is allergic to hot air take the edge off all that is unbearable and horrible in this accusation, and give it the necessary scale of all human relativity. May we be allowed, even beyond the excess and the rebellion, to insist on this moderation that does not lose sight of the fact that this art speaks to the men of today and holds up to them a fraternal mirror. Indeed, here urban mythology joins with a process that is much less reducible than it appears to the strict facts of our current civilization. The human condition is described there in a few peremptory movements that come from the eternity of struggle and dream. That is why we have included in our lists the names of Foldès and Golub, both of whom—one

with his magical allegiances, his semi-edifying, semi-perverse tales; and the other with his taste for antique monumentality—capture the permanent world of great myths. In this regard, let us note one of the originalities of the collective approach taken by these artists from different visual backgrounds, and who have no more contact with one another than through small groups, without having had the chance to compare their experiments: they counter the static derision of American Pop with the precious movement of life, grasped in its continuity or in one of its privileged moments. Indeed, that these painters eschew narrative art through the unfolding or partitioning of successive scenes, as do Foldès, Reuterswärd, Perilli, Voss, Gäitis, Novelli, Recalcati, Fahlström (with his “Opera”), or that, like Bertholo, Saul, Golub, Klasen, Télémaque, Arroyo, Gironella, Rancillac, Dado, Cremonini, Bettencourt, and Monory, they impose the vision of a shocking image caught in the movement of life itself, or even if, like Berni, they follow the story of their colorful figures from one painting to another, they are reintroducing all the meaning of duration into the context of painting. As for Pistoletto, who in appearance is moving ever closer to Pop formulations, he captures with the polished mirror surfaces on which he places his figures all the passersby in the city, all his chance partners. Standing before their canvases, even if there is no narrative or temporal completion, we can sense that there is a “before” and an “after,” that the characters and the objects are possessed by their own history, that a destiny is leading them where they must go, governing their gatherings and postures and deciding on a latent future. Dramas, abductions, hold-ups have just occurred: woman, whom Raysse lights up with neon, whom Bertini takes under his claw, offers or sells herself; homunculi are buzzing around in every direction; a host of unidentified objects, with Réquichot, Bertholo, even Télémaque, is spreading over the canvas. Even when the allusions and representation are more suggestive, as with Alleyn, Samuel Buri, and Arnal, we find these autonomous thematic developments, that “direction” in the composition of the work, and, of course, the reference to the mythology of primitive forms (Alleyn’s interest in primitive tribes; Arnal’s research into generative forms and imprints) that ground the painters in an adventure whose most obvious, most denunciatory, most exclamatory aspect they reject. It is also in seeking this

area beyond the object and the sign that sculptors take up position in that family of the spirit, even if they quite evidently do not share the current concerns with movement and temporality on the part of painters (except for Foldès with his image machines, Raynaud with his road signs, and Beynon, with his photographs heightened with objects). But Kalinowski’s crates, Kramer’s rotating bone cages, Brusse’s “instruments of torture,” the totem-dolls of Niki de Saint-Phalle, and the bathyscaphe of Geissler, of course, elude any kind of objective definition. To name them is to betray and travesty them, for they have nothing to do with what these vain analogies offer our imagination. Arnal, with his montages of pseudo-objects and faux organs, more explicitly obtains a surprising synthesis of impossible machines, but each of the sculptors we have assembled here carries in their works a bit of that everyday mythology of the object that we will never cease to have to tame, and whose meaning will always escape us to some extent.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as the foreword to the catalogue of the exhibition *Mythologies quotidiennes* (Paris: Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, July–October, 1964). This is the translation of the version published as “1964. Mythologies quotidiennes,” in Gérald Gassiot-Talabot, *La figuration narrative*, intro. by Jean-Luc Chalumeau, ed. Jacqueline Chambon (Paris: Critiques d’art, 2003), 13–16.

## FOR A REVOLUTION OF THE GAZE<sup>1</sup>

Alain Jouffroy

*As regards all visible objects, three things must be considered. These are the position of the eye which sees, that of the object seen, and the position of the light which illuminates the object.*

—Leonardo da Vinci

The artists of the new generation are unusually aware of what they call their independence and freedom. This kind of chaste restraint, this exaggerated discretion and

modesty, this fear, above all, of not stepping off the paths already beaten by the fathers of modern art, is all starting to come apart at the seams, and it seems that the most aggressive assaults—action painting, the prophetic outpourings of certain poets of the Beat Generation—were merely the first recognized signs of a much bigger explosion that is going beyond borders, schools, and ideological chauvinism on all sides.

Charles Estienne, the inventor of “Tachisme,” has announced “the end of isms”: the current avant-garde is no longer limited to this or that city, movement, or aesthetic tendency, but has made its own river burst its banks, and every free man, or at least every man who is a prey to his own demons and who considers himself free, can now go all the way to the extreme end of the possible. The “time of the assassins” is upon us, but the crimes committed are works, “creative acts.” Allow me to explain myself: no artist can, without making a shocking mockery of things, repeat himself, nor even uniformly respect his own laws. Modern art—that utopian adventure begun in around 1910 with Kandinsky, Picabia, Duchamp, and the Futurists—is bound to explode outside its own frame and be born a second time. It is this second birth of modern art that we are now witnessing, from New York to Paris, from Paris to Milan, from Milan to Tokyo, from Tokyo to Warsaw. But the paradox is that most of the “directors” of this museum that modern art has become for itself are bringing to bear all the recognized greats’ influence, which is immense and too grandiose, upon the investigations carried out by the artists of the new generation. It may one day be necessary to dismantle modern art museums all over the world, so that the revolution that has begun has the chance to become “permanent” and is not hampered by anything, is not bogged down in memories, and can forge its own path toward the future. The warning signs of this revolt against the clichés of modern art, of this resurrection beyond all isms, are, in Paris, a handful of young artists from all sorts of backgrounds (and motivated by diverse if not conflicting intentions) who are spreading the light. It is all very fascinating to observe, and here I shall mention a few whose courage, ardent utopianism, and lucidity I wish to acknowledge. There is, first of all, Raymond Hains and Jacques de la Villeglé who, as early as 1947, decided to consider as artworks the posters that they gathered on the walls of Paris, and who manage to

express themselves, in an indirect and detached way, through this painting made by all that is the poster.<sup>2</sup> There is François Dufrêne who, even more subtly, exhibits the “undersides” of posters, in which man speaks to the wall, and the wall to man. There is Jean Tinguely, whose latest antifunctional machines and his self-destroying machine are veritable object-poems with a power of lyrical evocation that is absolutely new. There is Takis, whose “telemagnetic” sculptures (in which the force of gravity is, for the first time, taken as the work’s subject and invisible heart) are acts of liberation from all aestheticism and at the same time receptacles of pure energy. There is Hundertwasser, who has just fought against modern academicism right at the heart of an academy, in Hamburg, and who has managed to make all systems for teaching modern art look ridiculous. There is Agam, whose idea of a work that can be constantly altered by the viewer is certainly one of the most “stirring” an artist has ever had. There is Hiquily, whose painting machine, which can produce “abstract” paintings with a real lyrical thrust to them in just a few seconds, casts a critical light on American action painting. There is Jean-Jacques Lebel, who manages to combine poetic and visual activity and manifests a provocative sense of freedom in everything he does.<sup>3</sup> There is Arman, whose “accumulations” of identical objects free collage of any aestheticism and give us the dizziness of the loss of identity. There is François Dufrêne, again, whose “cry-rhythms” constitute a spectacular transcendence of Lettrisme of any kind and carry it into a dimension where poetry has but seldom ventured since Artaud, that of the inner body, the most secret world of the organs and of breath. There is Yves Klein, whose latest novelty, which consists in making paintings from a distance, using naked models covered in fresh paint whom he asks to address the canvas, changes the artist’s relation to his art much more clearly than his “monochrome” works. And the list could continue.

All the artists I have mentioned share a particularity: they could easily change direction from one day to the next, and seem determined not to let themselves be confined by anything, whatever it is.

This mobility looks suspicious and makes all security seekers wary. And yet it is no doubt this mobility that is creative. In moving, these artists are liable to set in



motion what is most restive and slow in the world: the spirit. By being aware of their mobility, they can transcend themselves, and take the chance of never becoming the *rentiers* of their own originality.

For me, the current situation for young artists is comparable to that of Caryl Chessman during the years of his reprieve: condemned by the idea that everyone can bring about (and not just journalists) an inexorable apocalypse. And yet, it is by fighting this *idée fixe* every day, by constantly resisting the temptation to accept finitude, that he can hope to *change life*. Every artist is a “Caryl” fighting to change the judgment that may be passed on him, and that obliges him to reflect on those who pronounce that judgment. It is only the artist’s attitude to his work, like the criminal’s attitude to his crime, which makes that work or that crime an event, an opening onto the possible. The current “revolt” is impelling artists to think beyond being a maker and to show themselves to be creative in their behavior as much as by their works; or as Marcel Duchamp puts it so very well: to “expand their way of breathing.”

To speak of painting today offers the pretext of talking about something else that is important in another way. In any event, whether we like it or not, we are beyond the borders of aesthetic seriousness, beyond the nothingness of the commercial avant-garde, beyond *what’s happening* in Paris and *what’s happening* in New York. Duchamp was saying the other day, “The most surrealist thing at the moment would be a ‘socialist realist’ painting in the middle of abstract pictures.”<sup>4</sup> True, there are still many serious critics, like Nello Ponente, who I admire for the care and the talent he puts into analyzing what, according to him, are *contemporary tendencies*,<sup>5</sup> and I do feel outrageously frivolous if I compare myself to them. But one thing is clear: painting, as such (without even discussing painting-painting), strikes me today as being anachronistic, derisory, and pathetically outdated. It is surviving.

And yet—and this has a great deal to do with my friends and the critiques they give to me, not to mention their illusions and hopes—the international defeat of painting in the face of the future, the beautiful luxury and romantic prestige that it perpetuates come what may, certainly do not leave me indifferent.

For the last few months, time seems to have sped up: I felt it powerfully, as if under the effects of a drug. The consumption of ideas and images is beginning to look like the film that comes together instantaneously, so they say, when we are in free fall through empty space. Some young artists—among the hundreds of thousands who are seeking or think they are seeking their Grail—seem to me to be more consciously taking part in this accelerated consumption. Those who are most effectively countering the permitted aesthetic or intellectual demands, those who are working to bring about a revision of judgments, a transformation of viewpoint and understanding, those people want to say: the revolution that needs to be effected is that of the gaze we cast on things, and on art in particular.

That is why I have always been so interested in Duchamp: every art object, ultimately, is just a “readymade” that is *more or less assisted*, more or less “unhappy”: this is true, in any case, for Pollock, for Hartung, for Burri, for Louise Nevelson, and not only for César’s compressed cars. We could thus reverse that famous definition by Maurice Denis: “a painting—before being a flat surface covered with colors put together in a certain order—is essentially a battle horse, a nude woman, or an anecdote of some sort.” Painting is once again a servant, almost a slave, and it is what goes on inside of us when we look at it that decides its importance. To parody Gurdjieff, everybody could say: *art is real only then, when “I look.”*

More than that, it seems to me that every painting today loses its lifeblood if it does not in some way deny its nature as a painting. It is no coincidence if torn posters, the undersides of posters, kinetic objects, antifunctional and telemagnetic objects, “literary” or absolutely wild paintings (from Bernard Dufour to J.-J. Lebel, from Raymond Hains to Hundertwasser, from Tinguely to Spoerri, from Rauschenberg to Jorge Piqueras, from François Dufrêne to Takis) strike me as more full of life—of risk—than the nice works, whether tranquil or dramatic, made by painters concerned with “fine painting.”

It is not simple caprice, either, if I am more fascinated by Michaux’s mescaline-fueled drawings than by Tobey’s gouaches (although they are almost as intense). Exceptional experience, when it is expressed, shatters the limits of expression. *The exceptional viewpoint* is the

only one that compels attention: that of Raymond Hains, for example, which led him—after a few remarkable ventures in photography—to produce a body of work exclusively made up of torn posters. The artist is the inventor of a point of view: one cannot imagine truly “creative” work without such an invention. Meret Oppenheim’s fur teacup has become the ideal model for our fascination; after the kingdom of pure painting comes that of *pure invention*.

We are a long way from Dadaism! And yet there was something of all this in the *Merz* by Schwitters, there was something of this in Man Ray’s iron, and there was something of this in Duchamp’s *Bicycle Wheel* (and in his *Dart Object*). But in the work of these three masters, what detached humor, what casualness, what superb indifference! Intelligence alone is what led and guided them, like the theoreticians of new ways of seeing.

But we who have inherited (there is no other word) this way of seeing find ourselves in a different world from that against which the Dadaists fought. That is why we do not see the Dadaist works with the eyes of their makers: for us, Duchamp’s *Bottle Rack* is not an anti-masterpiece, it is not anti-art, it is what is always eluding us and what we cannot do without, it is reality and the distance that separates us from it.

Duchamp disdainfully snubbed the world around him, and he never felt the need to dramatize. His revolt was ironic. Quite frankly, such lordly coldness is a luxury we would struggle to afford. Tinguely’s antifunctional machines are neither aristocratic nor cold nor ironic: they disturb, they worry with their cacophonous absurdity. They rave. Rauschenberg’s Combine paintings are not humorous: they remind us of the terrifying fences of early morning in the suburbs, of the tragic anarchy of wastelands, of the dereliction of the overwhelmed man of the city. Compared to the black boxes and mystical cupboards of Louise Nevelson, the *Merz* sculptures of Schwitters were gay. As for the posters by Hains,<sup>6</sup> Villeglé, and Dufrêne, they literally have us with our backs to the wall. The world we live in transpires through them and their lacerations correspond to anger, to rage, more than to gratuitous gestures.

That Takis, for example, should declare that the theme of his telemagnetic sculptures is *the impossible* (the

impossibility of a relationship between two beings, the impossibility of contact, of fusion, etc.) is a sign. His innovation, which consists in using magnets to show visible static tension, refers, for him, to a reality that is not only physical but “internal.” True (as John Ashbery has observed), these sculptures recall the machines invented by Raymond Roussel, apparently rational and totally useless, or even Duchamp’s *Chocolate Grinder* and the mechanical paintings of Picabia, but there is something implacably glacial in Takis’ radars, something trenchant that I see neither in Duchamp nor in Picabia; it is not absurdity that charges them with their negative emotional power but the invisible energy of which they are the simple receptacle: the force of gravity can inspire admiration, or fear, but it cannot make us laugh. Humor thus seems to have disappeared from all the works manifesting the insatiable need for new innovations.

Just as the signs of Hartung and Soulages were, in essence, vehement symbols of refusal, mental barricades, so the works that are very inconsequentially described as “Neo-Dadaist” express, in my view, a painful disagreement with the world, but a disagreement that seeks a solution in an ideal acceptance, and that therefore implies the idea of a “liberation.”

Nothing could be more significant, in this respect, than the snare pictures of Daniel Spoerri: once raised vertically on the wall, these glued objects, as he found them one morning on a shelf—that petrified *Breakfast*, like a mental Pompeii—make our head spin.

All that is needed is a change of viewpoint to transform everyday objects into symbols of death and fixity. Spoerri contents himself with purely and simply gluing them to the board that supports them. But this act, this simple decision—to petrify the world around us, to cast a few of its fragments as “artworks”—makes us aware that today the whole world is in need of reinventing if we do not want it to transform us into objects (men snared by reality, who never let go). In the little room on Rue Mouffetard where I saw them, these snare pictures made me think, in any case, that another beholder was possible, one who would not reinvent only painting, but the world.

These *Neo-Dadaists* are not new realists, as the critic Pierre Restany says pleasingly and not without reason, they are *new beholders*. And, by inviting us through their works to look as they do, they can help man to change his attitude to reality, encourage him to submit to it a little less, to air his life.

<sup>1</sup> Originally published as “Pour une révolution du regard” (May–December, 1960), in *Une révolution du regard* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 185–92.

<sup>2</sup> Although he had never heard of Hains and Villeglé, Mimmo Rotella took the same decision as they did in about 1950, as a result of observing the walls of Rome. Wolf Vostell had a similar reaction in Cologne some years later.

<sup>3</sup> In Milan, where he and I are organizing *L'Antiprocès*, he has just produced a “collective anti-fascist painting” on a very large scale with contributions by Bal, Crippa, Dova, Ferré [Erró], and Recalcati. This painting subscribes to the fight against all authoritarian moralism and in favor of “man’s right to determine his existence.” It was seized by the police, and its makers, as well as the organizers of *L'Antiprocès*, are being prosecuted in the Italian courts.

<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps in this spirit that he agreed to sponsor a Surrealist exhibition held in New York, where it is said that a Dalí Madonna featured prominently.

<sup>5</sup> Nello Ponente, *Tendances contemporaines*, Skira.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly the series of posters by Raymond Hains titled *La France déchirée* (France Torn Apart).

## WHY I LEFT AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

Oliver W. Harrington

My very, very dear friends, this is always very difficult for me to stand up and speak because I haven’t spoken, really, since 1948 when it was with the NAACP. My best friends here tell me that it hasn’t been too bad, so I’ll try to go along and tell you about some of the things and explain some of the things that you just heard about me in the introduction. I’m particularly happy that Julia Wright is here tonight because she is working on a biography of her father’s life. She’s been doing research and I’ve helped her in the little way that I could. It’s

going to be an extremely interesting book and I’m very happy that it’s going to be published because it will clear up a lot of rumors and other misstatements that have been published in the past.

As you’ve heard already, I was raised in what is now the “jungle” of New York, the lower Bronx, and, indeed, at that time it was a very pleasant place. We played like all other kids. Where I lived was a very small enclave, a ghetto, but there were a number of ghettos. Most of the people there were immigrants: first-generation Americans from Italy, Ireland, Poland, and there were a few French people. In a way, in a peculiar way, it was an integrated community composed of several separated ghettos. That was about the norm in those days. The idea of integration hadn’t really gotten started, so I think that for anyone living today it would be a period that would be really difficult to understand. But we played in the woods, we played in the Indian caves, we absorbed some of the beauty that was in that area and it was, I can say, in spite of some of the racism which I began to learn in school, a rather pleasant life.

I wasn’t really interested in doing cartoons at that time, but I had one teacher, Miss McCoy, who used to call me and the other Black pupil in the school—a great, big guy by the name of Prince Anderson—to the front of the room and present us to the class. She’d say, “These two, being Black, belong in a waste basket.” Well, there was no way of defending oneself against that. So, I began to build up a kind of rage against her. There was no way that I could have gotten back at her because if I had, it would have been much more serious than it turned out. In the end, it turned out rather beneficial to me because I began doing cartoons of Miss McCoy in my notebooks. Needless to say, she never saw any. But they were much more violent than anything you can find in the present day so-called comics. I did her up fine. And it did me an awful lot of good. So much good that I never really hated her. I considered her quite a poor, dumb, sloppy woman who was injecting something into students which I really didn’t understand. It was like injecting them with their first “trips” on heroin, or what other drugs there are. They became addicts, most of them. I guess they still are. But to me, it was an opening to a source of pleasure which has remained and sustained me; the art of what we might call, loosely, cartoons.



There are many other incidents I could tell you about from that period, but I suppose it would take up too much of your time. But I don't want to forget about Dougan, the cap. Dougan took part in every parade and carried the flag which swayed with his overfed buttocks along the Grand Concourse where all the parades were held. I imagine I have in my notebooks, if I could find them, portraits of Dougan which would also come under the heading of "vicious" cartoons. He had a bad habit, and that was going on a spree every Saturday night and beating the hell out of every Black kid he could find. One kid was very, very seriously injured and the old Methodist Episcopal minister, who was a friend of mine, used to explain, "Well, Dougan kind of sprained his brain." The boy was partly paralyzed. But that was life in the Bronx.

About the time I was 17 and graduated from high school, I like to say that I ran away from home. I went to Harlem, and that was a most beautiful place where, fortunately for me, I came into, or rather, ran into, the hands of some wonderful people; people who formed an important part of the so-called Black Renaissance. They were people like Langston Hughes, Wally Thurmond, Bud Fisher, all really wonderful writers. I lived in the YMCA where you could rent a room for \$2 a week and they put all the regular inhabitants up on the 11th floor. Among them were people like Charlie Drew, who became the developer of blood plasma, distinguished physicians, physics people, and biologists. Now, this was a wonderful experience for me. Charlie Drew had graduated already from McGill University and was experimenting on his own in developing blood plasma. One day, Charlie got a telegram asking him to come down to the British Embassy and it was signed: Winston Churchill. So, Charlie stormed into my room and he said, "Ollie, I know you sent that god-damned telegram!" I swore to him that I hadn't and it took us some time to convince him to at least look into it. So, he did, and they said, "Yes, Dr. Drew, we are waiting for you at the British Embassy." This was right at the time of Dunkerque, and when he got to the Embassy, he learned that this was a perilous time for the British army and what they needed most was blood plasma. So, Charlie flew to London and worked on his blood plasma after having met Churchill, and really performed a magnificent job. He came back to the United States after having developed this whole system of supplying blood,

where a draft board tells him to go to the Navy department in Washington. He went there and presented himself, the distinguished Dr. Drew, and they suddenly realized that a very serious error had been made. So, I guess they found someone else to supply the blood plasma, and Charlie Drew became a terribly, terribly embittered man.

I was having trouble with my own draft board. I was working, at that time, on Adam Powell's paper, *The People's Voice*, which I think was a remarkable newspaper. It had really started the whole business about "hire Black," and that sort of thing in Harlem. There was the Cotton Club in Harlem which was owned by gangsters who came uptown each night, and went back downtown each night with the loot, which was considerable. Blacks were not allowed into the Cotton Club as patrons, only as entertainers. There were places like Frank's Restaurant on 125th Street, a marvelous place for steaks, but no Blacks were allowed to enter there, either. So, there was a movement which was started by Adam Powell through *The People's Voice*, his newspaper. At that time I was the art editor and, occasionally, the sports editor. The time came for me to go see my draft board, but I had discovered before I went there that two of the members were very wealthy Wall Street lawyers. My notice to come in to the draft board, however, read: You have been selected by a number of your neighbors to... etc., etc., etc., and I got inspired and nerved-up. So, I turned to the draft board as they were about to send me off to the butcher shop and I said, "I'm sorry. One moment, please. I'd like to ask you gentlemen a question." I pointed to the lead Wall Street lawyer and I said, "Do you gentlemen live in this neighborhood?" Well, no one had ever heard this in the draft board, so there was a long silence. I happened to look over to a brother, an architect, I've forgotten his name, but he was a leading Harlem architect, and his eye barely winked. Soon I realized I was on the right track. Sure enough, I was told by the draft board to go home and wait. So, as far as service in the armed forces is concerned, I'm still waiting!

I knew that I had strong feelings about the war against fascism. But, I also had strong feelings against fighting in a racially segregated army, and this was a wonderful solution: I became a war correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier* then, and later, I was a part of what

they called the Armed Forces Pool, which was quite a compliment, really.

And so, I went to north Africa. We were torpedoed on the way. The rudder was shot off and it took us 48 days to get to Taranto, a little place in the “instep” of Italy. There, I remember something happening which appeals to my cartooning side. A few of us went ashore and saw a large group of Black troops standing and ogling, watching these new fellows come in. So, some of the boys said, “What do you know, man? How is it over here?” And these fellows looked, turned to each other and said, “Hoola boola, booga wooga.” And I remember one of the cats from Harlem saying, “Well, I’ll be damned! They’ve forgotten how to speak English.” Later, we discovered that they were South African troops.

Off we went to the wars. Some months later, there had been a new program set up by the War Department for inspecting the morale of the Black troops. There was no morale, but they had to inspect what there was. People like Walter White were sent to Europe and Ben Davis, the commander of the 332nd fighter group, who was a friend of mine, called me in and said, “Look, we’ve got this on our hands. We have Walter White coming here and I’ve been told to delegate you to see that he doesn’t get hurt.” Well, if you know anything about Walter White, you know that he was a very headstrong guy, and I couldn’t see how I was going to be able to do that. But I had a Jeep and a driver and I took him around the battlefield. He didn’t get hurt, although we were in some very, very tough spots because of his saying. “Well, no, Ollie. Let’s go up there and see what’s happening there,” with shells flying in all directions. He’d say, “Well, man, that’s outgoing.” and I’d say, “No, no, brother, that’s incoming!”

We got back after a couple of weeks in the field and in one of the tents sitting around with some of the flyers, Walter White, who was a wonderful guy, but who had a big ego that you really couldn’t handle, turned to the fellows who were sitting around and said, “Look, boys, when we flew over the Bay of Naples there were a number of shots fired and I guess that was a salute for me. Now I think there were 18 shots fired. Tell me, for what rank was that?” And these pilots looked down and said, “Well, Mr. White, they was tryin’ to shoot yo’ ass down!” When he got back to the states, I guess as a

result of my having kept him alive, he began sending me letters asking me to start a public relations department for the NAACP. Well, I wanted to get back to art when I got back to New York: I had no interest in anything like that. I had an interest, but I didn’t think that I was the one for it. If you remember, there was a wave of awful lynchings at that time. You see, a lot of these fellows had bonuses coming from the Army. They had also saved up their salaries because there was no place to spend it. Blacks were not allowed in the Red Cross Clubs, and they had what was called a Liberty Club system. They didn’t have very much in the Liberty Club and so you could save all your salary. They would take their money, to the South, especially, and buy a little piece of land. Well, you can see how that would begin to make the system get a little wobbly. The Southerners didn’t like that, the idea of Blacks owning their own farms, so they began lynching whole families of Blacks. In one episode, a man by the name of Isaac Woodard was on a bus. He’d come back from the Pacific, got on a bus somewhere in perhaps Louisiana, and was on his way to New York. Having been away in the armed forces for so long, he’d forgotten a lot of the rules, and he was sitting in a seat where he should not have been. Policemen dragged him off the bus in some town, he didn’t exactly remember what the name of the town was. They beat him all night in a cell and then gouged both of his eyes out. There was no record in any Red Cross hospital, or veteran’s hospital, and there had to be in a case like that where a veteran was practically killed, but there was no record. No record was ever found. I don’t remember exactly how this case came to the attention of the NAACP, but it was at that time that I decided that I would have to take the job.

This was a fantastic incident which really had nationwide significance. Here was a case, a terrible case, where there was no known assailant, no hospital had any record of him, and he didn’t know exactly where it had happened except that he thought that it was in South Carolina. This was the first case that I had at the NAACP. I began trying to dream up the way public relations should be done without any real experience. But, I’d read about that sort of thing. I even had some friends on Madison Avenue and, naturally, they gave me tips. I got in touch with Orson Welles through his agent and we corresponded by telephone every Saturday, and he would make a broadcast every Sunday evening. It was

a fantastically dramatic and interesting program in which he took the role of somebody out hunting down these men who had committed that crime. As a result, they actually discovered the two policemen who had done this. They were brought up and tried, a very quick trial, and they were acquitted. There was a slight error made, and I suppose it was really a matter of our inexperience. He had named the town as being one of the most popular resorts in South Carolina. As a result, pressure was brought to bear. CBS fired him and they terminated his program. The film industry told him that he was no longer welcome and as a result, he left the United States and never returned.

There were other cases like this and we had spectacular successes. As a result, I was invited to speak at the Herald Tribune Forum in 1946, and one of the people I had to debate with was [Attorney General] Tom Clark. Clark actually named me as a Communist. I had trouble from that time on, but I wasn't worried about my personal situation at all. I was worried about the NAACP. If it could have been proven that an executive of the NAACP was a Communist... well, that was all they wanted. They wanted to push these organizations further to the right and get them out of the way.

I met an old friend at the Hotel Teresa Bar which was one of the most famous and pleasant watering places for the brothers and I said, "Look, come in and have a drink"—I almost mentioned his name and I mustn't do that—and he said, "O.K." So we went in and had some drinks, and after a while, I called the bartender and I said, "How much do I owe? I have to leave." And you know how the brothers push each other back and forth saying, "No, man, let me pay this," "No, man, let *me* pay this..." Well, somebody's got to come to a decision here. So, while we were doing this, my friend was making funny motions below the bar. I turned back to him and took a closer look. He was showing me his badge... Army Intelligence. So I wondered aloud, "Man, my old friend. What's happening?" He said, "I'm warning you to go to Europe. Take a vacation for six months and let this thing blow over." Well, he was much more optimistic than I was when he told me that. So I asked him, "How can you do this? It's a terribly dangerous thing you're doing by telling me this." He said, "Yes, but look," and he held his hand out next to mine. Both hands were black. So that

was that. Three weeks later I was on a boat. That was in 1951 and I've stayed in Europe all of that time.

I managed to continue my Bootsie cartoon until 1962 or 1963, when, I think under certain pressures, *The Chicago Defender* told me they had to dispense with my services. I had a week's notice. If you've ever lived in Europe as a Black expatriate, you know that a week's notice could be deadly because I lived on hardly anything, just managed to make it. But, it was a wonderful life, with terribly interesting people. Most of the Blacks who had been demobilized in Europe were on what was then called the GI Bill of Rights which gave them a certain amount of money each month to continue an education, or start an education. I really met some fantastic people in that era, very. There was one fellow, good old Harris, and I met him and he told me, "Look, man, you study art at La Grande Chaumière." That's a big place where artists can go and work all day for about 50 cents a day. And it still exists. It's a wonderful place in the development of French art history. Practically everyone at some time or another had been through La Grande Chaumière. You could have teachers if you wanted to, or you could study on your own.

So, I met old Harris in the Cafe Select, one of the places in Paris, and he said, "Look, man, I'm going to be at the Grande Chaumière. I'm going to be an artist." So I said, "Well, that's alright. That's great." So, sure enough, he showed up. He had asked the brothers, "What do you do when you go to the Grande Chaumière?" "The first thing," he was told, "you buy a beret. Then you get some paper and some charcoal and a board to place on a chair and you watch and do what everybody else is doing," which is what old Harris did. He was so engrossed in preparing himself for this new career that he didn't realize what was happening up in front of him on a stand. This was a normal thing at La Grande Chaumière, I hadn't thought to tell him about it. But the curtains were pushed aside and out stepped a nude model. Now, Harris was from Mississippi. To be suddenly faced with this naked white lady was too much for old Harris. He reached down and slapped his beret on his head and packed up his stuff and flew out of there. It took us a long time to explain the circumstances to Harris and to convince him that there was nothing to it, they weren't trying to trick him. I don't know how far Harris went in



his art studies, but this was serious. It made a great difference in Harris' life, I'm sure. He began to develop a completely different perspective on himself, certainly different from that he'd had in Mississippi. I remember later, during a talk, Harris had said to me, "Look, man, the good Lord showed me a way out of Mississippi and I ain't going to be ungrateful and go back there. Because if I go back there, the last thing I can do is get a job maybe as a waiter at the country club, and who's going to be sitting there at that country club? There's going to be Wernher von Braun, who is the Nazi head of the whole missile program. He's going to be sitting at a table and he's going to say, 'Harris, come over here, just like he's been doing when he was in the SS.'" He said, "I ain't giving him that opportunity." And he never did, as far as I know.

I was just telling someone at the dinner table about an African chap I saw in a little cafe, the Monaco Cafe it was called... very dark and dingy on a little street, rue de Seine, which goes right down to the Seine river. One afternoon, way in the back, I saw one figure. It was difficult to make him out but I didn't want to sit in an empty place and I walked in there and sat down near him. His back was to the wall. I also saw that he had on a black sweater, a black suit: Africans were cold in Paris and even in summertime they wore these black raincoats, I guess, black socks, black shoes. I didn't get a look at his teeth, but he was a stolid looking fellow and he sat there and I sat near him. Finally, out of the corner of his mouth he said, "Where you from, man?" So, I told him I was from America. "That's what I figured. Been here long?" I told him, no, it was the first time I had been there. He never looked at me and always spoke to me out of the corner of his mouth. So I said, "Look, man, it's dark in here. Why do you sit back here?" He said, "Man. I got no trust." He was sitting there facing that door all the time and he wasn't going to be tricked either, you see. I knew him for years in that place and he never sat in another seat except that one there. Incidentally, I met a couple of young ladies who told me that even his underwear was black. Eventually, he met a young lady from Sweden and she took him to Sweden where someone told me that he lived in a sort of a small castle overlooking the Skagerrak and may still be there.

Now these were the kinds of wonderful experiences I had with so-called expatriates. Once a fellow said, "Ah,

what's all this stuff in the newspapers and magazines? *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* are all doing lots of articles on expatriates." Now, the focus was actually on Black expatriates, you see, and it made a big difference because Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, all the great American writers were all in Paris at one time or another. But when Black expatriates sort of joined the "fraternity," it wasn't a very popular thing with the authorities in the United States and you can easily see why. These were really disrupting ideas which existed. Blacks had to be held in check. They had to fear white law, and that sort of thing. Living in Paris and having experiences that Blacks shouldn't have was not conducive to a smooth course towards whatever American history would finally produce. So, Blacks were really harassed by the journalists, American journalists. I remember being interviewed quite a few times and I asked the interviewer who was with *Time* magazine why he was so worried about me being an expatriate, whereas down the street there was the American library where Hemingway hung out. Faulkner spent time there. Every American writer spent time there. But when Blacks showed up, why, it became something else. Well, you can see that clearly, this was a continuing motif in our way of life. I understand it has improved. I hope so. I understand that the conditions here have improved. I dearly hope so.

If I had been able to, I would have come back to America because my roots are in America. That wasn't possible and I couldn't say that I have been too uncomfortable. But one of the most distinguished expatriates and a focus of attention was Richard Wright whom I considered one of the greatest American writers, a guy who started in Mississippi with no education—that in itself is a wonder. He went to Chicago, came to New York, and wound up in Paris as a literary stellar star. He was admired and worshipped by the French people until his death in 1960. I would say that Dick was my closest friend. We had a small group, Dick Wright, Chester Himes and myself and we lived and enjoyed French life. I would say that if you had to live anywhere in Europe without a passport, France was the place. I'm not saying that racism doesn't exist in France. It certainly does. But it's not oppressive. One is never harassed racially by a Frenchman. A Frenchman has too much dignity to walk up behind you in the street and call you a dirty nigger. That wouldn't enter the mind of a Frenchman

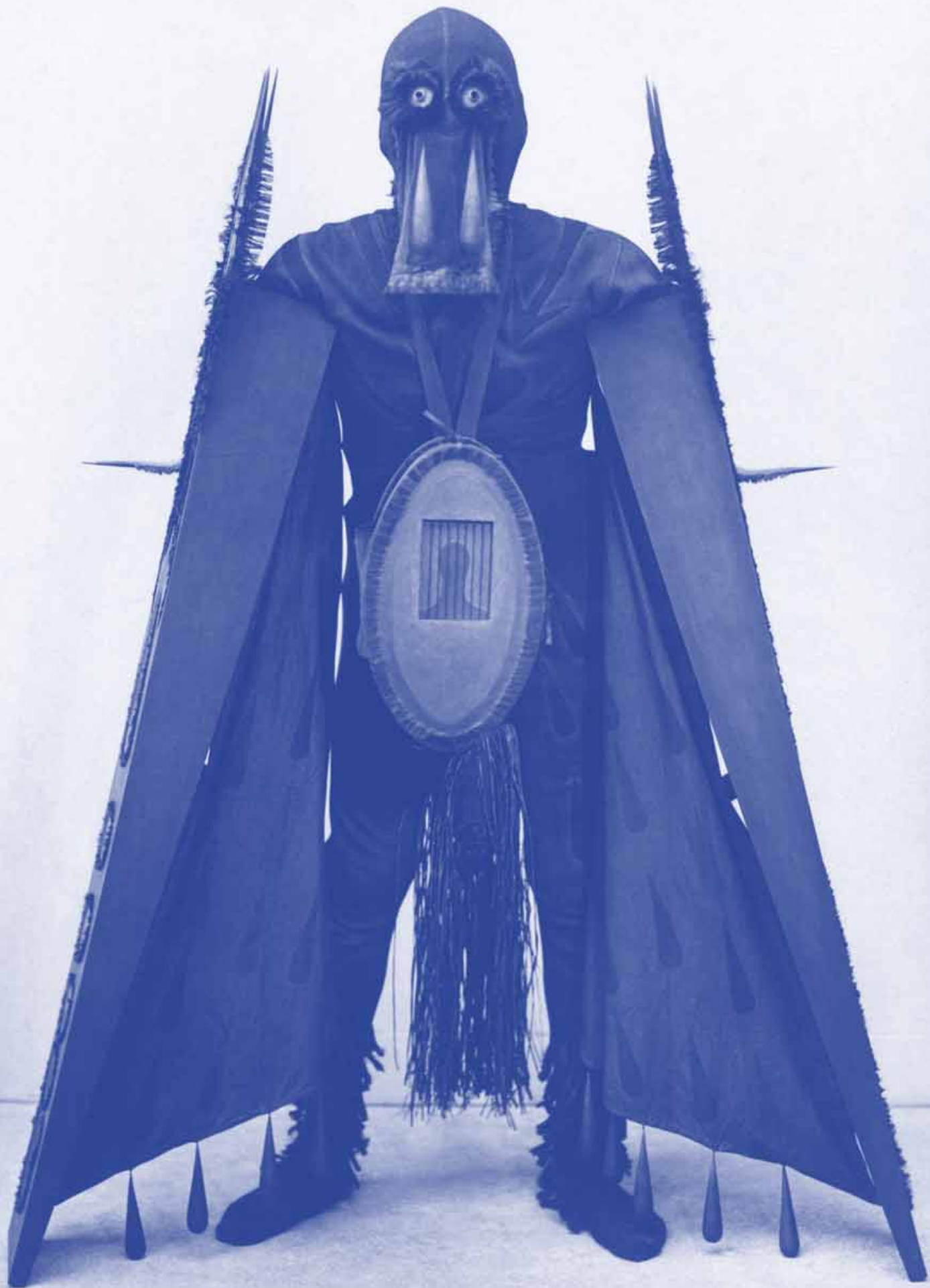
and he might just be a racist. Since then, things have changed very much. At the end of the Algerian War a lot of the Algerian plantation owners moved to France. They were called “Pieds Noirs,” black feet. They really were people who had black minds because they have injected the worst kind of racism into France where Algerians, for the most part, were lynched. I see Julia nodding her head; she knows better than I. She’s been living there all her life. The anti-Algerian feeling is very, very intense and this, as racism always does, has infected the whole French atmosphere, I think, so that racism is much more open and apparent now than it was then.

In 1961 after Dick died, I went to Berlin to talk with publishers about illustrating American and English classics like Irving, Conrad, and other outstanding writers of the early period and while I was there, in August, I heard a very sinister sound in the streets. I looked out of my tiny hotel window and down below there was a stream of tanks going along. They were Soviet tanks. That gave me a bad feeling because I’d seen that before.

I went down out of my room and walked in the direction the tanks were going for about a mile. On the edge of a place which has since become known as Checkpoint Charlie there was a line of US tanks. I knew I was right in the middle of World War III. I had had enough of wars and I didn’t want to be in the middle of any war after that. So, I went back to my hotel, but found that I couldn’t leave because I didn’t have the proper visas. The bureaucracy, the cold war bureaucracy had really set in at that point. I was a virtual prisoner. I couldn’t leave there. I lost my French apartment, I lost everything. I had to stay there, I must say that it hasn’t been too unfortunate or uncomfortable because I had an opportunity to start this line of political cartoons using color which had been entirely different from what I’d been doing. Gradually, I was published in the top satirical magazines in the GDR and I’ve been doing that ever since 1961. There were great temptations to leave there, but I liked the work. I continued to work and I’ve been there ever since. I maintained, loosely, some relationships with a young lady I really consider a daughter who is now working on a biography of her father’s very fantastic life and the circumstances of his death, which are still very unclear. I was asked by *Ebony*

magazine to write an article about that. I certainly didn’t make any charges, although I’ve had certain suspicions, but I tried to inject into that article that this wasn’t the end of the story. It should be looked into. And I’m very happy to say that that feeling has spread. I’ve never met a Black person who did *not* believe that Richard Wright was done in. By whom, I don’t know. I’ve no idea. There are so many possibilities. But, you’ll probably read of them in Julia’s book. That’s about all I have to say. Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> Speech given on April 18, 1991, at Wayne State University in Detroit. Originally published in Oliver W. Harrington, *Why I Left America, and Other Essays* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 96–109.





# ESSAYS

## SPANISH ART AND EXILE IN POSTWAR PARIS: THE CASE OF JOSÉ GARCÍA TELLA, "HOMBRE-ARTISTA"

Amanda Herold-Marme

Starting with Pablo Picasso's inauguration of the newly liberated art scene at the 1944 Salon d'Automne, Spanish art was omnipresent in postwar Paris. As the Spanish art critic Abelardo García describes in June 1945:

In music, dance, and sculpture, in the poetic and the pictorial domains, Paris feels the attraction and influence of our Art.... And in monographic shows, the Salon d'Automne, and painting and sculpture exhibitions, our artists, those of yesterday and especially of today, are being showered with the accolades of a definitive consecration.<sup>1</sup>

This citation comes from the illustrated magazine *Galería. Revista Española*. The cover donning the colors of the Republican flag, it is one of the hundreds of periodicals published by the vast and dynamic community of Spanish political exiles in France that emerge in the postwar period. Indeed, as is the case with Picasso's mediatized *retour en scène*, which coincides with his adhesion to the French Communist party, this effervescent artistic activity is also intensely political. Though its protagonists include renowned creators like Picasso, settled in France since long before 1936, the postwar artistic and political climate foments the emergence of a number of unknown Spanish exiles on the Paris scene. This essay seeks to explore this politicized artistic activity in its complexity and contradictions through the lens of one of its most outspoken yet forgotten figures, a founder of *Galería*, the art critic and late-blooming painter José García Tella. We will examine how he, like many of his compatriots, attempts to carve out his place on Paris's postwar art scene with his writing and his striking, unconventional art, which convey and promote his nonconformist worldview as an anti-Francoist Spanish anarcho-syndicalist in exile.

### Lost in Paris after Eight Years of War

José García Álvarez, who adopts in exile the surname "Tella" in honor of a beloved father figure,<sup>2</sup> was born in Madrid in 1906. As a young man, he works in photography and film, is jailed for reading Blasco Ibañez's forbidden anti-monarchic literature, and is drawn to the anarchist ideology influential in pre-Civil War Spain, namely anarcho-syndicalism. Harshly critical of capitalism and centralized government, this worker's movement promotes

<sup>1</sup> Abelardo García, "Riba Rovira," *Galería*, June 7, 1945, n.p. All translations are the author's.

<sup>2</sup> A special thanks to Charles Tella for sharing his family history and archives. The titles furnished in this text are from his self-published book: Charles Tella, ed., *Tella, un témoin à l'œil aigu* (Paris, 2013).

social revolution through radical unionism, as well as individual fulfillment through education and culture.

His anti-fascist engagement during the civil war is both military and cultural. Disadvantaged in terms of military and material resources, diverse artistic forms—posters, paintings, sculpture, plays, poems, photographs, and films—serve as an important weapon in the defense of the Second Republic, an active promoter of progressive Spanish culture from its inception. As such, Tella, enrolled in anarchist army divisions, splits his time between the frontline and working as a pro-Republican short filmmaker, playwright, theater and film critic, and cultural militiaman.

This active engagement leaves Tella no choice but to flee after the fall of Catalonia. He enters France with the retreating Republican army through Portbou on February 9, 1939, during the mass exodus of some 500,000 Spaniards known as the *retirada* (retreat). Considered “undesirable” immigrants by the French government, he is herded with throngs of his compatriots to internment camps close to the border, first Saint-Cyprien then Le Barcarès. During the subsequent eleven months of internment and forced labor, he finds his “salvation” in culture by organizing makeshift theater performances, drawing, and translating French literature.<sup>3</sup> Conditions further deteriorate during World War II, when he is detained by the Nazis, who consider *Rotspaniers* (Red Spaniards) like Tella enemies of the state. He is deported to Bremen, where he works in a factory for eighteen months before escaping and returning to Paris in 1943, doing odd jobs and keeping a low profile.

At the Liberation, after eight years of war and exile, having “lost everything ... become an exile, stateless, almost nothing,” he asks. “What was I going to do in Paris?”<sup>4</sup>

### **A Militant Culture Reborn: Spanish Artists on the Frontline**

Lost in postwar Paris, Tella feels compelled to speak out against the years of horror and injustice he and his compatriots experienced. He reconnects with Spanish anarcho-syndicalist groups who, in the immediate postwar, put ideological differences aside to resume the fight against Franco with other sectors of the Spanish community in exile. The climate is ideal: both intensely anti-fascist and favorable toward the Spanish refugees who played a prominent role in the French resistance and liberation.

<sup>3</sup> José García Tella, n.t., n.p. (1948): 1.

<sup>4</sup> J. García Tella, “Pourquoi j’aime la France,” n.p, n.d., n.p.

As during the civil war, culture is an essential weapon in their fight. As for Tella, he organizes music and theater shows, cofounds the review *Galería*



with the stated goal of defending the “Spain of Lorca and Machado, Unamuno, Picasso,”<sup>5</sup> and begins following his compatriots as a sharp-tongued art critic. Indeed, one of the most concrete expressions of this militant cultural activity is the wave of collective and individual exhibits highlighting Spanish artists “in exile,” a term liberally applied in these years. Extending from Paris to Prague, and boasting titles such as *Umění republikánského Španělska: Španělští umělci pařížské školy* (Art of Republican Spain: Spanish Artists of the School of Paris; Prague, 1946) and *L’art espagnol en exil* (Spanish Art in Exile; Paris and Toulouse, 1947), these exhibitions serve to raise money and/or awareness for the pro-Republican and anti-Francoist cause. By promoting this activity, exiled art critics like Tella strive to preserve and flaunt what they consider to be the only remaining “authentic” Iberian cultural creation, considering Franco’s Spain to be “hostile and closed to free and authentic art.”<sup>6</sup> Fueled by the belief that liberty, which no longer exists in Franco’s Spain, is a necessary condition for genuine cultural production, the exiles unanimously agree that “authentic” Iberian culture lives on only in the freedom of exile.

Iberian artists settled in Paris since well before 1936, like Picasso and his compatriots of what is then rebaptized the “Spanish *Republican* school of Paris,” take center stage, thrust to the forefront on a Parisian scene eager to improve its artistically and ideologically tarnished image after the dark years of the Occupation. At the same time, this flourishing activity serves as a springboard for the careers of unknown or little-known artists, even some without formal artistic training or previous experience.

Tella follows the promising Parisian debuts of several Republican army veterans who discover their artistic vocation in exile. Within the plurality of aesthetic languages flourishing in the postwar, artists like Jean Dubuffet seek renewal after the trauma of war by positioning themselves against established order and finding new sources of inspiration, creating works deemed “naïf,” “primitif,” “brut,” or “informel.” In this context, self-taught exiles like former Catalan soldier-turned-farmer Joan Busquets and longtime anarchist militant Miguel García Vivancos, whose works are categorized as “naïve” because of their lack of training and the simplicity of their figurative forms, find a certain success, as do those of Miguel Hernández. However, Hernández’s works are darker and more incongruous than the vibrant landscapes and picturesque villages featured in Vivancos’ and Busquets’ paintings, and he is adopted by Dubuffet’s “art brut” movement founded in 1948. This movement’s focus on marginal artists, guided by instinct rather than technique or intellectual considerations, resonates with Tella’s own artistic paradigm and that predominant in anarcho-syndicalist circles.

<sup>5</sup> “Presentación,” *Galería*, January 1945, n.p.

<sup>6</sup> J. García Tella, “Arte y artistas,” June 1957, 14.

They see freedom and engagement as the pillars of worthwhile artistic creation. Freedom supposes a lack of adherence to dogmas or trends, whether they be aesthetic, political, or commercial. They promote art that is easily accessible to the masses, considering many avant-gardes including Cubism and abstraction as elitist and incomprehensible. The personal, straightforward artistic languages of self-taught exiles resulting from “improvisation and the necessity to survive,”<sup>7</sup> rather than the pressure to conform to the art market or its elitist public, are a gauge of their authenticity for Tella.

These former soldiers are examples of the “hombre-artista,”<sup>8</sup> an artist who demonstrates his political engagement both as a social actor and through his free artistic expression, which constitutes the ideal to which all creators should aspire in the anarcho-syndicalist paradigm. As Tella writes, he and the community admire Hernández as “a representative of this Spanish exile—that is to say, third-class exile—who refuses to disappear, and who without means, without possibilities, ignored, persists in living, affirming with his work, the continuity of our Spain, still alive.”<sup>9</sup>

### **An Artistic Vocation Born in Exile: Unveiling a Harsh Reality**

In his unpublished memoirs, Tella cites his admiration for Hernández’s work and his desire to be heard as the catalysts for launching his own artistic career in 1948. Self-taught, his style is personal, “primitive,” and expressionistic—his bold colors lack harmony, his treatment of volume is awkward, his compositions unbalanced, his figures schematic, his forms disproportionate—but intensely narrative. The mastery of traditional technique is of little concern to Tella, who considers the mark of a true artist to be “the power of a message.”<sup>10</sup> His lack of conformity with regard to academic conventions reinforces the poignancy and incisiveness of that message, focused largely on exposing and confronting various forms of sociopolitical injustice in two primary settings, Spain and Paris.

One of Tella’s first postwar paintings is entitled *Mauvais chrétiens* (Bad Christians, 1948). Highly critical of organized religion, in keeping with his anarchist ideology, Tella is nonetheless fascinated with mysticism, myths, and traditions, which constitute a major theme in his work. *Mauvais chrétiens* is a grotesque parody of the Last Supper, the episode in which Jesus shares a final meal with his disciples before his passion. Here and in a later version of this work (*La cène* [The Last Supper], 1951) the artist takes significant liberties in his interpretation of the biblical scene: Jesus has already been betrayed by his friends, who devour his body, carved up like rounds of sausage. Indeed, Tella’s scathing criticism is often conveyed with a healthy dose of dark humor.

<sup>7</sup> J. García Tella, “Visita de estudios: García Vivancos,” *Solidaridad Obrera Suplemento Literario*, April 1955, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Eugen Relgis, “Del ‘homo faber’ al hombre artista,” *CÉNIT*, December 1963, 4273–4.

<sup>9</sup> J. García Tella, “El pintor Miguel Hernández,” *España libre*, n.d., n.p.

<sup>10</sup> J. García Tella, “Visita de estudios: PISANO,” *Solidaridad Obrera Suplemento Literario*, March 1954, 5.



Fig. 1:  
Tella (José García Tella)  
*La mort de García Lorca*  
(The Death of García Lorca)  
1953

As an artist, critic, and social actor, Tella continues the fight against what he deems the obscurantist forces afflicting Spanish society, including Franco's reactionary brand of Catholicism. His commentary on fellow exile Eduardo Pisano's work, that "the reproduction of religious motifs, of fruits and saints, monks and beggars, bulls and bullfighters, resume a backward, fanatical environment in which cruelty and death have their way,"<sup>11</sup> informs the interpretation of his own work, such as *Le parade* (The Parade, 1953). Under the snakelike extremities of a deformed candlestick, the usual culprits of these backward forces take center stage: a priest, a *Manola* wearing nothing but a crucifix and the traditional mantilla headpiece, an altar boy, a bishop, and a bullfighter. Framed by a red curtain, Tella unveils the lead actors of the "synthesis of a decadent nation ... a harsh reality, only acknowledged by a minority."<sup>12</sup> Tella strives through his painting to enlighten the masses to this reality.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



Tella's work also reminds the viewer of the crimes of Francoist Spain and her fascist allies. His *Cristo de Mauthausen* (1949) commemorates his compatriots massacred at the Nazi death camp reserved for "Rotspaniers." He depicts their bodies writhing in an inferno behind a sullen-faced crucified Christ, who fails to intervene. *La mort de García Lorca* (The Death of García Lorca, 1953; fig. 1) depicts the aftermath of the infamous crime of Granada, perpetrated at the outset of the civil war. Outside the city walls, a stylized skeleton fashioned from barbed wire, skull coiffed with the headwear of Spanish forces of order, places the lifeless body of the pro-Republican poet, without volume or skin, his colorful entrails exposed, eyes staring into the void, into his grave. It is a crude but poignant depiction of Spanish culture receding into the abyss at the hands of the nationalists.

Tella's work perpetuates Lorca's poetic legacy, deeply rooted in Spanish popular culture, and largely focused on the themes of death, passion, and eroticism, for example in his painting *Les étoiles* (Stars, 1951; fig. 2). The undulating, stylized forms of four floating *Manolas*, clad only in an elaborate, flowing mantilla, keep vigil over an open coffin. Behind them stretches a vast Castilian landscape, glowing yellow against a starry indigo sky. Scarlet drops drip from a blood-soaked crescent moon, whose sharp contours resemble a bull's horn, marking a trail to the casket, draped in a flamboyant red torero jacket. Like Lorca, Tella sublimates the Iberian penchant for death and passion epitomized in the *corrida*, betraying once more his lasting fascination—and perhaps nostalgia—for his homeland and its traditions, in spite of their flaws.

### **“Pourquoi j'aime la France”**

Tella's representations of Parisian life, another major theme, share this ambivalence. On the one hand, Tella sees Paris as a mother who welcomes and nourishes him with her art and civilization. In *La Seine* (The Seine, 1951; p. 43), he depicts a bird's-eye view of the heart of Paris, crowded with its typical bourgeois apartment buildings. The mythic river has been replaced by an attractive female nude, who embraces the Îles de la Cité and Saint-Louis in her slumber.

Beyond personified depictions of Paris's historic cityscape, Tella's art reveals his lasting enthrallment with less glamorous aspects of the capital: its metro, anonymous masses, bums, prostitutes, demonstrations, the Salvation Army, immigrants, covert gay culture, and working-class festivals and neighborhoods. Marked by the precarity of his Parisian debut, Tella is sensitive to the trials of other marginalized groups, including immigrants. As tensions grow between France and its colonies, Tella pays homage to “North



Fig. 2:  
Tella (José García Tella)  
*Les étoiles* (The Stars)  
1951

Africans” in *Les nord-africains* (1952), depicting six dark-skinned, morose men, crowded and desperate in a stifling, run-down Parisian apartment.

As a microcosm of contemporary society, the Parisian metro is a favored backdrop in Tella’s work. *La bouche du métro* (Metro Entrance, 1953) is divided into two registers: a subterranean metro station topped by a street-level scene. Underground, a proliferation of wide-eyed naked passengers are crammed into snakelike metro cars, while another anonymous mass waits on the platform and the stairs. At street level, four tramps warm themselves on an aeration vent, framed by warped but colorful façades, bathed in bright supernatural light. The ample luminous space, gay color, and individualized treatment of figures in the upper register—that traditionally reserved in painting for the celestial realm—contrast with the chaotic, suffocating bleakness of the dehumanized masses underground, whose representation resembles Tella’s rendition of naked Nazi deportees, packed into freight trains (*Déportés*, 1950). This nonconformist artist seems to represent life on

Fig. 3:  
Tella (José García Tella)  
*La mort de Modigliani*  
(The Death of Modigliani)  
1953



the margins of society in a more appealing light than that of conventional, metro-going slaves of capitalism.

Another fringe group of great concern to Tella are artists struggling in misery and obscurity in Paris. *La mort de Modigliani* (The Death of Modigliani, 1953; fig. 3) pays tribute to the Italian artist whose avant-gardist painting only achieves recognition and monetary value after his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1920. Rather than depicting the painter's demise, Tella's focus is on the suicide of his distraught companion, Jeanne Hébuterne. Disproportionately large, her unborn child clearly visible in her womb, she careens toward the open arms of the painter's lifeless body, laid out on an austere hospital bed. The warped building from which she leaps bears a resemblance to the Eiffel Tower, identifying Paris as the scene of the crime. Tella condemns the injustice of an often corrupt art market and a frivolous public that value moneymaking fads over genuine artistic expression.



At the same time, Tella learns from experience that talent *can* be recognized. At the “Foyer de l’Art brut,” held at Galerie René Drouin in 1948, his painting depicting working-class Bastille Day festivities catches the eye of Henri-Pierre Roché. The distinguished writer and collector had been discovering and promoting unknown talent in Paris for nearly fifty years, from Pablo Picasso to Marcel Duchamp. Captivated by Tella’s singular pictorial universe, Roché becomes his principal patron and support for the next ten years. Thanks to Roché’s efforts, Tella benefits from a personal exhibition at the prestigious Galerie Jeanne Bucher in 1951. His work is the subject of two conferences at the Sorbonne in 1953 and several articles in the press over the course of the 1950s, as he participates in a number of collective exhibits, including Parisian salons and the Galerie Charpentier’s annual *École de Paris* show in 1955. Thanks to Roché’s support and guidance, Tella carves out a modest place for himself on the sometimes “inhumane” postwar art scene.

### Cracks in the Front

While tending to his own budding artistic career, Tella remains engaged with the Spanish community in exile long after the anti-Francoist cause is diserved by the Cold War. Starting in 1954, he takes on a monthly column in *Solidaridad Obrera*’s monthly “literary supplement,” becoming the voice of Spanish artistic life in Paris. Though politically engaged Iberian artistic manifestations become increasingly rare over the course of the 1950s, an exhibit entitled *Hommage des artistes espagnols au poète Antonio Machado* (Homage of Spanish Artists to the Poet Antonio Machado), the pro-Republican writer revered as a martyr, is organized in 1955 under the auspices of Picasso. Tella participates in this initiative held at the *Maison de la pensée française* with *Massacre* (1951). A decaying tangle of recently executed cadavers amassed in front of a walled cemetery disturb the tranquility of the neatly arranged rows of white crucifixes that stretch into the horizon. It is a raw visual manifesto of Tella’s lasting condemnation of the Spanish regime having perpetrated so many heinous crimes, in spite of its increasing acceptance on the world stage as an indispensable ally in the fight against communism.

However, by 1955 the same is no longer true of many fellow exiles. Certain compatriots begin participating in government-sponsored shows, in the peninsula or abroad, as the regime adopts modern and contemporary art to improve its image and facilitate its reintegration into the international community. The collaboration of any exiled “hombre-artista,” entrusted with the preservation of “authentic”—and necessarily anti-Francoist—Spanish art and identity in the sanctity of exile, is perceived as high treason by Tella.

He virulently denounces in his monthly column the opportunism and “political confusion” of compatriots like Pedro Flores,<sup>13</sup> a fellow refugee and a pillar of the postwar anti-Franco artistic front, who in 1954 participates and even accepts an important prize in the Spanish government-sponsored II Bienal Hispanoamericana celebrated in Havana, Cuba. Tella rejects the notion that art can ever be dissociated from politics. Never having shed his “militiaman’s mentality,”<sup>14</sup> political engagement remains as important for the aging anarchist in 1956 as in 1936. At the same time, Tella lashes out at the Republican government in exile for having failed their artists, who incarnate the values and prestige of the nation, by their lack of patronage and support.

Disappointed by his peers, Tella turns his focus to the next generation of Iberian creators, whose presence in postwar Paris is often funded by French government scholarships, designed to improve relations between the two countries, and some of whom, like Antoni Tàpies, rise to international preeminence. Several of these young artists, like the Catalan sculptor Josep Subirà-Puig, are included in the homage to Machado. Tella salutes the opportunity for these creators having fled from “Franconia,” as he calls it, to exhibit art free from “military or ecclesiastic censure.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1956, Spanish artists of all walks of life, exiles and scholarship recipients, old and young, partisans of figuration and of abstraction, Catalan and Castilian, famous or unknown, exhibit together in tribute to Jacques Vidal, framer, gallerist, and pillar of Montparnasse artistic life. Tella salutes the effort to unite this diverse group of compatriots lacking a hegemonic power. He advocates for the creation at Vidal’s gallery of a permanent exhibition space designed to allow his compatriots to work freely outside of Franco’s Spain. His impassioned plea falls on deaf ears. Vidal refuses, provoking Tella’s ire and, in turn, his banishment from Vidal’s gallery. Disheartened with the state of Spanish art in exile, whose manifestations become increasingly rare, marginal, and even “catastrophic,”<sup>16</sup> the sole critic of artistic collaboration and proponent of reigniting a united anti-Francoist artistic front, leaves his position at *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1958, by choice or by force.

### Combatting Windmills and Giants

Roché sees Tella as a real-life Don Quixote, eternally poised to take on windmills and giants. This combativeness eventually spills over to the artist-patron relationship. Roché laments the self-taught artist’s repetitiousness and inconsistent quality, ranging from excellent to downright bad.<sup>17</sup> He nonetheless buys much of what Tella produces, at times regretfully, amassing some 193 paintings and works on paper. However, in spite of his best efforts to promote the Spaniard’s work to gallerists, art critics, collectors, and

<sup>13</sup> J. García Tella, “Homenaje a Antonio Machado,” *Solidaridad Obrera Suplemento Literario*, March 1955, 5.

<sup>14</sup> J. García Tella, “Arte y artistas: El Paso,” *Solidaridad Obrera Suplemento Literario*, June 1958, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> J. García Tella, “Pinturas de la Emigración española,” *Solidaridad Obrera Suplemento Literario*, June 1957, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Scarlett and Philippe Reliquet, *Henri-Pierre Roché. L’enchanteur collectionneur* (Paris: Ramsay, 1999), 264.

*connaisseurs*, Roché's enthusiasm is not widely shared. Even Picasso, whose support and encouragement for his exiled compatriots is well-documented, fails to heed Roché's repeated invitations to support Tella. Unaware of Roché's efforts, or unwilling to accept the limited appeal of his work, Tella lashes out against his patron in February 1956, blaming his lack of success on Roché's inaction.

Perhaps in an attempt to increase his appeal, Tella experiments with new styles and artistic media like watercolor, ink drawings, and collage, while remaining faithful to his social themes of predilection. The same year of his feud with Roché he embarks on a series of paintings with a limited palette, a textured, enameled facture, and a less anecdotal composition, abandoning canvas for other supports. He begins with *Ma main* (My Hand, 1956), in which a clenched fist occupies the entirety of the pictorial surface.

Tella alternates this new style with his more narrative and colorful aesthetic. In *La bandera* (The Flag, 1975), the background is equally divided into horizontal planes of solid red and purple. Five black silhouettes donning the cap of Spanish forces of order stand watch over a mass of tangled cadavers, whose yellow hues complete the colors of the Republican flag, obliterated by the dictatorship.

Roché, no stranger to tensions with his *protégés*, doesn't hold a grudge. While acknowledging the artist's limited notoriety, though accepting no fault of his own, the patron admits that his only wish had been granted: Tella had been able to pursue his painting. Though unmoved by his latest aesthetic experiments, Roché continues to support Tella to the end of his days. He even includes a reproduction of Tella's work *Métro-Termitière* (Metro-Anthill), a return to the theme of the metro as a microcosm for the dehumanizing experience of modern society, in his last article, published in the art journal *L'ŒIL* shortly before his death in April 1959. Tella, another man of principle, never forgets his debt or his gratitude toward he who "made him a painter."<sup>18</sup>

Though Tella is subsequently supported by other collectors and gallerists, his presence on the Parisian scene becomes more fleeting after Roché's death. He participates in occasional exhibitions in Paris and elsewhere in France but eventually fades into oblivion. Ever the "hombre-artista," Tella remains politically engaged as a social actor as well, participating in the events of May 1968 and clandestine Spanish anarchist activity that draws the attention of the Parisian *préfecture de police*.

<sup>18</sup> Henri-Pierre Roché and Serge Fauchereau, *Écrits sur l'art* (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1998), 378.



For Roché, “Tella sees his vision more clearly than reality.”<sup>19</sup> Tella’s body of writing and singular pictorial universe reflect and promote his nonconformist and militant worldview, informed by his anarchist ideology, his anti-fascist convictions, and his experience as a Spanish exile. In spite of his lack of lasting success on Paris’s postwar art scene, like Roché his wish too was ultimately granted: having lost his country and his voice, Paris provided him a means and a forum to be heard.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL HAREM

Tom McDonough

Art historians, seeking an origin point for Pablo Picasso's 1954–55 series *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Women of Algiers), have frequently landed upon a story told by his onetime partner Françoise Gilot, of the famous "Louvre test" in late spring 1947. Having made a significant donation of his paintings to the nascent museum of modern art, Picasso was afforded the privilege of directly comparing them with those of some of his preferred masters in the Louvre. Gilot recounts the visit alongside Georges Salles, then director of the Musées de France, and the guards who carried Picasso's works through the galleries to hold them beside Francisco de Zurbarán, Gustave Courbet, and, of course, Eugène Delacroix. "He ... asked to see some of his paintings beside Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus*, *The Massacre of Chios*, and *The Women of Algiers* (fig. 1)," Gilot remembers. "He had often spoken to me of making his own version of *The Women of Algiers* and had taken me to the Louvre on an average of once a month to study it." Upon returning to the house on the rue des Grands-Augustins, she asked Picasso how he felt about the comparison with Delacroix. "His eyes narrowed and he said, 'That bastard. He's really good.'"<sup>1</sup> The seed had been planted, we are meant to understand, which would flower, some seven years later, into his great series of canvases. It is, as told, an irresistible tale: the modern master confronting his predecessors in the hallowed sanctum of the museum, bravely assuming the burden of the anxiety of influence, and begrudgingly admitting the immensity of the challenge. Art history will operate in this circuit between the institutional repository and the equally sovereign space of creation; all else drops away as insignificant.

But those same scholars curiously ignore the anecdote that immediately precedes Gilot's account of the triumphant parade through the Louvre's halls. Upon arriving at the museum, Salles had taken her and Picasso to a huge storage room in its rafters, where the donated works were being stored. "There was almost nothing else in the room except a large piece of dirty, worn-looking cloth that covered most of the floor. The guards picked up Pablo's paintings ... and we set off across the cloth to try the experiment." At that moment, Salles shrieked in panic, "'Get off, for God's sake.'"<sup>2</sup> The worn cloth upon which Picasso and the others were standing was in fact Delacroix's ceiling painting *Apollo Slays Python* (1850–51), which had been removed from its place in the Galerie d'Apollon for conservation. How not to read this tale as an almost exact inversion of the terms of the "test" that would immediately follow? In place of recognition of the accomplishments of one's predecessors

<sup>1</sup> Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

and the assumption of one's own rank in the long line of tradition, we now find profound misrecognition—the Delacroix perceived not as a painting but as “a large piece of dirty, worn-looking cloth”—and antagonism, the literal trampling underfoot of one's forebears. In place of the comparison conducted on the idealized vertical plane of visual sublimation, we now find struggle on the material, horizontal, earthbound plane, the revenge, we might say, of Python on Apollo. What first appeared to be a story of tradition's unbroken continuity and artistic beginnings becomes one of implicit violence and endings. And perhaps, after all, the latter proves a more truthful introduction to the *Femmes d'Alger*.

It might permit us, for example, to place the paintings within the long trajectory of those “avant-garde gambits” that defined so much of the history of modernism from the late nineteenth century onward. The *Femmes d'Alger* are more productively inscribed within the strategic play of reference, deference, and difference outlined by Griselda Pollock than within those simple biographical arcs of the artist's life that we typically find in the Picasso scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Namely, that his longstanding desire to “make his own version” of the *Femmes d'Alger* is finally fulfilled at the end of 1954 when, we are told, he observes in the profile of his new love Jacqueline Roque a striking echo of the seated figure with the rose in her hair, holding the tube of the narghile, to the right of Delacroix's painting. Such biographical interpretations have been sufficiently discredited that we need not belabor their inadequacy. Other accounts multiply possible origins for these works. There is the story of Roland Penrose visiting the atelier days after Picasso had painted the final version of the series and finding the reference to Matisse, who had recently died, unmistakable: “My first sight of the Moorish interiors and the provocative poses of the nude girls reminded me of the odalisques of Matisse.” When asked, Picasso affirmed his impression: “‘You are right,’ he said with a laugh, ‘when Matisse died he left his odalisques to me as a legacy.’”<sup>4</sup> Or Pierre Daix who, looking back upon the genesis of the series, adds that the artist's interest in Delacroix's painting must have been “sharpened by news of the triggering of the Algerians' struggle for their independence.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, one cannot help be struck by the coincidence of these chronologies: on Monday, November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front (FLN) commenced its armed struggle for independence with a wave of attacks against the French in Algeria; that Wednesday, November 3, Matisse died. Six weeks later Picasso would paint the first two canvases of the *Femmes d'Alger*, on Monday, December 13. The question for the historian will be how, or even whether, the first two events can be brought together in an account of the third.

<sup>3</sup> See Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888–1893* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 396.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Daix, *La Vie de peintre de Pablo Picasso* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 359.



Before such an attempt, however, it is necessary to note that none of Picasso's contemporaries who have left us accounts from the ten weeks during which the series occupied his attention make any mention of the events in Algeria, neither Penrose nor Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, our two best witnesses of the days between mid-December 1954 and mid-February 1955 when the fifteen canvases of the *Femmes d'Alger* were produced. This should hardly be surprising: at this early stage, there was not yet the sense of a "war" underway in Algeria, only a manifold of "North African problems," as the regular rubric on the inside pages of the daily *Le Monde* was titled in these months. In winter 1954–55, the French were paying closer attention to the ongoing negotiations with nationalist factions in Tunisia and Morocco than to those they still considered "gangs of outlaws" operating in the Aurès Mountains. During these weeks, Algeria appeared on the cover of *Le Monde* only seven times, most often in regard to reforms being proposed by the interior minister, François Mitterrand, and other governmental issues within the *métropole*. So we must, at the outset, abandon as wishful thinking the belief that these works could plausibly "be interpreted as a direct comment" on any aspect of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Picasso was undoubtedly kept up to date with French Communist Party (PCF) opinion on Algeria by painter Édouard Pignon and his wife, critic and journalist Hélène Parmelin, friends who effectively functioned as intermediaries between the artist and the Party.<sup>7</sup> But the PCF was not without its own ambivalences on the matter: to judge from early coverage of the conflict in *L'Humanité*, while colonial repression was consistently denounced from the November 3, 1954 issue, the Party vacillated in its support of "independence" for Algeria, preferring the formula of "freedom" for Algerians, a telling hesitation in the face of FLN demands for restoration of a sovereign Algerian state. "Freedom," "independence": these are terms to which we will have to return.

Of the paintings' aesthetic development, however, we can be rather more certain. Begun on December 13, 1954, the fifteen canvases of the *Femmes d'Alger* series were completed sporadically over the following months: four relatively small paintings produced throughout the last weeks of the year (variations A to D, December 13, 1954 – January 1, 1955); a pause of two weeks, then three further modest studies in mid-January 1955 produced on consecutive days (E to G, January 16–18); then a move to significantly larger formats in three paintings the following week, again at a rate of one work per day (H to J, January 24–26); and a final burst of activity after another weeklong pause, with Picasso painting what would prove the last five versions over the course of nine days in February (K to O [fig. 2], February 6–14). In tracing their progress, one could hardly improve upon the account provided by Leo Steinberg. He finds the central drama of the series to be focused on the

<sup>6</sup> The position stated by Lynda Morris and Christoph Grunenberg, "What Picasso Stood For," in *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, ed. Morris and Grunenberg (London: Tate, 2010), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Their place in Picasso's life is best recounted in Gertje R. Uteley, *Picasso: The Communist Years* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

Fig. 1:  
Eugène Delacroix  
*Femmes d'Alger dans leur  
appartement*  
(Women of Algiers in Their  
Apartment)  
1834

Fig. 2:  
Pablo Picasso  
*Les Femmes d'Alger (version O)*  
(Women of Algiers [version O])  
1955



right-hand figure—the one who in Delacroix smokes the narghile, although Picasso will shift that role to her more hieratic companion on the left; after the first two canvases of December 13, in which she is seen sleeping peacefully, the artist rotates her so that she now reclines on her side in abandon, with her entwined legs thrust in the air. Steinberg calls her the Sleeper, and the problem, as Picasso formulated it, was to pose her “simultaneously prone and supine; put another way, to have her seen both front and back, yet ... without physical dismemberment, without separation of facets, but as a compact close-contoured body which denies itself neither as an object of vision nor as self-centered presence.”<sup>8</sup>

This problem arises almost as soon as the Sleeper is cast onto her side, and reaches a crisis point in the first of the large canvases of late January, version H, painted on Monday the 24th. In it, the body loses its integrity, becomes incoherent: the two views, on her back and on her belly, are divided by what Steinberg calls a “no-man’s land, where the color is murky and a black wedge concedes the impossibility of the task. The parts sunder like a trunk split down the middle. Separated by 180 degrees, the contrasting aspects refuse to incorporate.”<sup>9</sup> The solution only presented itself two weeks later, in version M of Friday, February 11, in which simultaneity is achieved by transforming her lower contour into “a rotating shaft” that alternately presents left- and right-hand views of the figure.<sup>10</sup> Divergent aspects are conflated in a single, convergent form, what John Elderfield has called “an impossibly folded image.”<sup>11</sup> We might more accurately call it a mirroring structure constituted in the line that forms at once spinal groove and front axis, and that becomes even more prominent in the final two variants of the *Femmes d’Alger*, canvases N and O of mid-February.<sup>12</sup>

This was, of course, a psychic as well as a formal problem, and the solution discovered in February 1955 is part and parcel of the ubiquitous eroticism of the series: to see the woman’s body, the body of the other, in its entirety, all at a glance. Steinberg recognized this, describing the simultaneity of prone and supine views as a matter of erotic possession as well as systematic investigation, of both “diagram and embrace.” The figures in Picasso’s paintings, “objects of a perfect possessiveness, occupy an invaded space, like the inside space of a pocket, like a cat’s cradle,” he writes, in a language that seems peculiarly charged given the context. The invader here is the artist’s eye, inhabiting the picture like “a roaming caress.”<sup>13</sup> If Picasso, in Daix’s recollection, imagined Delacroix as a timid voyeur of the harem, he would boldly enter, vision for him becoming an instrument of intimate occupation.<sup>14</sup> The full title of Delacroix’s painting was *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*, “in their apartment,” by which he emphasized the space in

<sup>8</sup> Leo Steinberg, “The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large,” in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 141–42.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>11</sup> John Elderfield, “Chapter 33,” in Elizabeth Cowling et al., *Matisse Picasso* (London: Tate, 2002), 334.

<sup>12</sup> I here echo the terms used by Rosalind E. Krauss in describing Picasso’s recourse to a generative grammar of stereometric form in his *Balconies* of 1919; notably, she makes this argument with reference to the Steinberg essay cited above. See Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 194–99 and 261n80.

<sup>13</sup> Steinberg, “Algerian Women,” 234.

<sup>14</sup> “Picasso would recount to me in his inimitable fashion what he imagined of Delacroix as a timid voyeur of the harem: ‘And then, he was one of the first tourists after the conquest. That would have changed things in the harems. In any case, before that, Delacroix would have remained at the door ... and we would never have had the *Femmes d’Alger*.’” Daix, *La Vie de peintre*, 363n11.



which his three women sit, attended by their black servant. The depth of the room, half-hidden behind a curtain that invites us into its intimate recesses, is suggested by the faience tiles with their schematized floral patterns. On the wall hangs a Venetian mirror with its rococo frame, and Murano glass, crystal, brass, and pewter wares are displayed on a shelf or glimpsed behind the wooden doors of a niche. For much of the series, Picasso will retain the tilework, but the rest of this Orientalist paraphernalia is cleared out; in the final version, canvas O, even the vestigial faience has disappeared. Only the keyhole arch, now displaced to a reflection in a mirror hanging at the back of the room, still suggests the North African setting. But the sense of domestic enclosure remains. We are reminded that, as T. J. Clark has argued, the interior, the room—“this little space of possession and manipulation”—had been the very premise of Picasso’s Cubism, and that is no less true for the 1954–55 series. What will be possessed here, however, are not the accoutrements of the bourgeois subject but the nude bodies of the harem, a setting as intimate as the lining of a pocket.<sup>15</sup>

To take possession of these bodies was also to accept the bequest of Matisse’s own odalisques. “When Matisse died he left his odalisques to me as a legacy,” Penrose recalls Picasso saying. A few weeks earlier, in the midst of painting the most clearly “Matissean” versions of the series, he had remarked to Kahnweiler that “I sometimes tell myself that perhaps this is an inheritance from Matisse. After all, why shouldn’t we inherit from our friends?”<sup>16</sup> Yve-Alain Bois has characterized the *Femmes d’Alger* as a form of “mourning” for this lost interlocutor, which seems true so long as we recognize the antagonism, even aggression in that mourning.<sup>17</sup> Picasso inherits from the dead while also killing his rival once again: in his notes from the visit to the Grands-Augustins studio, Penrose writes that the artist “certainly thinks a lot about Matisse, especially since his death, but ... in a curious way the nudes are more erotic and more vicious than the hotel orientalism of M.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, he will describe the scenes as orgiastic, the women stripped of their chemises and jewelry, bold curves defining full breasts and round bottoms. What was discreet in Delacroix and Matisse becomes extravagant in Picasso, a legacy simultaneously accepted and contested. And this sexuality pervades the entire canvas: “the seduction of the female form,” Penrose explains, “is no longer veiled and segregated, it floods the whole picture, affecting every corner and opening up the scene from a shadowed confinement to the light of the sun.”<sup>19</sup>

That language, composed by Penrose in the later 1950s, is indicative of the ways history enters these paintings through complex, rather oblique plays of allusion: the sexuality of Picasso’s Algerian women will no longer be veiled or

<sup>15</sup> See T. J. Clark, *Picasso and Truth* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 79. In this regard, Zeynep Çelik rightly points to the echo of the French military imperative to “penetrate” the previously inaccessible spaces of the Algerian casbah. See Çelik, “Colonial / Postcolonial Intersections: ‘Lieux de mémoire’ in Algiers,” in “France and Algeria: From Colonial Conflicts to Postcolonial Memories,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 156–62.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, “Entretiens avec Picasso au sujet des *Femmes d’Alger*,” *Aujourd’hui: art et architecture*, no. 4 (September 1955): 12. The remark was made on Tuesday, January 25, 1955, when Picasso was beginning variation I.

<sup>17</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, *Matisse and Picasso* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 231.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Cowling, *Visiting Picasso: The Notebooks and Letters of Roland Penrose* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 104.

<sup>19</sup> Penrose, *Picasso*, 395.

segregated, their shadowed confinement has come to an end. The “je ne sais quel haut parfum de mauvais lieu” that Baudelaire had detected in Delacroix’s painting—its atmosphere of relentless melancholy—is definitively dispelled in favor of a newfound freedom in the open air. There is, in relation to the *Femmes d’Alger*, a curious tendency for Picasso’s commentators to describe him as somehow liberating the brown women he depicts in these canvases. We hear it in Parmelin’s account, written, like that of Penrose, toward the end of the 1950s: the inhabitants of Delacroix’s harem “have meanwhile become emancipated” in the century separating his painting from those of Picasso; in these new works, they are seen “enjoying all the freedoms of the century without ever denying their birth.”<sup>20</sup> The trope is amplified by Daix, who reminds us that “Picasso always loved liberating the beauties of the harem,” just as “he enjoyed delivering Ingres’s recluses to the pleasures of the beach.”<sup>21</sup> Women, once segregated by an oppressive Muslim society, will here be made over into proper, emancipated female subjects of mid-twentieth century France. In this regard, we might note that the features of Jacqueline Roque, Picasso’s lover in these years, are evident in canvas O, the final painting of the series; putting her traits into the painting was, however, less a matter of noting her resemblance to the seated woman to the right in Delacroix’s painting—as is so frequently claimed in the Picasso literature—than it was one of imprinting the features of a Frenchwoman onto those of the Algerian. To return to the language of the newspapers, we could say that he was happy to grant his subjects their (sexual) freedom but certainly not to concede their independence.

The war, we could say, enters the *Femmes d’Alger* only from the outside, as a shadow that troubles the inheritance from his predecessors—not only Delacroix and Matisse but Ingres and Cézanne as well, all of whom find some echo in the series. It will interpose itself to disturb that neat circuit between museum and studio that Picasso had hoped to tread in these years of his maturity, when he was seeking to confirm his place in art history in dialogue with the Old Masters. The events of November 1, 1954 are not so much present at the origins of this series then, but they could be said to play a role in its conclusion. When Penrose called on Picasso on February 16, it was not at all clear that the most recent *Femmes d’Alger* canvas would be the last; he reports the artist as explaining, “Pictures are never finished in the sense that they suddenly become ready to be signed and framed. They usually come to a halt when the time is ripe, because something happens which breaks the continuity of their development.”<sup>22</sup> For Penrose, that something would be an unanticipated departure for Vallauris in mid-February to settle some financial business, an unwelcome break that inadvertently ended his engagement with Delacroix. Perhaps those very “complications in the ownership of property”

<sup>20</sup> Hélène Parmelin, *Picasso Plain: An Intimate Portrait*, trans. Humphrey Hare (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963), 78. It is worth noting in this context the broader reconstruction of middle-class feminine sexuality taking place during these years in France—a transformation marked by such “scandals” as the publication of Françoise Sagan’s *Bonjour Tristesse* in 1954 or the release of Roger Vadim’s film *Et Dieu... créa la femme* in 1956. For a critical approach to this issue, see Jen Kennedy, “Charming Monsters: The Spectacle of Femininity in Postwar France,” *Grey Room*, no. 49 (Fall 2012): 56–79.

<sup>21</sup> Daix, *La Vie de peintre*, 359.

<sup>22</sup> Penrose, *Picasso*, 397.

Fig. 3:  
Martial Raysse  
*Soudain l'été dernier*  
(Suddenly Last Summer)  
1963



functioned as a displaced recognition of the impossibility of truly inheriting the legacy of Matisse and his odalisques—of the fact that the “North African problems” of the newspapers had made possession of those particular bodies inaccessible. The *Femmes d’Alger*, despite all their orgiastic energy, bring to a close a great cycle of French painting. Parmelin remembered seeing them shown as a group in summer 1955 at the great Picasso retrospective held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. “I looked at them with a sort of serenity,” she writes, “for they had been, as it were, sewn into their final skins, placed for ever. The peace treaty had been signed with the signing of the canvas.”<sup>23</sup> The elegiac, even funereal, tone is unmistakable, even if the true peace treaty would have to wait another seven years.

<sup>23</sup> Parmelin, *Picasso Plain*, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Kahnweiler, “Entretiens avec Picasso,” 12.

<sup>25</sup> Most notably, Assia Djebar, “Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound” (1979), in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 133–51; and Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (1981), trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

Visiting Picasso on January 25 along with publisher André Lejard, Kahnweiler recounts the conversation turning to the creative process. The artist discusses how he is haunted by voices of self-doubt that continually question the decisions he is making on the canvas. At the end of these remarks, he quotes the famous line of Rimbaud: “Je est un autre.”<sup>24</sup> And yet we must admit that the world-historical question being posed at the time hinged rather on whether the other would become an “I.” The later history of the *Femmes d’Alger* is one precisely of “postcolonial” rereadings by Algerians themselves, not only of the Delacroix-Picasso axis specifically but of the entire regime of French colonial representation of Arab women more generally.<sup>25</sup> In France, the foreclosure of this history led to a thoroughgoing



domestication of the odalisque, embodied in the visual arts most notably by *nouveau réaliste* Martial Raysse's *Soudain l'été dernier* (1963; fig. 3). This reclining beachgoer, torn from the pages of *Elle* or *Marie Claire*, is a cellophane version of Matisse's and Picasso's women, their colors now keyed up in shocking juxtapositions of intense green against orange, or slate blue against raspberry. Three years earlier, in 1960, Raysse had refused to fight in Algeria, choosing commitment for several months in a psychiatric hospital over conscription, and while the work's title makes reference to the recent film after Tennessee Williams's play *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959, dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz), we should note that in 1963, "last summer" quite literally meant 1962, when the Évian Accords at long last conceded Algerian independence. *Soudain l'été dernier* is, then, a work that undoubtedly expresses the joy of the first postwar *vacances*, the first summer of peace since 1954. But it is also the expression of a vitiation of the long tradition of the odalisque, of that venerable fascination with the "Oriental" that had provided French artists for well over a century with figures for "sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy."<sup>26</sup> Later in life, Edward Said acknowledged the curious creative power of such "images of Western imperial authority," their "capacity to produce strangely autonomous intellectual and aesthetic images."<sup>27</sup> Picasso's *Femmes d'Alger* were the last in that line; they represent the final moment such images could be imagined as "autonomous" from the history out of which they were generated. But the odalisque cleansed of its otherness becomes strangely unerotic, enervated; it becomes Raysse's cutout. Transported across the Mediterranean to the beaches of the Riviera, the drama of erotic possession is transformed into the bloodless spectacle of the publicity image, the pinup, the commodity.

<sup>26</sup> In the words of Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 118.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 110. Such images have been addressed in a wide range of art-historical literature, but here we might signal, as a foundational moment, Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 33–59.

## MOMENTS OF A SHARED HISTORY AFRICAN ARTISTS IN PARIS, 1944–1968

Maureen Murphy

In the first short film ever made by African directors, the Latin Quarter was renamed *L'Afrique sur Seine* (1955), a title chosen to emphasize the presence of the African community in Paris. The co-directors Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, Jacques Mélo Kane, and Mamadou Sarr present Paris in the short film as the “capital of the world, the capital of Black Africa,” but they also refer to the city as the place of “days without bread, days without hope.” This was a “Paris of solitude consoled by eternal fraternity,” where men went “to be together, to meet.” At the time of the Bandung Conference and the non-aligned movement, Paris was still seen as a capital of ideas, freedom, and cosmopolitanism. Africans, West Indians, Asians, and Europeans met on café terraces and danced together in nightclubs. Workers, intellectuals, and vagabonds crossed paths, talked, or ignored each other. In the film, the Left Bank is presented as a land of encounters and promises, the place of what novelist Cheikh Hamidou Kane would describe in 1961 as an “ambiguous adventure.”<sup>1</sup> It was indeed in Paris that authors such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and Léopold Sédar Senghor forged the tools of anticolonial resistance and the language that would enable them to reverse the logic of power. This “detour” *via* Paris was no less decisive for being paradoxical: most of the actors in the independence movements studied in the city before returning to their countries of birth to join the government or take part in the independence movement, whether in Senegal, Algeria, or the Caribbean. But if the story of the Black intellectuals and novelists who sojourned in the French capital is fairly familiar, the tale of their artist peers is seldom told.

Most of the existing publications on this subject are indeed specialist accounts, viewed from an angle of geographical specificity, a viewpoint that tends to place them outside history. In 2016, Okwui Enwezor organized the exhibition *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in order to set the artistic tendencies of this period in a global context unconfined by continental categories. Although this show included several works by African artists, these artists were all but absent from the catalogue. This silence no doubt reflects the difficulties faced by researchers and curators when dealing with the art of this period: the lack of archives and of preserved or accessible works, as well as the difficulty of shaping theoretical tools capable of dealing with this moment of shared history. Just as anticolonial authors wrote in the language of the oppressor in order to rethink it, so too the artists created works that combined the signs of Western “modernity” with African references. In so doing, they undermined or even destroyed the idea of

<sup>1</sup> Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *L'aventure ambiguë* (Paris: Julliard, 1961).

authenticity that was, at times, nevertheless claimed by these very same artists or by politicians themselves. Contradictory, paradoxical, and ambiguous, the works made by these artists did not fit the stylistic categories of the time. Instead, they questioned them by often reusing their codes (abstraction, expressionism, a form of primitivism) to better rethink and transform them. If their productions had an anticolonial dimension, this did not necessarily coincide with anti-Western thought. The primitivism practiced by European artists of the early twentieth century challenged the norms, the “good taste,” and the authority of Western institutions by referring to African, Oceanic, or American models. But for artists who themselves came from countries that were then considered “primitive,” the issues were more complex: they wanted both to appropriate the signs associated with Western “modernity” and to valorize a local heritage, and thus forge a “new art”<sup>2</sup> that was suited to their own societies and at the same time capable of engaging in a dialogue of equals with artists in Europe and the United States. In the 1960s, most of the artists who contributed to the institution of “modern” art in South Africa (Gerard Sekoto, Ernest Mancoba), Algeria (Mohammed Khadda, Abdallah Benanteur), Ethiopia (Alexander Boghossian), Senegal (Iba N’Diaye, Papa Ibra Tall), or Ivory Coast (Christian Lattier) belonged to a generation born in the 1920s and 1930s. Their time spent in Paris in the 1950s was an important part of their political, intellectual, and artistic training. Most of them would return to their home countries to teach and take part in the decolonization movements of the early 1960s. Some of them, disappointed by “the suns of independence,”<sup>3</sup> would actually go back to Paris later in the same decade.

## Why Paris?

The power of attraction of the French capital lay, no doubt, in the image that it projected even if it lost some of its luster when compared with reality. Paris, it seemed, was the city where everything was possible, a land of liberty, fraternity, and equality without the shackles of racial discrimination, an artistic capital to which artists came from all over the world, whether Black novelists and jazzmen fleeing segregation, artists from the Jewish diaspora, or writers escaping the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe. Many of the artists who congregated in the city were labeled the “School of Paris,” a title that attempted to unify the diversity of their contributions and valorize the city’s identity. Artists from the colonial world, however, were not included in this category even if their presence was undeniable: “Beginning in 1950 and until independence,” writes the Algerian painter Mohammed Khadda, “many of our painters would live or stay in France and Europe ... at that crossroads of the arts that was Paris; they would confront their own ideas and visions with contemporary aesthetic research.”<sup>4</sup> Neither truly French nor truly foreign, the subjects of the French colonial empire who, until 1946, had been governed by the *Code de l’indigénat* now acquired the status of citizens of the French Union.

<sup>2</sup> See Mohammed Khadda, “Éléments pour un art nouveau” (1972), in *Éléments pour un art nouveau, suivi de Feuilletés épars liés et inédits* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2015). The author wishes to thank Emilie Goudal for the advice and information she provided about the art of Mohammed Khadda.

<sup>3</sup> In *Les Soleils des indépendances* (Montreal: Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 1968), Ahmadou Kourouma describes the tormented aftermath of the independences in Africa; in English as *The Suns of Independence*, trans. Adrian Adams (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Khadda, “Les Premiers peintres algériens,” in *Éléments pour un art nouveau*, 42.



This was the case in most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The same year also saw the beginning of a totally free movement between France and Algeria. Both developments favored the movements of artists who were not only attracted to Paris but also eager to escape from an environment that allowed none of the conditions needed for the emergence of local art.

There were a number of art schools around the French Empire, some of them created in the nineteenth century (École des Beaux-arts, Algiers, 1881), others between the wars (Institut des Beaux-Arts, Tunis, 1923; École des Beaux-arts de l'Indochine, Hanoi, 1925; Société des Amis des Arts, Dakar, 1928). However, all these schools had been intended for Europeans. Their role was to train, exhibit, and disseminate the art of metropolitan citizens who were considered as the sole possessors of the “modern” spirit. In British colonies, a number of art departments were opened to local artists in the 1920s,<sup>5</sup> which could explain the limited number of Anglophone artists in Paris. Generally speaking, “natives” could choose between two paths: either to acquire European techniques (assuming they had access to training), or to restore and perpetuate local traditions by taking inspiration from the models displayed in the museums created for that purpose.<sup>6</sup> Encouraged to reproduce rather than to create, to imitate rather than to invent, African artists also had to face colonial artistic conformism. Africanist and Orientalist paintings offered bowdlerized visions of a world that was both idealized and stereotyped, in which “indigenous people” posed in the background of exotic scenes conceived for Europe, showing a land that was there to be conquered, a source of profits, available bodies, and fruit ripe for consumption. At once documentary and propagandistic, this academic painting was exactly what artists like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were fighting against in the 1910s, and it is not hard to see how the anticolonial thrust of European primitivism could have won over African artists of the “modern” generation. However, this was not a simple choice to make: “In France, Picasso was accused of being a foreigner; here, we are accused of being Picassos,” wrote Mohammed Khadda.<sup>7</sup> In order to lay the foundation for a national style, artists had to escape from such constraints. For some, such as the South African artist Ernest Mancoba (1904–2002), that intellectual and moral struggle also meant refusing to play the role of the “primitive.”

### Dealing with Primitivism

A former pupil of missionary schools in South Africa, Ernest Mancoba began his career as a sculptor and most of his early works relate to Christian iconography. In 1936, Dr. N. J. van Warmelo, an ethnologist and member of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, asked him to lead a group of African sculptors in the production of “folkloric art”<sup>8</sup> for the upcoming Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg (1936). “I was shocked,” he recalled years later,

<sup>5</sup> This is the case, for example, with the Nigeria College of Arts, Science and Technology (Zaria), which provided a European academic training, dispensed by a staff where African teachers were the exceptions among a European majority. Similarly, at the Achimota College in Accra, Ghana, which was open to Africans and Europeans in 1927, the classical technical teaching was based on the British model, which tended to be rather closed to modernist experiments.

<sup>6</sup> On this point, see Katarzyna Pieprzak, *Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed Khadda, “La colonisation,” in *Éléments pour un art nouveau*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Mancoba, interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, in Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Lives of the Artists, Lives of the Architects* (London: Penguin, 2015), 254. The author would like to thank Sarah Ligner for the advice and information she provided about Ernest Mancoba.

“and, as politely as possible, refused the proposition.”<sup>9</sup> Leaving for Europe, and for Paris in particular, also meant getting away from the stultifying atmosphere of the colonial world: “In my daily life, I felt more and more humiliated at the conditions imposed on my people, and I had a growing difficulty in containing myself on certain occasions. Thus, I soon understood I would never be able to feel free enough, in my mind, to express myself as fully as I wished, but would always knock my head against the barriers which the colonial order had set up in my country.”<sup>10</sup> Two years later, having been awarded a grant, he left South Africa and traveled to England. From there he continued on to Paris, where he enrolled at the *École des Arts Décoratifs*.

In 1947, Mancoba moved to Denmark with the artist Sonja Ferlov, whom he had married in Paris a few years earlier. There he joined the Danish section of the CoBrA movement and appeared in a photograph taken in Copenhagen for one of the group’s first exhibitions in 1948.<sup>11</sup> The fact that he frequented members of CoBrA granted him an a posteriori inclusion in the postwar group. Mancoba’s work was recently shown at Tate Modern alongside works by Asger Jorn, and was featured in the *Modernités plurielles* exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou (2014)—where it was displayed *outside* the room reserved for Africa and therefore *in* history.<sup>12</sup> The reception of his work seems to have followed the same path as that of Jean-Michel Atlan (born in Algeria in 1913) or Matta (born in Chile in 1911), for, once their art was linked to that of major names from Western modernism, identity ceased to be a factor of distinction or even discrimination. However, if we look more closely, Mancoba’s art really did not fit the primitivist spirit of CoBrA: the saturated expressiveness and violence suggested by the centrifugal energy exuded by the mask in his *Composition* of 1940 (fig. 1) could indeed be seen to herald the postwar spirit of CoBrA, but only if one fails to observe the symmetry and rigor of its geometrical formal arrangement, which leaves nothing to chance. The hallucinatory character of certain sketches (1938–40) can be generically related to the graphic scarifications on Congolese masks, but they never lose their structural rigor. Thus references to African art evident in Mancoba’s work do not function as vectors of the deconstruction, hybridization, or destruction of form. On the contrary, the graphic forms inspired by Kota reliquaries from Gabon that appear in the work of the 1960s and 1970s are present as architectural skeletons. The lightness and warm tones, as well as the neutrality of certain grounds, combined with the energy emanating from the stabbing brushstrokes on the canvas, stand in strong contrast to the thick layering in the works of Jorn or Corneille.

“For me, in the 1950s and 1960s,” recalls Iba N’Diaye, “[the term primitivism] evoked the racial prejudices of those who considered that Africans were incapable, in artistic disciplines or anywhere else, of thinking for themselves, of affirming themselves as individuals who had thrown off the shackles of

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Although he appears in this photograph, Ernest Mancoba did not take part in the exhibitions organized by the group and remained something of a marginal figure.

<sup>12</sup> On this point, see Maureen Murphy, “L’exposition modernités plurielles en question,” in *L’Histoire n’est pas donnée. Histoire de l’art et postcolonialité en France*, ed. Emmanuelle Chérel and Fabienne Dumont (Rennes: Les Presses Universitaires, 2016), 27–36.

Fig. 1:  
Ernest Mancoba  
*Composition*  
1940



tradition.”<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Khadda was no less critical of the way André Breton responded to the drawings of Fatima Haddad (better known as Baya) in his review in the journal *Derrière le miroir* of her 1947 exhibition at Galerie Maeght in Paris: “We have not forgotten the positive revolt of Surrealism,” Khadda wrote in 1972, “but can we really say that the attitude of the author of *Les Vases communicants* [*Communicating Vessels*], who positions himself, one might say, as a prospector of overseas talents (A. Césaire, W. Lam), is totally devoid of that Eurocentrism we find so irritating.”<sup>14</sup> Born in Algeria in 1931, with no academic training, Baya seemed to combine all the characteristics of what Europeans at the time imagined a “primitive” artist to be. Little over fifteen years old when she exhibited in Paris, she painted brightly colored, shimmering forms replete with references to North African landscapes. The story of her “discovery,” first by Marguerite Caminat, the owner of the farm she was working on, and then by Adrien Maeght when he visited Algeria in the 1940s, no doubt helped construct this image of the artist from remote lands. Praised by the Surrealists, appreciated by Picasso himself, who met her in Vallauris in 1949, she was nevertheless reduced to her otherness by the very process of the celebration of her work, which Khadda described as “paternalistic.”<sup>15</sup>

While they shared a common interest in extra-European art with their European contemporaries, African artists did not subscribe to the vision that bundled references to childhood, exoticism, and madness into one overall idea of artistic regeneration. In breaking with colonial painting and value systems, these artists did indeed follow the same movement of return to the origins characteristic of the avant-garde in order to lay the foundations of a “new” art, but they did so to invent an art that would be fully of their time. An art not only rooted in the local but also nourished by visual references from Europe, Africa,

<sup>13</sup> Iba N’Diaye, “A propos des arts plastiques dans l’Afrique contemporaine,” *Cahiers de la Maison de la culture de Reims* (1978).

<sup>14</sup> Khadda, “Les Premiers peintres algériens,” in *Eléments pour un art nouveau*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



or the Middle East. These artists thus learned about the art of their own continent in European museums or in the publications of the period, just as their European contemporaries did. Ernest Mancoba read *Primitive Negro Sculpture* by Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro in the national library in Cape Town in 1936, while in the 1950s the Senegalese painter Iba N'Diaye made sketches of masks and statuettes in Paris, which was where Mohammed Khadda would study Islamic arts, references to which are found throughout his work.

Close to the abstraction of Nicolas de Staël and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Mohammed Khadda also shared an interest in Oriental calligraphy with Pierre Soulages, Georges Mathieu, or Hans Hartung, which enabled him to redefine the relation between painting and reality. Taking part in the collective dynamic that aimed at rethinking painting in Paris, he participated in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in 1955, 1957, and 1958, and met with artists at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, where he took evening classes. “Starting with the postulate that all painting is abstract by definition,” he wrote, “it is in effect something other than raw reality, even if it sets itself the aim of representing that reality with the greatest fidelity—we shall not attribute to form an importance that it does not have, so as to take into account, above all, the primacy of the contents, and more exactly, of their elaboration.”<sup>16</sup> Resolutely abstract during the years in question, his paintings later acquired a figurative and more explicitly political dimension when he returned to Algeria in 1963 after the War of Independence.<sup>17</sup>

## The Politics of Forms

In *Les Casbahs ne s'assiègent pas* (You Cannot Besiege a Casbah, 1960–82; fig. 2), for example, Khadda introduced motifs inspired by Arab calligraphy with a graphic violence (exacerbated by the red and black outlines) that contrasted sharply with the geometrical order that emanated from the silhouette of the city nested between sky and sea in the background. Reversing the Western directional structure of the work, the painter oriented the gaze from right to left (as in Arabic), starting with the machine guns (at top right), so as to better express the violence of the conflicts that took place during those years. The visual power of the letters became a structural element, in counterpoint to the peacefulness embodied by the city, which seemed both under siege and protected by the motifs. If one can speak of an aesthetic of signs, it acquired here a political dimension combined with abstraction, as in most of this painter's works. Following such an artistic path was not an easy choice to make considering the liberation struggles that were going on in the colonies as well as the Soviet support for national liberation movements.

<sup>16</sup> Mohammed Khadda, “Et les artistes vont sortir de leur ghetto...,” in *Éléments pour un art nouveau*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, *Torture ou Martyre*, 1968, oil on canvas.

Fig. 2:  
 Mohammed Khadda  
*Les Casbahs ne s'assiègent pas*  
 (You Cannot Besiege a Casbah)  
 1960–82



Considered as an imported aesthetic, associated with the oppressor and with a certain kind of elite, abstraction did indeed seem incompatible with the struggle for disalienation called for by nationalist movements anxious to elaborate a form of art that would be both “authentic” and accessible to all. “It was claimed that art should serve the revolution, and a climate of constraint developed on the basis of that postulate,” wrote Khadda. “The usefulness of art became the leading criterion; the obligation placed on the work to be legible pushed painting deeper into conventions.”<sup>18</sup> According to Khadda, going back to the fundamentals of creation as they appeared in the rock paintings of the Tassili desert or in Islamic calligraphy, made more sense since these visual solutions were not only local, but also one of the sources of modern art as it had developed in Europe.<sup>19</sup> The play of influences would thus be reversed, or at least relativized, in favor of local origins. Choosing this direction, or writing in French for intellectuals from the French colonial empire, represented only an apparent contradiction, wrote Iba N’Diaye: “Most of us are sons of African cities, which were created, for the most part, in the colonial era, and were crucibles of an original culture in which foreign or indigenous cultural contributions dominate. We are both the sons and the creators of this culture that those nostalgic for an Africa of the ‘noble savage’ find so disconcerting.”<sup>20</sup> Colonial times constituted a moment of shared history and copresence to the disadvantage of the colonized, but which nevertheless favored and increased exchanges between Africa and Europe. In traveling to Paris, these artists took part in the debates, discussions, and experiments that would have been impossible for them in the colonies that were placed under strict surveillance and regulation.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Mohammed Khadda, “Nouveau souffle,” in *Eléments pour un art nouveau*, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Khadda, for example, writes, “We all know how much Gauguin and van Gogh benefited from the arts of the Far East, the paternity of *arts nègres* regarding Cubism (Picasso, Braque) is patent, as is the undeniable influence of the arabesque on the work of H. Matisse or, more recently, on Mathieu, who makes no secret of his debt to Arab calligraphy.” Khadda, “Eléments pour un art nouveau,” 38.

<sup>20</sup> N’Diaye, “A propos des arts plastiques.”

<sup>21</sup> The Laval Decree of 1934 stipulated that any film had to apply for authorization by the local governor, which explains the small number of films made by Africans before the independences.

In 1956, the journal *Présence africaine*, founded in Paris in 1947, organized the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists. This gathering brought together authors such as Frantz Fanon, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Jacques Stephen Alexis, all of whom came to discuss the conditions for the

liberation of cultures under European domination, but whose views varied as to the ways in which they should impose themselves on the international scene. Where Senghor tried to defend and to nuance at the same time the idea of “Negritude,” others, such as Alexis, championed the voice of nationalism, while Fanon evoked the risks inherent in the manipulation of local cultures: “The culture put into capsules, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted. And this headlong, unstructured verbal revalorization includes paradoxical attitudes.”<sup>22</sup> And Césaire to conclude, “We are here to say and to demand: Let the peoples speak. Let the black peoples come onto the great stage of history.”<sup>23</sup> Artists such as the South African Gérard Sekoto and the Nigerian Ben Enwonwu attended the congress, while Picasso’s portrait of Aimé Césaire served as its poster. Far from being an isolated event limited to African, West Indian, or African American debates, the congress hosted European intellectuals such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacqueline Delange, and Michel Leiris. It was a time of encounter and dialogue—ideas circulated as they did in university lecture halls, cafés, and studios. Ernest Mancoba became friends with Alberto Giacometti through his wife Sonja Ferlov, whose studio was in the same building as theirs. Most of the foreign and colonial artists attended the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, such as the Ethiopian Alexander Boghossian, who stayed in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s, Papa Ibra Tall, Iba N’Diaye, Mohammed Khadda, or Abdallah Benanteur. Although often presented as somehow on the edge, torn between two worlds, neither truly from here nor really from elsewhere, these artists were in fact fully engaged with their time and sought to capture all its complexity. If Khadda kept his distance from the new government in Algeria in the 1960s, others played a full part in setting up “national schools” when they returned to the continent. This was the case, for example, of the painter and tapestry maker Papa Ibra Tall.

Born in 1935 in Tivaouane, Senegal, Papa Ibra Tall studied at the École des Métiers d’Art in Sèvres, at the École Spéciale d’Architecture de Paris in the 1950s, as well as at the Manufactures de Tapisserie des Gobelins in the 1960s. Close to President Léopold Sédar Senghor and often presented as an advocate of Negritude,<sup>24</sup> on returning to Senegal in the 1960s he created the “Recherches Plastiques Nègres” section at Dakar’s Maison des Arts in 1960 and helped set up the Manufactures des Arts Décoratifs, first in Dakar in 1962, and then in Thiès in 1965. He had several shows organized around the Soviet Union (in Moscow, Leningrad, Erevan) in 1965, and was close to the *Présence africaine*’s team during his sojourns in Paris where he produced various illustrations for the journal. He also took part in the 1967 Biennale de Paris as curator of the Senegalese section. Although he refused to recognize it and claimed that he was autonomously African, unconnected to Europe,<sup>25</sup> Tall drew on multiple sources. In his work references to Fang masks cohabited with allusions to pharaonic Egypt, explosive colors and deformed, elongated bodies echoed

<sup>22</sup> Frantz Fanon, “Racisme et culture,” in *Premier congrès international des Ecrivains et Artistes noirs* [Sorbonne, Paris, September 19–22, 1956], special issue, *Présence africaine*, nos. 8–10 (June–November 1956): 129; translated as “Racism and Culture,” in Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 42.

<sup>23</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Culture et colonialisme,” in *Premier congrès*, 205; translated as “Culture and Colonization,” trans. Brent Hayes Edwards, *Social Text* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 142.

<sup>24</sup> See Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> See “Tapisseries de Thiès,” *African Arts* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1970): 61–63.



Fig. 3:  
Papa Ibra Tall  
*Couple royal* (Royal Couple)  
1965



psychedelic graphics of the 1960s as well as jazz experiments, all trends associated with the African American civil rights movements he encountered during his stays in the United States (fig. 3). Benefiting from the new techniques in the art of tapestry developed by Jean Lurçat in Aubusson, Tall shared Lurçat's sense of swathes of color and an interest in metaphysical cosmology. His collaboration with the Aubusson and Beauvais tapestry works made it possible to train several Senegalese weavers and to put in place the equipment needed for the manufactory in Thiès to function.<sup>26</sup> Although an important figure in the "School of Dakar"—named in homage to the "School of Paris"—Tall's work remains little known and misunderstood. When they were exhibited at the 2013 Venice Biennale, his tapestries were shown alongside drawings by the prophetic Ivoirian artist Frédéric Bruly Bouabré and works by the Brazilian Arthur Bispo do Rosário, who made most of his art while interned in a psychiatric hospital in Brazil. Such juxtapositions show just how powerful and persistent the primitivist imaginary can be in perceptions of the works made by these forgotten artists. Building individual careers as well as taking part in the collective movements linked to the rise of new nations, politically radical or marginal, these artists developed a body of work impossible to classify stylistically, but whose coherence emerges in the context of a history that reaches beyond geographical categories and draws on the complexity at play in the making of art.

<sup>26</sup> The author wishes to thank Joshua Cohen for the help and advice he provided concerning the "école de Dakar" and the Thiès manufactures in particular.

# PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND UNIVERSAL APPEAL PARIS AS A CULTURAL CENTER FOR SOUTH AMERICAN GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION FROM THE POSTWAR PERIOD TO THE 1960S

Isabel Plante

For ten years their activities were more or less ignored. One of them was earning his bread by playing a guitar, another existed as a layout assistant, and nearly all of them lived a very long way out of the limelight. But in their garrets they invented an art form that is everywhere supplanting declining “Pop” and “Op” art.... There have been shows of Takis and [Alexander] Calder in Paris; of [Jean] Tinguely, [Nicolas] Schöffer, [Pol] Bury, [Jesús Rafael] Soto, [Yaacov] Agam, and [Julio] Le Parc in New York; exhibitions like “Machine” at Berkeley, “Light and Movement” in Bern, Brussels, and Düsseldorf: kineticism is “fashionable,” now subject to the vanities of fashion, though really it deserves better. Firstly, it is Paris’s counter. It has so often been said that France now stands apart from the great movements of modern art, that it is surprising to see kinetic art was almost entirely born here, that it was developed right here, and that it is here, within our walls, that fifty-odd artists from around the planet—Latin America, Switzerland, Belgium, Israel—have instigated, to the almost total indifference of museums and collectors, it must be said, a new “School of Paris,” a sort of secret society gathered around a single idea: to add time to the art of space.

—Jean Clay, “L’art du mouvement,” 1966<sup>1</sup>

Midway through the 1960s, when the fallout from World War II seemed finally to have been consigned to the past and French cultural policy went in search of lost time and sought to reestablish Paris as the capital of innovation,<sup>2</sup> kinetic art burst onto the scene. An array of exhibitions dedicated to kineticism drew crowds of enthusiastic youngsters and the galleries, lit up only by the artworks themselves, came to resemble nightclubs. The Argentinian artist Julio Le Parc, who’d been based in Paris since 1958 thanks to a French government grant, received the grand prize in painting at the 1966 Venice Biennale, news of which spread through the press at the speed of light and encouraged greater consumption of kinetic art.<sup>3</sup> Brigitte Bardot sang on French television surrounded by kinetic works produced by Martha Boto and Gregorio Vardanega—also both from Buenos Aires—and sporting a miniskirt made of metal pieces designed by the Spaniard Paco Rabanne, who himself was inspired by this movement.<sup>4</sup> Foreign in their majority, and with a large percentage of them hailing from

<sup>1</sup> Jean Clay, “L’art du mouvement,” *Réalités* (June 1966): 88. The titles of the exhibitions cited in Clay’s original text are: *La Machine and Lumière et mouvement*. In the first case, this probably refers to *Directions in Kinetic Sculpture: An Exhibition*, curated by Peter Selz in 1966 at the University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley. The second was exhibited as *Licht und Bewegung* in 1965 at the Kunsthalle in Bern, and as *Lumière et Mouvement* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa’s Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> See the author’s own *Argentinos de París. Arte y viajes culturales durante los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013), chs. 3 and 4.

<sup>4</sup> On December 31, 1967, French television transmitted a program of musical performances with Brigitte Bardot launched as a pop star. Bardot’s version of the song “Contact!” by Serge Gainsbourg was performed among kinetic art works. Paco Rabanne had begun to experiment with haute couture designs in 1966 and subsequently stated that he’d been inspired by kineticism and especially by the work of Julio Le Parc; his statements can be found at <http://www.julioleparc.org/paco-rabanne.html>. Meanwhile, among thirty-odd news clippings relating to the *Lumière et mouvement* (1967) exhibition at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, there is this *Paris-Match* headline of August 31, 1967: “Les pionniers de l’art cinétique ont découvert un supporter: Brigitte Bardot” (The Pioneers of Kinetic Art Have Found a Supporter: Brigitte Bardot). This was perhaps the

Fig. 1:  
Martha Boto  
*Plus Helicoidal*  
ca. 1967



most visited kinetic art exhibition of the era, with the museum extending the show for several more months than planned.

<sup>5</sup> Clay, “L’art du mouvement,” 93.

<sup>6</sup> The proliferation of industrial objects was a theme explored by Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Tati, among other philosophers, writers, and filmmakers. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>7</sup> See the author’s “Kinetic Multiples: Between Industrial Vocation and Handcrafted Solutions,” in *Keep It Moving? Conserving Kinetic Art*, ed. Rachel Rivenc and Reinhard Bek (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2018), 104–12, available online at <http://www.getty.edu/publications/keepitmoving/theoretical-issues/13-plate/>.

Latin America, the Paris kineticists were a lively and highly visible group, so much so that—according to the critic Jean Clay—they proved the French capital was still the cosmopolitan capital of old and still had something essential to offer in terms of contemporary art (fig. 1).

By taking a cognitive view of perception, the kineticists maintained that Op and kinetic art could not be dismissed as simple games of illusion. To alter visual and synesthetic perceptions meant modifying the way each viewer literally, but especially symbolically, looked at themselves and the world. In arguing that kineticism was more than just a trend, Clay summarized, “In a society in stasis, static art; in a society in movement, kinetic art.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as Kristin Ross has noted, from the late 1950s, daily life in France had changed so quickly that intellectuals and peasants alike found their lifestyles undergoing an abrupt transformation, one that brought a surge of new consumer goods like refrigerators, cars, and televisions.<sup>6</sup> Trusting in the destabilizing effects of kinetic art, Clay felt optimistic about its dissemination through multiples: a serial production of industrial vocation that filled exhibition spaces and storerooms.<sup>7</sup> Clay envisaged a near future in which art galleries governed by the uniqueness or rarity of an artwork would



be superseded by “industrial-scale organizations” that would disseminate “the art product” along the same lines as books and records.<sup>8</sup>

In turn, considering the number of places the kinetic artists hailed from, the “society in movement” alluded to by Clay also referred to geographic mobility. In 1964, the exhibition *Nouvelle tendance. Propositions visuelles du mouvement international* (New Tendency: Visual Proposals from the International Movement), at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, gathered together some fifty artists of eleven different nationalities. Kinetic works by German, Italian, and Spanish artists were brought to the city and presented alongside a large number of works by Latin American artists living in Paris such as Carlos Cruz-Diez (the layout designer mentioned by Clay),<sup>9</sup> Narciso Debourg, and Jesús Rafael Soto (the guitarist<sup>10</sup>) from Venezuela, and Martha Boto, Hugo Demarco, Francisco García Miranda, Horacio García-Rossi, Julio Le Parc, Francisco Sobrino,<sup>11</sup> Luis Tomasello, and Gregorio Vardanega from Argentina. Kinetic art was conceived—in the words of Pascal Rousseau—“as a kind of Esperanto through which each individual would communicate with the world in the ecstatic intoxication of optical vibration.”<sup>12</sup> Colored by the information-flow model of cybernetics, the kinetic movement nurtured the avant-garde utopia of radical behavioral changes through destabilizing perception and contact with new technologies. Kineticism was—according to Rousseau—a universal language that anticipated the future removal of cultural and linguistic borders, with humanity transformed through contact facilitated by communication technologies.

The motivation behind trying one’s luck in postwar Paris was quite different from the cultural sojourns of previous generations of South Americans. It was no longer a matter of amateurs traveling to the undisputed mecca of art to study and then thrive upon their return; rather they were artists who sought to become professional (that is, to earn a living as an artist) and who lived as foreigners in the cosmopolitan city par excellence, developing innovative artistic projects that would earn recognition beyond their countries of origin. Aware that New York had stolen the idea of modern art (to paraphrase Serge Guilbaut),<sup>13</sup> these artists were undoubtedly still attracted to what Paris represented in terms of the modernist tradition (forgive the oxymoron) and the art market, but the city was also significant politically. By the mid-1960s, anti-American vitriol had reached unprecedented levels. In France, such sentiments were fueled in equal measure by President Charles de Gaulle’s attacks on US foreign policy, opposition to the Vietnam War, and the political radicalization that exploded in May 1968. The choice of Paris was predicated on concrete opportunities (typically grants and fellowships offered by the French administration)<sup>14</sup> and aesthetic possibilities associated with a

<sup>8</sup> Clay, “L’art du mouvement,” 90. Two years later, Clay’s prediction seemed to be about to come true: see the March 1969 initiative to sell multiple kinetic works by FNAC, a photography and phonographic shop that had just opened a second outlet in Paris and was expanding its range of products related to culture. *La fin de l’objet et du lieu culturel. Débat organisé par la revue Robho avec Jean Clay, les artistes présents et le public*, brochure for the Centre culturel Noroit, Arras, March 8 to 24, 1969. Julio Le Parc Archives, Cachan, France.

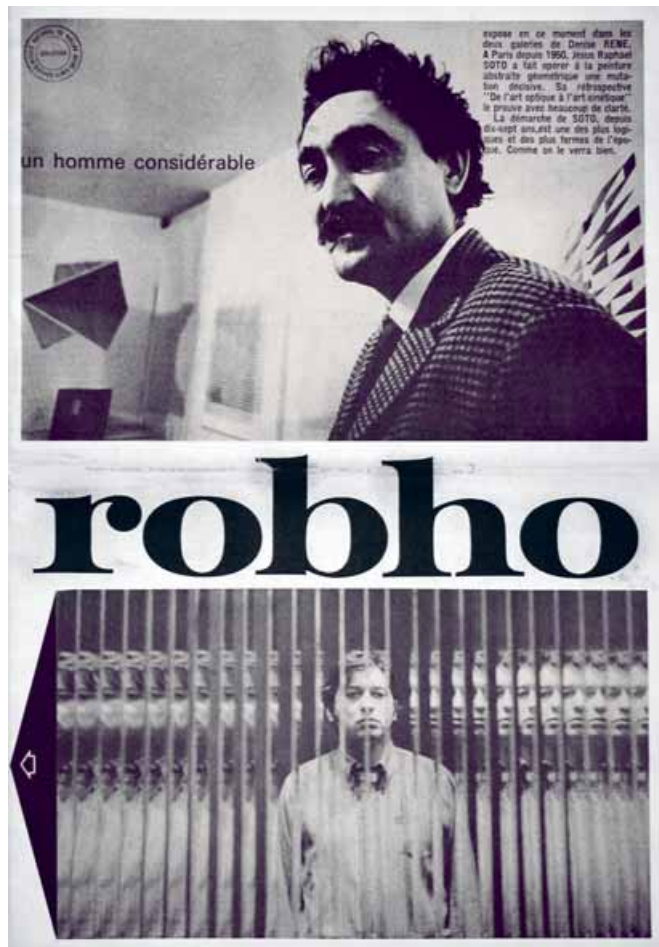
<sup>9</sup> Moving to Paris in 1960, Cruz-Diez worked as a printer and designer for the Creole Petroleum Corporation, an artistic director at the McCann-Erickson advertising agency, and an illustrator for the newspaper *El Nacional* in Caracas.

<sup>10</sup> Soto earned a living in Paris until at least 1955 playing and singing boleros. During the 1960s, a number of pictures appeared in the French press of the artist playing the guitar. One example is an article by Christiane Duparc, “Les sud-américains ont pris Paris,” *Le Nouvel Adam*, no. 19 (February 1968).

<sup>11</sup> García-Rossi, Le Parc, and Sobrino had been part of the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAV) since 1961, alongside the Frenchmen François Morellet, Joël Stein, and Jean-Pierre Yvaral. The first meeting of those involved in *Nouvelle tendance* took place at GRAV’s Paris studio in November 1962. The groups Zero (Germany), T, and N (both Italy) were present, as well as a few critics. See Frank Popper, *Naissance de l’art cinétique* (Paris: Gauthier-Villards, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> Pascal Rousseau, “‘Folklore planétaire’. Le sujet cybernétique dans l’art optique des années 1960,” in *L’œil moteur. Art optique et cinétique, 1950–1975*, ed. Emmanuel Guigon and Arnauld Pierre, exh. cat. Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg (Strasbourg: Musées de Strasbourg, 2005), 142; cited in translation in Plante, “Kinetic Multiples,” 104.

Fig. 2:  
*Robho*, no. 1, June 1967. Cover:  
 Rafael Soto and Julio Le Parc



<sup>13</sup> Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Several of the Argentine kineticists arrived in Paris with either a grant from the French government or an endowment from the Braque Prize, awarded by the French Embassy in Argentina between 1963 and 1969: Julio Le Parc, Armando Duarte, and Gabriel Messil.

<sup>15</sup> As the internal workings of the art market are kept secret, this is impossible to prove.

<sup>16</sup> See Jean-Paul Ameline and Véronique Wiesinger, eds., *Denise René, l'intrépide. Une galerie dans l'aventure de l'art abstrait 1944–1978* (Paris: Éd. du Centre Pompidou, 2001).

geometric abstraction regarded as aloof from any North American “shrillness.” But many of those who saw Paris as an aesthetic choice with political connotations would later find themselves responding to the French Left’s enthusiasm for the Third World.

Of all the South American artists, Jesús Rafael Soto and Julio Le Parc, who moved to Paris in 1950 and 1958, respectively, undoubtedly attracted the most attention from the press, art institutions, and, probably, the art market as well:<sup>15</sup> their public profiles in Paris during the 1960s reached levels that were certainly beyond their wildest dreams. They both had exclusivity contracts with Galerie Denise René, which had been specializing in geometric abstraction since the 1940s,<sup>16</sup> and contributed to kinetic art exhibitions in several European capitals (fig. 2). As mentioned earlier, Le Parc won the grand prize in painting at the Venice Biennale in 1966 and the following year was made Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French minister of culture André Malraux. Soto was equally lauded, winning a prestigious

commission to produce a mural for the UNESCO building in Paris.<sup>17</sup> The rivalry that existed between them was so fierce that the Brazilian artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica referred to it in their private correspondence as “that Soto-Le Parc competing bullshit.”<sup>18</sup> It’s worth remembering that both Soto and Le Parc originally went to Paris in order to measure themselves in the international arena.

By starting with the good fortune (the lucky star, one might say) of the kineticists in the mid-1960s, this text intends to shed some light on the South American artists who arrived in Paris before them, in the immediate postwar period, such as the Uruguayan Carmelo Arden Quin. These artists not only took up the mantle of working with geometric abstraction but also sought to innovate and overcome what they deemed to be its unresolved contradictions.

### An Alternative History of Kineticism: Madi Art

In 1966, the aforementioned Jean Clay wrote that kinetic art’s concern with the transformation of forms had its origins in the isolated experiments of the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, such as those by László Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Duchamp; it also had a modernist forerunner in the figure of Alexander Calder, and a first generation of kineticists brought together by Denise René for the *Le Mouvement* exhibition in 1955: the Venezuelans Cruz-Diez and Soto, the Israeli Yaacov Agam, the Brazilian Abraham Palatnik, the Belgian Pol Bury, the Italian Bruno Munari, the Swiss Jean Tinguely, the Greek Vassilakis Takis, the North American Frank Malina, and the Hungarians Nicolas Schöffer and Victor Vasarely. They were followed by a second generation, many of whom organized themselves into groups and brought a utopian dimension to exploring visual and synesthetic instability: GRAV in France, Gruppo N and Gruppo T in Italy, Zero in Germany, and Equipo 57 in Spain.

Notwithstanding, two years later Clay had already discovered another key historical figure in the incorporation of movement into artistic production: Carmelo Arden Quin. In the European spring of 1968, the magazine *Robho* (1967–71), which Clay edited alongside the visual poet Julien Blaine and the cultural journalist Christiane Duparc, published a dossier dedicated to Arden Quin (fig. 3). The Uruguayan artist had moved to Paris in 1948 after having been a driving force behind *Inventionismo* in Uruguay and Argentina with the magazine *Arturo. Revista de artes abstractas* (1944).<sup>19</sup> The *Robho* dossier offered a four-page spread of archive photography and artifacts documenting Madi art initiatives in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1946 as well as later

<sup>17</sup> *Matière, espace et temps ne font qu’un* (Material, Space, and Time Are But One), 1969, a two-part installation, 238 × 118 × 150 cm; 203 × 1040 × 258 cm.

<sup>18</sup> Hélio Oiticica, letter to Lygia Clark, June 7, 1969, reprinted in *Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica. Cartas 1964–74*, ed. Luciano Figueiredo (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ).

<sup>19</sup> The editorial committee on *Arturo*, the only edition of which was published in January 1944, was also formed by Rhod Rothfuss, the brothers Tomás Maldonado and Edgar Bayley, and a very young Gyula Kosice. See María Amalia García, “La revista *Arturo* y la relocalización de la vanguardia en el cruce regional,” in *El arte abstracto. Intercambios culturales entre Argentina y Brasil* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2011), 25–53.

<sup>20</sup> Reclaiming Madi’s place in the history of kineticism is put forward as a premise by Cristina Rossi in “Imágenes inestables. Tránsitos Buenos Aires-París-Buenos Aires,” in *Real/Virtual. Arte cinético argentino en los años sesenta*, ed. María José Herrera, exh. cat. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Buenos Aires: MNBA, 2012), 47–67.



developments in Europe. There was also a short text entitled “Arden Quin précurseur,” which traced the artist’s work back to the origins of kineticism.<sup>20</sup>

The archaeology of kinetic art has yet to be written. Arden Quin, in the early postwar years in Argentina and later in France, addressed, with great clarity, the problem of movement in art.... We have rather forgotten about them and today tend to think kineticism was developed in Paris in 1955. Not true.<sup>21</sup>

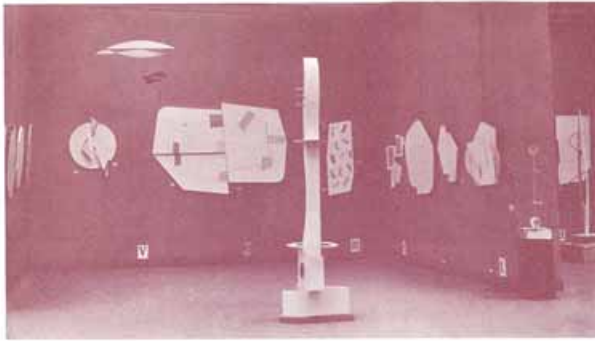
This 1968 *Robho* feature detailed Arden Quin’s twenty-odd-year trajectory as an artist and in doing so argued that the established wisdom that Denise René’s *Le Mouvement* exhibition was the launchpad for the kinetic art movement was in need of revision. In shining a spotlight on Arden Quin, the dossier corrected what Clay himself had argued previously. In 1966, he deemed Soto to be the turning point, in that the Venezuelan had moved, in 1954, from Op Art to kineticism when switching from one pictorial surface to two by overlapping matching pieces of plexiglass painted with different geometric patterns: if viewers moved position while keeping their eyes fixed on the work, the visual effect of the overlap changed, giving the impression that the image itself was moving. But by introducing Arden Quin and Madi art into the argument, Clay was dating the first attempts at kinetic art to even earlier in the postwar period and switching the focus of attention to Buenos Aires.

In the immediate postwar years, the artistic avant-garde on both sides of the River Plate had conceived of “invention” art, prompted by the aforementioned *Arturo* magazine. Inventionism explored the relationship between shape and color, spatial rhythms and the connections between points and lines on a flat plane, as well as the possibility of introducing a random element by having different components interact through the incorporation of movable parts. The two groups that emerged from the *Arturo* nucleus—Madi and the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención—produced structures they called *coplanares* (coplanals) and that were composed of cut-out geometric forms painted in solid colors and displayed directly on the wall. Around 1946, the *coplanares* and articulated sculptures by artists from the Madi group in Buenos Aires, initially led by Arden Quin and later by Gyula Kosice, had incorporated a sense of transformation into the work.

<sup>21</sup> “Arden Quin précurseur,” *Robho* no. 3 (2nd quarter of 1968), n.p.

<sup>22</sup> Agnès de Maistre, *Carmelo Arden Quin* (Nice: Éditions Demaistre, 1996).

The *Reliefs amovibles* (Removable Reliefs) series that Arden Quin developed in Paris between 1949 and 1950 was a continuation of those experiments in changeability explored with the *coplanares*. According to Agnès de Maistre, the reliefs were a direct precursor to kineticism, especially the *Méta-*



Œuvres cinématiques et transformables ; Salle Madi n° 2 ; Réalités nouvelles ; 1953.



MICHEL BILANDIER



Carmelo Arden Quin devant ses poèmes transformables : Au fond, à gauche « Boîtes » (1950) ; Premier plan, à gauche : « Madigra » (1948) ; Premier plan à droite : « Ionnel » (1952).

Réalités Nouvelles 1953. Au premier plan : relief articulé de Guesars.

WHDH - PRÉSTIMPS 1968

# MADI



## MANIFESTE 1948

Nous vous montrerons des choses inconnues, jamais vues ni entendues par vous, même en songe. Nous vous donnerons des yeux et des oreilles nouveaux afin que vous puissiez voir dans les rumeurs et entendre dans les transparences. N'en doutez point !

Madiste signifie homme conséquent avec les audaces sans bornes, les aventures démesurées, l'exactitude rigoureuse dans les relations, la science stricte des éléments, l'invention, le génie.

Nous ne nous fatiguerons pas d'inventer ! Nous serons toujours célèbres ! Jusqu'à la fin de l'âge du monde présent ; jusqu'à ce que nous voyions la transformation totale de toute forme, de toute règle, de toute pensée. L'homme a été fait pour surpasser l'homme, pour construire la conscience pure et immortelle dans une seule sphère cristalline. Etonnez-vous-en !

De la transparence pour nos pas !

Nous avons peu d'espace pour des analyses de principes, c'est pourquoi nous allons vous présenter tout de suite :

La dernière poésie qui puisse être lue  
la dernière plastique qui puisse être regardée  
la dernière musique qui puisse être écoutée  
la dernière maison qui puisse être habitée  
la dernière et définitive connaissance !

Allons-y donc hardiment !

Avant Madi, rien. Après Madi, rien non plus. L'expressionnisme, le cubisme, le néo-réalisme, le dadaïsme, l'existentialisme, le lettrisme ne sont que des produits de la décadence d'une époque.

Le désir de filtrer l'art — cette chenille grise — jusqu'à le tenir dans la paume comme une larve nucléaire, a échoué. Rien moins que l'art ! La connaissance la plus élevée ! A travers lui Léonard de Vinci vit tout notre monde il y a quatre cents ans. Nous sommes au delà. Qu'ils s'inclinent devant notre sagesse. De la pluralité à nous.

JE N'EXISTE PAS. JE PENSE.

Les deux premiers mouvements n'ont pas pu organiser des formes multiples ; les deux autres n'ont pas pu refaire la littérature ; les trois derniers n'ont pas pu exalter la raison de l'homme. Qu'est-ce que la poésie pour vous autres, plein airistes de la parole, si ce n'est un jeu floral encore, des feuilles du cœur sans temps ni mesure ?

La lumière ne fait autre chose qu'élargir l'espace. Notre architecture sortira à tous les horizons ! Notre littérature sera une mer de mythes ! Notre peinture mettra en liberté les couleurs.

ELLES SE MEUVENT !

SANS AUCUN DOUTE, LE MOUVEMENT, DANS TOUTE SON ESSENCE, VA ENVAHISSANT, COMME UN FLEUVE PRODIGIEUX ET ELECTRIQUE, TOUT L'ART PAR LA PORTE TOURNANTE DE MADI.

Nos directions sont obliques. Nous faisons

DE LA SCULPTURE MOBILE. GEOMETRIQUE ET DELIRANTE

DE LA PEINTURE MOBILE  
DE LA MUSIQUE ELECTRONIQUE  
DE LA POESIE MOBILE

Ici, reculez, images oniriques, morceaux cubistes, faux mythe créationniste, byzantinisme lettriste. Donnez passage à l'image madiste NON TRADUISIBLE PAR AUCUN ELEMENT SAUF LA PAROLE ; mais la parole sentie PAR UN MOYEN QUI N'EST PAS LA PENSEE.

JE CREE LE POEME MOBILE.

Avec nous autres l'art finit, la science commence.

L'art est dialectique. Les lois du mouvement déterminent aussi les relations dans la poésie, l'architecture, les arts plastiques, la musique, la littérature. Frontalité, profond et totalité constituent les liens synthétiques des ordres sagittal, orthogonal et vertical. Mais l'art n'est pas une idéologie aliénée. L'art fait l'histoire et vice versa. Une culture parcourt un cycle complet dans l'expression, représentation et signification. Historiquement chacune des déterminations forme un style. Matérialisme esthétique.

Nous ne parlerons pas des « murs » de l'orthogonalité.

Nous ne parlerons pas du statisme.

L'art se surpasse. Quand ne l'a-t-il pas fait ?

LA PEINTURE FAIT LA REVOLUTION VISIBILE.

MADI FAIT L'ART MOBILE.

L'ART RECOMMENCE.

ARDEN QUIN.



Fig. 3:  
Dossier on Carmelo  
Arden Quin and Madi  
art, *Robho*, no. 3, second  
quarter of 1968.  
Following page: Detail  
of *Structure articulable*  
(Articulable Structure,  
1946) by Carmelo  
Arden Quin

## ARDEN QUIN

Né à Rivera (Uruguay) le 16 mars 1913, C. Arden Quin se fixe à Buenos Aires dès 1938. En 1942, il fonde la Revue « Arturo » dont il paraît un seul numéro, deux ans plus tard (début 1944).

Cette revue a marqué le commencement du mouvement non figuratif en Argentine. En 1945, il fonde le groupement Arte Concreto-Invention qui réalise la première manifestation d'art abstrait à cadre irrégulier (Buenos Aires), chez le Dr Pichon Rivière (avril 1945), puis, la même année, chez l'artiste photographe Grete Stern. En 1946, il crée le mouvement MADI. Depuis 1944, il publie des pré-manifestes qui sont le prélude du Manifeste Madi en préparation.

À pris part à plusieurs expositions collectives en Argentine et à l'étranger : Première Exposition Madiiste Internationale, à Montevideo (1946), Jeune peinture argentine (Kraft, 1947), Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (van Riel, à Buenos Aires, 1948, 1949) ; à Paris, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1949-1954), Galerie Colette Allendy (1951) ; Espace-Lumière, Galerie Suzanne Michel (1953) ; Diagonal, Galerie Denise René (1953).

En 1948, il voyage en Europe et il en profite pour réorganiser à Paris le Mouvement Madi sur de nouvelles bases.

En 1954, C. Arden Quin crée à Buenos Aires un groupe « Arte Nuevo » auquel participèrent des artistes aujourd'hui à Paris (Var-

danega, Asis, Villalba, Tomasello, Boto), « Arte Nuevo » va publier de nombreux livres et catalogues sur les nouvelles tendances de l'abstraction géométrique et organiser des expositions des auteurs de ce mouvement.

En 1956 alors qu'« Arte Nuevo » poursuit son expansion, C. Arden Quin arrive à Paris et s'y fixe ; là il commence à travailler sur la superposition des surfaces qui lui permettent d'obtenir des vibrations un des ombliements par le rapport des surfaces entre elles.

En 1962, il crée « Ailleurs » où il peut se consacrer plus spécialement à cette nouvelle poésie qu'il n'avait jamais abandonnée : parmi les revues qu'il a publiées, on trouve souvent des poèmes expérimentaux, « Fegans » dans *Arturo* de 1944 (où collaboraient également Murilo Mendes, Vincent Huidobro, Torres-García et Vieira Da Silva) *lonnel* (1950) et ses sujets poétiques « Nature » (1949) et « Soleil » (1963).

S'il continue maintenant sur le plan plastique ses expériences sur le mouvement et plus spécialement sur la vibration et la transformabilité, il s'occupe d'une manière très intense d'« Ailleurs » (hérité de la neuvième numéro) où il publie ses poèmes-découpages et des textes qui cherchent à renouveler le langage et les thèmes de l'anticipation.

C. Arden Quin ; 25 ans de refus pour entreprendre et découvrir → un fabricant solitaire.

## MADI/PROGRAMME 1955

Dans la sculpture « madi », outre la valeur plastique qui découle du contenu spatial de l'objet, il en est d'autres qui correspondent à sa nature mobile : ce que j'appelle « lucidité » et « pluralité » sont comme des qualités nouvelles résultant de la fonction temporelle.

Dans la série des structures « étendues » que j'ai réalisées de 1945 à 1948, l'espace était un solide primordial généralement un cylindre, ou un parallélépipède, divisé en trois parties et subdivisé en plans... Suivant une coupe intérieure le volume se divisait en trois formes. Tandis que la forme intérieure ou noyau était « située » dès le commencement, les formes extérieures se séparaient mais avaient tendance à s'immiscer ensemble ; elles agissaient comme si elles avaient conservé une parenté formelle. Dans ces dernières, toujours composées de deux parties, l'intégration était résolue au moyen de barres plastiques, souples. Ce rapport interne avait en outre une fonction ludique. Un autre élément d'intégration était constitué par des rectangles de verre mobiles. La structure était réversible.

En ce qui concerne les premières, la fonction des barres ou des soles, en matière identique, consistait à créer des valeurs de force et de pluralité et à maintenir l'équilibre. La structure était plurielle.

L'autre série de structures, appelées « transparences », était consi-

tituée par des éléments amovibles de verre ou de plexiglass. Outre la plasticité pure on retrouvait des valeurs de lumière et de pluralité.

Les éléments qui entrent dans la composition des deux séries étaient le bois et le fer en tant que matières plus facilement articulables et les matières transparentes usuelles : plastiques, verres travaillés ou non, soumis au moule d'air.

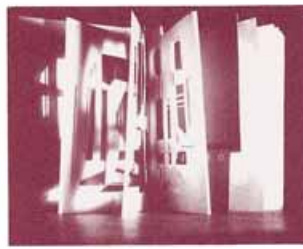
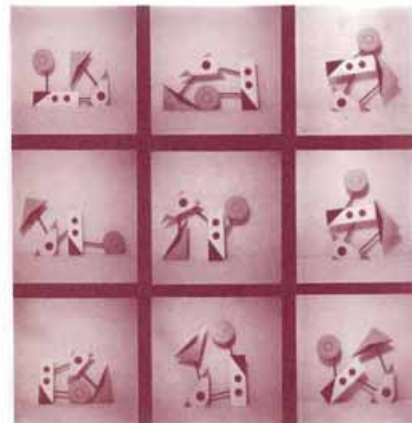
L'objet « madique » doit être constitué de corps sur lesquels la lumière se reflète comme, outre ceux que nous avons déjà cités, les miroirs chromés et polis, et ceux que peintre la lumière, comme les ensembles de jls, de verres, de matières plastiques transparentes, constituant des vides optiques. Et finalement, complétant le tout, la lumière et le mouvement réels.

La proportion contrôlable dans un espace géométrique et même lorsque l'articulation est relativement concentrique. Plus l'action est rapide, plus les éléments « divergent » et plus le contrôle des proportions est difficile. Dans ce cas, c'est le temps qui est articulable.

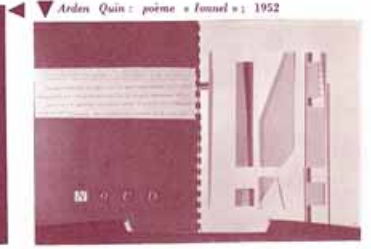
On peut désirer de ces expériences que l'espace se comporte comme une matière inorganique, facilement mesurable, tout au contraire du temps qui se révèle comme une matière organique. Ce sont les degrés du mouvement qui provoquent cette différence.

ARDEN QUIN ; 1955

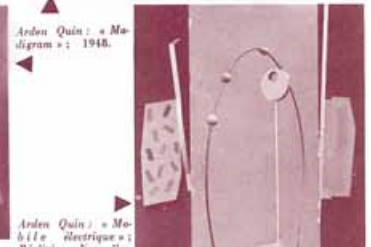
Arden Quin : structure articulable (neuf positions) ; 1946.



Arden Quin : poème « Foucault » ; 1952



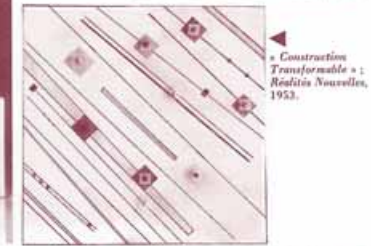
Arden Quin : « Madigram » ; 1948.



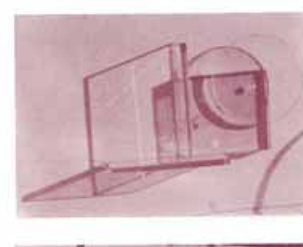
Arden Quin : « Matière Réactive » ; Réalités Nouvelles, 1952.



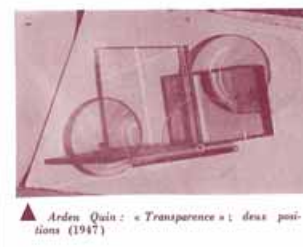
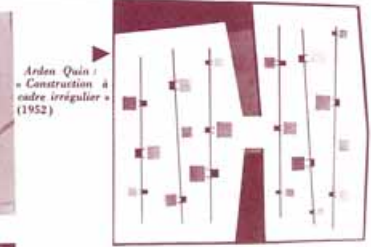
Arden Quin : « Baites » ; 1950.



« Construction Transformable » ; Réalités Nouvelles, 1953.



Arden Quin : « Construction à cadre irrégulier » (1952)



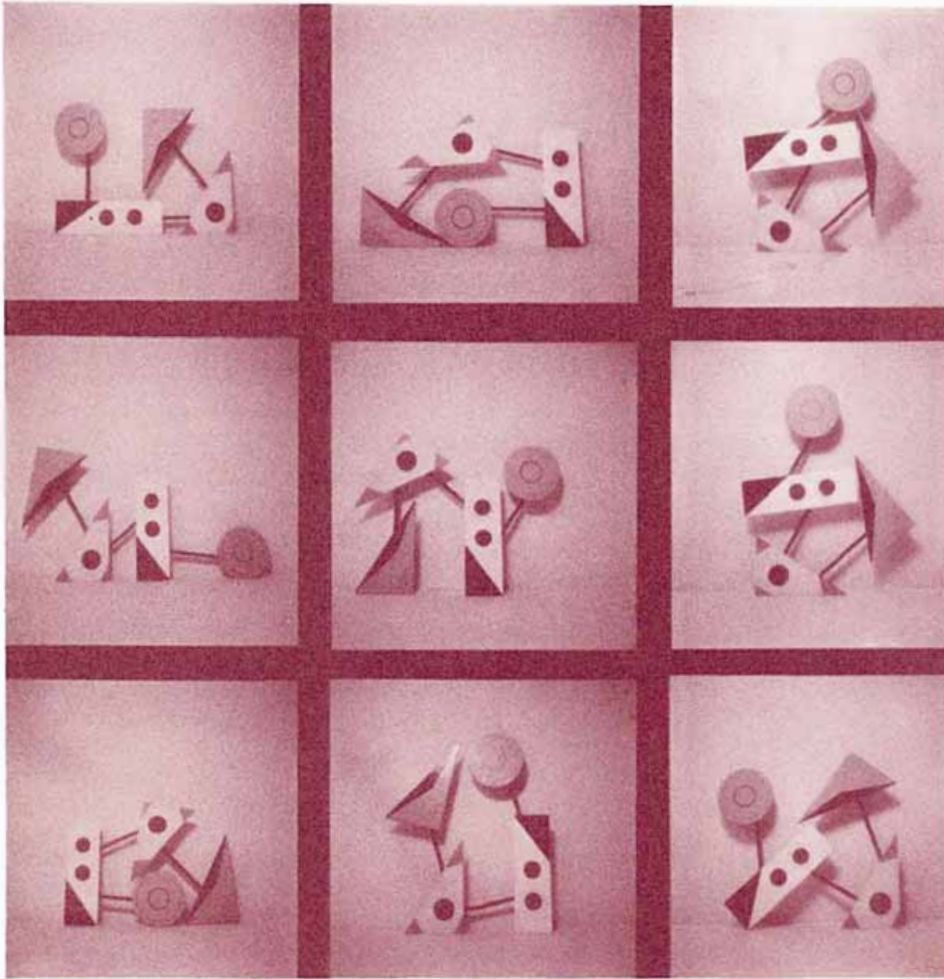
Arden Quin : « Deux fils de ayles mobiles transformables » (1947)



Arden Quin : « Transparence » ; deux positions (1947)



Arden Quin : *structure articulable (neuf positions)* ; 1946.



*mécaniques* by Tinguely, the *Mobile Planes* by Bury, and the *Assemblages mouvants* (Moving Assemblages) by Agam, all produced in Paris in 1953.<sup>22</sup> The argument extrapolated in *Robho* was this: Arden Quin's work not only anticipated the kineticists of the mid-1950s, it also inspired them. The magazine might have provided further details to support this hypothesis: in 1950, having recently arrived in Paris, Soto hung out with the emerging group of Madi artists that Arden Quin was leading, a group that included Rubén Núñez and Luis Guevara Moreno; furthermore, in late 1951, Soto took part, alongside the Madi group, in the *Espace-Lumière* exhibition that Arden Quin himself had organized for Galerie Suzanne Michel in Paris.<sup>23</sup>

That Arden Quin was inserted into the French narrative of kinetic art history in 1968 was possibly due to Julien Blaine.<sup>24</sup> Arden Quin's involvement with the co-editor of *Robho* magazine dated back to the early 1960s when,

<sup>23</sup> "Chronologie," in *Jesús Rafael Soto*, ed. Daniel Abadie, exh. cat. Galerie nationale Jeu de Paume (Paris: Éd. du Jeu de Paume, 1997), 179.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Shelley Goodman credits Blaine for inclusion of the Arden Quin content in *Robho*. See her *Carmelo Arden Quin: When Art Jumped Out of Its Cage* (Dallas: MADI Museum and Gallery, 2004), 253.

<sup>25</sup> Arden Quin met the poet in Buenos Aires in the mid-1940s.

alongside Jacques S nelier and Godofredo Iommi,<sup>25</sup> Arden Quin and Blaine performed “poetic acts” in different locations, including reading Guillaume Apollinaire beside his tomb in the P re Lachaise cemetery. A little later, Blaine and S nelier joined with Arden Quin to launch the magazine *Ailleurs* (1963–66), which featured reproductions of kinetic works by Vardanega, Antonio As s, Sobrino, Le Parc, Fran ois Morellet, and Jo l Stein.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Arden Quin is not only the link between Madi art and kinetic art but also between visual art and poetry, an aesthetic field of exploration that would continue with *Robho*, through Blaine and the magazine’s graphic designer Carlos Cruz-Diez.

### Geometric Abstraction as Universal Art

The items that featured in *Robho* serving to document Arden Quin’s career included: a page from *Arturo* magazine; a series of photographs showing the different positions of an “articulated structure” dating from 1946 and a motor-powered “electrical mobile” from 1952; views of the Madi room in the 1950 and 1953 Salon des R alit s Nouvelles, a space which had been amassing abstract, geometric, and constructive works since 1946;<sup>27</sup> a photographic portrait of the Uruguayan artist in his Parisian studio, surrounded by his poetic creations; a handout printed for the “Matin e madiste” held in April 1948, and a transcription of the manifesto, written in French, from the same document (fig 3.).

<sup>26</sup> S nelier is listed on the editorial team for the first issue and Blaine for the second. See *Ailleurs*, no. 1 (third quarter of 1963) and no. 2 (first quarter of 1964).

<sup>27</sup> Between July and August 1948, before arriving in Paris, Arden Quin (using the pseudonym Ram n Rasas Pet) also took part in the Salon des R alit s Nouvelles as part of a shipment of work sent by the Madi group, organized by Kosice.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Nora credits the “invention of France” precisely to the nineteenth-century configuration of a national identity in universal terms. See Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de m moire*, vol. 1: *La R publique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (New York and London: Verso, 1989), 45.

Publicized in French, this soir e took place in Ramos Mejia (a suburb of Buenos Aires) in the house of Elias Piterbarg, a homeopathic doctor and patron of the Madi group. Why print in French in a Spanish-speaking country? One answer could be that Arden Quin had already bought his ticket to France and with Paris on the horizon wanted to be able to distribute what he’d written once he got there. Another could be that using French was another example of the playfulness and eccentricity the Madi artists brought to their work and pseudonyms. Nor should one rule out, among other reasons, the universal appeal of their aesthetic project. While geometric abstraction could be considered a sort of visual Esperanto, the “international language”—the language spoken among people of different nationalities—was at the time still French (who in their right mind in 1940s South America would have written a manifesto in English?). And if any city could claim to be universal, that city was Paris.<sup>28</sup>

Now, unlike Soto, Le Parc, and the majority of the South American artists who became kineticists in Paris, Arden Quin had experimented with transformable works before he migrated to Europe. In this sense, he does not seem to correspond to the migratory dynamic of modernism proposed by

Raymond Williams, whereby migrating to the metropolis opened up, through means of visual and linguistic otherness, a “decisive aesthetic effect,”<sup>29</sup> a distancing with respect to national and provincial cultures and a communion with a sort of “Republic of the arts” governed by its own rules and methods.<sup>30</sup> Arden Quin was already an active proponent of Madi art before leaving Buenos Aires, despite the fact that in Paris this was only noted twenty years later, due to the visibility the South American kineticists acquired in Europe in the 1960s.

In September 1948, Arden Quin set off for Europe along with the Peruvian José Bresciani and two members of Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención, Juan Melé and Gregorio Vardanega (who was born in Italy but moved to Buenos Aires with his family as a child). For these young artists, interwar Paris had been a sort of “constructive Eden”<sup>31</sup> where the principle protagonists in abstract-constructive experimentation had crossed paths. In 1930, the Uruguayan Joaquín Torres-García had been a driving force behind the Cercle et Carré group alongside Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, and Michel Seuphor. The status Torres-García had attained in Paris confirmed that it was a city open to foreign artists and proved you didn’t have to be Russian or Dutch to find your place: the universal language of geometric forms united artists of different latitudes and tongues.

Upon arriving in the French capital, contact with Georges Vantongerloo pushed Arden Quin’s and Melé’s work in a new direction. Vantongerloo had been involved in legendary movements such as De Stijl, Neoplasticism, the aforementioned Cercle et Carré, and Abstraction-Création. In the postwar period he had begun experimenting with plexiglass, one of the materials most frequently employed by the kinetic artists of the 1960s. Vardanega had also experimented with plastics in the mid-1940s, and in 1948, not long after arriving in Paris, he exhibited alongside Vantongerloo, Bruno Munari, and Max Bill at Galerie Denise René. Between 1949 and 1950, Melé and Vardanega returned to Buenos Aires.<sup>32</sup> While the former continued to produce pictures, the latter began to explore, from 1956 onward, the possibilities of kineticists by making mobiles using celluloid strips and devices that allowed the viewer to manually alter the works.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the 1950s, Vardanega was back in Paris, this time accompanied by the artist Martha Boto.

Between 1957 and the mid-1960s, many more South American artists made their way to Paris, so much so that the Argentine press reported that Spanish could be heard mixing with French everywhere at a well-attended opening at Galerie Denise René, its new space<sup>34</sup> dedicated to exhibiting and selling

<sup>30</sup> While Laurence Bertrand Dorléac speaks of a “Republic of the arts,” and Pascale Casanova considers a “world Republic of letters,” both identify Paris as the capital of their republics. Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, “De la France aux Magiciens de la terre. Les artistes étrangers à Paris depuis 1945,” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès and Pierre Milza (Paris: Éd. de la Sorbonne, 1994), 403–28; Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Following the expression used and the reconstruction of the Parisian milieu realized by María Amalia García, *El arte abstracto*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Arden Quin traveled to South America in 1953 and returned to Paris in 1956. During his stay in Buenos Aires, he formed the Arte Nuevo group along with the critic Aldo Pellegrini, Vardanega, Tomasello, and other artists.

<sup>33</sup> Popper, *Naissance de l’art cinétique*, 144, 161.

<sup>34</sup> The Galerie Denise René opened a second show room in 1966. It was the opening of this new space.

<sup>35</sup> Miguel Alfredo D’Elia, “El mendocino que triunfó en Venecia,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), July 10, 1966. Julio Le Parc Archives, Cachan, France.



kinetic multiples.<sup>35</sup> All the same, kinetic art wasn't merely a Latin American art movement; rather it involved artists from a range of different origins and was inspired by a universal vocation, meaning that it aimed at "the whole world."<sup>36</sup> These artists sought to engage with problems of a perceptual nature unrelated to their own personal history or subjectivity. Their places of origin, or any other questions of identity, did not, in theory, impact upon their artistic output.<sup>37</sup> In turn, though the kineticists themselves had primarily destabilizing intentions, under the presidencies of Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, administrations marked by modernization and aggressive foreign policy, kineticism provided an image of a rejuvenated France. Indeed, in 1970, Pompidou himself commissioned the Israeli Yaacov Agam to refurbish the private salons of the Palais de l'Elysée, the president's official residence.<sup>38</sup> Kinetic art was deemed "joyful," "democratic," and attractive to the wider public, it enabled the "School of Paris" to survive and transform, and, as foreign artists in France, the kineticists became exemplars of recovered universal principles following the destruction of World War II.

<sup>36</sup> Alain Badiou, "La potencia de lo abierto: universalismo, diferencia e igualdad" [text of the author's introduction to the symposium of the same name organized by the journal *Archipiélago*, the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea Arteleku, and the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, October 9–10, 2006], *Archipiélago. Cuadernos de crítica de la cultura*, no. 73–74 (2006): 4. Available online at <http://artxibo.arteleku.net/es/isl-andora/object/arteleku%3A2981>.

<sup>37</sup> By way of contrast, other artists active in Paris at the time, such as the Chileans Violeta Parra and Roberto Matta, the Mexican Rufino Tamayo, the Cuban Wifredo Lam, and the Argentines Alicia Penalba and Antonio Berni, did incorporate into their work (in very diverse ways) aspects of their places of origin and Latin American belongingness: the urban periphery and violence of the Third World; the colors of *Mexicanidad* ("Mexicaness"); the iconography of nature and peoples of the Americas; African forces in Caribbean culture.

<sup>38</sup> In 1970, he decorated this room with Op Art walls, color transparent doors, and a kinetic ceiling.

## THE ARTIST AS THERAPIST ISIDORE ISOU AND LYGIA CLARK

Kaira M. Cabañas

I would like to begin with two photographs, each of the Centre psychiatrique Sainte-Anne in Paris. The first photograph documents psychiatric patients' creative work as presented in the context of the *Exposition internationale d'art psychopathologique* (International Exhibition of Psychopathological Art; fig. 1). The exhibition, which ran from September 21 to October 14, 1950, was international in scope, including approximately two thousand works created by more than 350 patients, and representing forty-five psychiatric collections from seventeen countries.<sup>1</sup> In this image, we see how one of the hospital rooms was turned into an exhibition venue with a gallery dedicated to patients' work from French and Brazilian psychiatric collections. I wonder, given the exhibition's popularity and its more than ten thousand visitors, if artist Lygia Clark, then studying painting in Paris, would have visited or been privy to the exhibition's rave reviews in the contemporary press. By this time, she would have likely known of Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa's enthusiastic support of the creative work by Dr. Nise da Silveira's patients in her native Brazil, seven of whom were exhibited in Paris.<sup>2</sup>

Now fast-forward twenty years to the second photograph taken in the years 1970–71. We see the entrance to the very same Centre psychiatrique Sainte-Anne with five posters illegally glued to its façade (fig. 2a). The posters read, "Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are all dangerous lunatics for themselves and for others" (fig. 2b). Sited in the box below this prominent tagline, another text implores passersby to "join the group of their victims and of honest psychotherapists who strive, for the good of all, to study and apply the new discoveries of psychokladology." On the far right, one notes that the poster's publication was supported by *La Revue de la psychokladologie et de psychothéie*, which was founded by Lettrists Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaître.

The first photograph testifies to a moment in the history of psychiatry that is characterized by the scientific context's persistent diagnostic drive, which insisted on the visibility of pathology in the painted sign in the patients' works on view at Sainte-Anne.<sup>3</sup> The second photograph instead takes us to a little-known chapter in the history of Lettrism: Dr. Gaston Ferdière treated Isou for a mental breakdown after the uprisings in Paris in May 1968. Isou was held against his will for twenty-one days. Consequently, after his release the Lettrists launched a public assault against the psychiatrist and against psychiatry more broadly.<sup>4</sup>

\* Author's note: I dedicate this essay to my dear friend, the late Adela Rodríguez.

<sup>1</sup> In 1946, the Centre psychiatrique Sainte-Anne hosted the *Exposition d'œuvres de malades mentaux* (Exhibition of Works by the Mentally Ill), which was conceived of as a response to the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition mounted by the Nazis in 1937 to target modern art and also the work produced by psychiatric patients, claiming the pathological origins of each. The history of institutional psychotherapy at the Saint-Alban asylum and La Borde (also discussed in this essay) differs from prevailing psychiatric interest in psychopathological expression in postwar Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Clark also likely knew of the landmark exhibition *9 artistas de Engenho de Dentro do Rio de Janeiro* (1949), which featured nine of Silveira's patients' work at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo.

<sup>3</sup> In his volume *L'Art psychopathologique*, Dr. Robert Volmat brings together extensive documentation related to the exhibition. He provides individual entries for each of the "cases," including name, date of birth or age, date of internment, profession, brief family history, diagnoses, artistic formation (if applicable), and descriptive commentary on the work that is tied to a specific diagnosis. Consequently, Volmat affirms, "*If the mentally ill expresses himself totally in his work, the work totally expresses his illness.*" Robert Volmat, *L'Art psychopathologique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1956), 266 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>4</sup> The poster, in addition to lectures, multiple tracts, pamphlets, magazines, books, their participation at a psychiatric conference in Royan, make up the many acts in the Lettrists' campaign against psychiatric practice.

Fig. 1:  
Unknown photographer  
Untitled (View of the  
International Exhibition of  
Psychopathological Art, at the  
Sainte-Anne psychiatric center)  
Paris, 1950



Fig. 2a:  
Unknown photographer  
*Lettrist appeals on the walls*  
of Sainte-Anne  
Paris, 1970–71



I begin with these two photographs in order to highlight the intersections and discontinuities across cultural contexts (the early 1950s and post-May 1968) and in artistic practice between two foreign artists in Paris: Isidore Isou and Lygia Clark. In addition to the early 1950s, the two overlapped again in Paris in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and both form part of the broader artistic network charted in *Lost, Loose, and Loved: Foreign Artists in Paris, 1944–1968*. Isou, a Romanian Jew, founded Lettrism with Gabriel Pomerand in 1946. Initially a poetry movement, Isou eventually expanded the Lettrist universe to include all disciplines, early on experimenting with the potential crossovers and cross-contamination between media: music within poetry, painting within the novel, and the novel within cinema. By contrast, Clark initially practiced painting and turned to geometric abstraction. In the late 1950s, she participated in Rio's short-lived Neo-Concrete movement and its reorientation of the space of geometric abstraction, of Concrete Art, toward a





Fig. 2b:  
 Poster: *Les psychiatres et les psychanalystes sont tous des déments dangereux pour eux-mêmes et pour autrui* (Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are all dangerous lunatics for themselves and for others). Published in *La Revue de psychokladologie et de psychothérapie*, Centre de créativité, Paris, 1970

spatialized phenomenological experience, one in which the viewing subject was accorded a more active role. Notwithstanding the divergent origins of their practices, this essay explores how each artist eventually turned to psychiatry as an inspiration for their work and incorporated therapeutic practice as an actual material in their art.

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Perhaps the single most important visual and verbal work for understanding Isou's experience during his various psychiatric internments in these years is the novel *Jonas, ou le corps à la recherche de son âme* (hereafter, *Jonas*), of which he published an initial suite of 12 plates in 1977 before publishing the final 484-plate volume with fellow Lettrist Gérard-Philippe Broutin in 1984.<sup>5</sup> On the back cover, Isou describes the book's content as follows: "A day in one 'section' of the Sainte-Anne insane asylum as experienced by the main character, 'officially interned' among frightening beings, 'dangerous lunatics,' but also among some individuals of exceptional intelligence, imprisoned on account of their revolt against society or their unusual situation in relation to its citizens."<sup>6</sup> The extensive text is written in hypergraphy (initially known as metagraphy), a writing system that the Lettrists established in 1950, calling for a synthesis of multiple alphabets, symbols, and notational systems—both existing and invented. Isou showcases this comprehensive super-writing across all of *Jonas's* pages. The pages' panels also juxtapose a coherent narrative (typed) to a subjectively expressive story (handwritten) that serves

<sup>5</sup> The first version, titled *Jonas ou le début d'un roman 1974-77*, included twelve original etchings with collaged photographs. Though published in 1984, many of the plates in the final version were produced in 1981-82. See Frédéric Acquaviva, "The Body in Search of its Soul in Search of its Body," in *Isidore Isou: Hypergraphic Novels, 1950-1984* (Stockholm: Rumäniska kulturinstitutet, 2012), 86-92.

<sup>6</sup> Isidore Isou, *Jonas, ou le corps à la recherche de son âme* (Paris: Éditions Gérard-Philippe Broutin, 1984), back cover. All translations from non-English sources are my own.

to question the “objectivity” of the former. Here Isou describes visits by Jean-Paul Curtay, his conversations with a patient that resembles Antonin Artaud, his discussions with Dr. Siamuni about his release, and he includes passages related to insanity and what it means to be institutionalized. He also establishes a relation between Nazis and psychiatrists on account of their failure, among other things, to recognize a subject’s full humanity, a theme that echoes throughout Lemaître’s various tracts with headlines such as “Pour en finir avec la psychiatrie réactionnaire super-nazie” (To Have Done with Reactionary Super-Nazi Psychiatry).<sup>7</sup>

What I would like to turn to now are thirty-two of Isou’s drawings for *Jonas* that are quite simply crude—one might even call them *brut*. Beginning with plate 229, these drawings’ almost childlike rendering with disjunctions in proportion and scale make psychiatric power plainly visible, as in the oversize psychiatrist who towers above the seated patient in the lower panel. The doctor’s left armband, similar to that of a military or police uniform, reads “psychiatre,” while his speech balloon declares, “After having read [Philippe] Pinel, you read a book about anti-psychiatry. We should ban subversive works at Sainte-Anne.” Indeed, this panel, like other parts of the novel, is tellingly biographic. One need only peruse Isou’s vast archive to take stock of his extensive reading: margin notes are scribbled across multiple pages of books on psychiatry, among them *L’Institution en négation. Rapport sur l’hôpital psychiatrique de Gorizia* (The Negated Institution: Report from the Psychiatric Hospital in Gorizia), edited by Italian radical psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, perhaps the very book to which the psychiatrist’s speech balloon refers.<sup>8</sup> The violence in *Jonas* escalates with subsequent images of chained and beaten “fous” (madmen). One drawing’s caption reads, “Young woman treated with a revolver blow by her father, [a] psychiatrist,” and another drawing of a physically restrained patient implies that such disciplining results from his preference for the poetry of Charles Baudelaire over that of Paul Déroulède. As Frédéric Acquaviva notes, these drawings and their adjacent texts display “a rare violence that does not appear elsewhere in [Isou’s] visual art or novels.”<sup>9</sup>

On page 233, the central panel shows a patient and a doctor with a descriptive text that reads, “Antonin Artaud treated with love by a psychiatrist... at the whip” (fig. 3). Isou’s drawing of a menacing doctor ironically contravenes his use of the term “love.” Indeed, Artaud’s earlier experience as Ferdière’s patient played a significant role in Isou’s critique of psychiatry (and anti-psychiatry), as evinced by his publication of *Antonin Artaud torture par les psychiatres* (Antonin Artaud Tortured by Psychiatrists) in 1970 as well in his articles published in popular venues like *Paris-Jour*.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Lettrists regularly listed Isou as the most recent in a lineage of maligned artists and

<sup>7</sup> See the various publications and tracts in Archiv Acquaviva, Berlin.

<sup>8</sup> See Fonds Isou, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Originally published in Italian in 1968 as *L’Istituzione negata. Rapporto da un ospedale psichiatrico*.

<sup>9</sup> Acquaviva, “The Body in Search,” 90

<sup>10</sup> Isidore Isou, “De Gabrielle Russier à Antonin Artaud / Un responsable: Le Dr. Ferdière,” *Parispoche*, n.d.; Jacques Chancel, “Isidore Isou déclare la guerre aux psychiatres,” *Paris-Jour*, November 5, 1969. Clippings in the Fonds Isou, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Fig. 3:  
Isidore Isou  
(Jean Isidore Goldstein)  
*Antonin Artaud soigné avec amour par un psychiatre... à la cravache* (Antonin Artaud treated with love by a psychiatrist... at the whip)  
1982

writers, including the Marquis de Sade, Friedrich Hölderlin, Vincent van Gogh, Gérard de Nerval, Raymond Roussel, and Artaud.

It is thus unsurprising that Artaud would also make an appearance in *Jonas's* pages.<sup>11</sup> Beyond being interned, the two artists also entered the debate on the relation between art and madness. Upon Artaud's release from Rodez, he published *Van Gogh le suicidé de la société* (Van Gogh: The Man Suicided by Society, 1947), a vitriolic critique of psychiatric practice that also offers some of the most moving descriptions of Vincent van Gogh's paintings. Coinciding with van Gogh's retrospective at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Artaud's text describes how society invented psychiatry "to defend itself against the investigations of certain superior lucidities," and poses the question "What is a genuine lunatic?" To which he responds, "a man whom society has not wanted to heed and whom it has wanted to keep from uttering unbearable truths."<sup>12</sup> It is a volume in which Artaud, as in the conclusion to his censored radio program *Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu* (To Have Done with the Judgment of God, 1948), also inscribes his own relation to art, society, and psychiatry: "I will never again, *without committing a crime*, tolerate hearing anyone say to me: 'Monsieur Artaud, you're raving,' as has so often happened to me."<sup>13</sup>

Isou's *Jonas* proceeds similarly, but Isou ultimately goes further with his development of an alternative therapy, which he evokes in *Jonas* but which he fully articulates in his *Manifeste pour une nouvelle psychopathologie et une*

<sup>11</sup> Artaud also returned to drawing while interned in the asylum at Rodez.

<sup>12</sup> Antonin Artaud, "Van Gogh: The Man Suicided by Society" (1947), in *The Trembling Lamb: Antonin Artaud, Carl Solomon, LeRoi Jones* (New York: 1959), 2–4 (translation modified).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 (emphasis added). This paragraph draws upon my "Afterword" to Jacques Derrida, *Artaud the MoMA*, ed. Kaira M. Cabañas, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).



*nouvelle psychothérapie*, published as a special issue of *Lettrisme* in 1971. The manifesto constitutes his contribution to what I tentatively call the “artist as therapist” model. In the course of his text, Isou repeatedly asserts how the majority of psychiatric and psychoanalytic concepts are “erroneous and falsifying.”<sup>14</sup> For Isou these fields do not take into account the totality of the person or of life. It follows that “All models of ‘madness’ should be envisioned as a fragment of a partial formula of the domain of *Kladologie* and *Paradilogie*, of complete Knowledge and of perpetual joy.”<sup>15</sup> Kladologie refers to the branches of knowledge (in ancient Greek *klados* is “branch”) and includes art, philosophy, science, technique as well as empirical or quotidian existence. Isou even provides a mathematical formula for the kladologic ensemble of the human personality,<sup>16</sup> while the classification of psychological elements occurs within the specific field of psychokladology. To this end, he affirms how his work represents a Copernican revolution of psychopathology by showing how the supposedly “healthy and balanced ground of social thought” is becoming “the most frightening dementia” in light of his theories.

Isou proposes expanding the nosological “cosmos” to account for the “infinitely more immense deviations and innovative deficiencies.”<sup>17</sup> Among the examples he offers are: (1) *Judopathie*, referring to the mental illness when a disciple believes he knows more than his master; (2) *Dalilopathie* or *Jaquelinopathie*, referring to when someone delivers a “superior genius to inferior enemies,” as when Artaud’s mother approved Dr. Ferdière’s actions against her son. For Isou, what was most important was to move beyond existing conceptions of pathological anatomy as well as Freudian complexes in order to develop more comprehensive and precise mental charts, displacing the “mechanical” (understood as physiological) in favor of the “ensemble of intrinsic and specific sectors: images, associations, and themes and their aesthetic, philosophical, scientific, technical, and quotidian contents.”<sup>18</sup> Given the new names for a multiplied number of conditions that form part of his psychokladology, one might well ask: How was one to put psychokladology into actual practice with patients? The clinical case presented in *Un cas de “folie” dans le mouvement lettriste* (1983) provides a partial answer to this question.<sup>19</sup>

The facts: Alain Satie anonymously mailed a pornographic photograph to fellow Lettrist Geneviève Tasiv and to members of her family, indicating via montage that the women in the photograph looked like her. When she discovered that he was the culprit, he apologized but she refused to accept his apology. wrote an insulting tract against him, and filed a grievance with a lawyer. All this plunged Satie into greater despair such that his brother Roland Sabatier was called upon to intermedate, using psychokladology to help Satie return to a normal state. In his clinical summary, Sabatier describes how his brother was less frightened by his act than by the fact that he seemed “as if

<sup>14</sup> Isidore Isou, *Manifeste pur une nouvelle psychopathologie et une nouvelle psychothérapie*, special issue of *Lettrisme*, nos. 18–22 (February–June 1971): 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> *Un cas de “folie” dans le mouvement lettriste* (Paris: Publications PSI, 1983).

conducted by uncontrollable forces.”<sup>20</sup> Sabatier affirms how his approach to the case moved beyond psychoanalytic explanations that reduce behavior to complexes such as “psychic masochism,” “delirium of persecution,” or “castration anxiety.” Rather, following Isou’s psychokladology, he describes how the offensive act (the mailing of the pornographic photograph) was committed at a moment when Satie was “already fragile due to excess fatigue and the accumulation of non-habitual torments [ones related to his professional income].”<sup>21</sup> He interviews his brother, listens attentively to him, and encourages him to also see a medical doctor. What is more, to put things in perspective Sabatier affirms how the act did not define Satie’s entire person but was of limited scope. In so doing, and in the name of psychokladology, Sabatier held at bay the conclusions of “erroneous” therapies such as psychoanalysis, affirming instead that the causes of his brother’s distress were of a social and economic order.

In his conclusion to the volume, Isou supports Sabatier’s findings, describes the facts (Satie’s mailing of the pornographic photograph), explains the human dimensions, and narrates how he intervened and argued against a trial in favor of economic remuneration for damages. Without a doubt, both Sabatier and Isou acknowledge Satie’s guilt, but they also challenge Geneviève’s response, which they believe used totalizing language and refused to consider how she may have further aggravated Satie’s psychological state by neither accepting his apology nor understanding his fragile condition. Here, as in *Jonas*, Isou critiques the fragmentary and partial specialists (psychiatrists and psychoanalysts) who ignore art, science, and philosophy, also inscribing his own psychiatric history therein: how he was committed for twenty-one days after May 1968.<sup>22</sup> Isou thanks Sabatier, who identified Satie’s lack of sleep and economic difficulty as the causes of his lapse into madness. Isou explains how if Satie had been cared for by anything other than psychokladology, his behavior might have resulted in his internment in an asylum from where Satie “would have exited more ‘mad’ than before, having landed in the hands or in the moronic conversation of the ‘savants.’” In short, the Satie case represented nothing less than a victory for psychokladology in the fight against psychiatric nosology.

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I would like to turn, if briefly, to another photograph (fig. 4). It is an image of one of Lygia Clark’s “propositions” taken in Paris in 1969. We see a woman dressed in a long-sleeve striped shirt; she wears a skirt with a belt composed of metal rings and round discs. She extends her arms within the open weave of two jute sacks that reveal her gestures: arms outstretched, palms out, and fingers spread. Another two bags, each hanging by an elastic band, extend from below the sacks on her arms. These smaller bags contain stones, creating a

<sup>20</sup> Sabatier describes how in this instance the psychokladologic practice differs since the individual’s name in this case was already public, and, as his brother, he already understood more of his personality such that he conducted fewer interviews toward the mental portrait. *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> See Isidore Isou, “Conclusion,” in *ibid.*, 27–31.

Fig. 4:  
Lygia Clark  
*Camisa de força*  
(Straightjacket)  
1968



downward pull that her arms resist. A larger sack—mask—covers her head and hangs in front of her torso. The proposition's title, *Camisa de força* (Straightjacket), is significant since it shows how Clark explicitly engaged the iconography of bodily confinement practiced by psychiatry, reconfiguring the straightjacket's materials and purpose—for example, the disciplining of psychotic subjects but also political dissidents during the dictatorship in her native Brazil—into a work that she described as “dramatic but beautiful.”<sup>23</sup>

Clark's knowledge of psychiatry also extended to the art produced by interned patients, as the opening of this essay suggests. Thus when writing to Hélio Oiticica from Paris in October 1970, in addition to speaking of the friends she met there (e.g., Guy Brett, Carlos Cruz-Diez, and Jean Clay), she writes, “I'm tired of closed people; I'd much rather be in a place like Engenho de Dentro [the hospital where Dr. Silveira worked] where the fabulous Rogério Duarte checked in; where someone like Emygdio expressed himself or someone like Raphael eats pencils and shit, but what a wonderful character, and what he expresses is magisterial!”<sup>24</sup> While this statement in part taps into a Surrealist imagination regarding the purported “freedom” madness represents, what strikes me in the broader context of her letters, especially those written in Paris, is one letter dated March 31, 1971, in which she mentions how Clay was arranging for her to work at a clinic in the Loire, the “most advanced” clinic in France, she explains. She continues by explaining that the clinic is “where [Françoise] Dolto works and other interesting professionals who work with

<sup>23</sup> Lygia Clark, “January 15th, 1969,” reproduced in *Lygia Clark*, exh. cat. Fundació Antoni Tàpies et al. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 241.

<sup>24</sup> Lygia Clark, letter to Hélio Oiticica, October 22, 1970, reproduced in *Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica: Cartas*, 182.



the body. If it works out it will be my salvation, which is a paradox, for someone like me who makes art to escape the asylum, to end there is incredible! But there is no place for me in the world of normal people.”<sup>25</sup>

The asylum is clearly a reference to La Borde, a psychiatric clinic founded in the Loire Valley in 1953. Psychiatrist Jean Oury, La Borde’s founder, had worked alongside François Tosquelles at the Saint-Alban asylum where they practiced institutional psychotherapy, a therapeutic approach informed by Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, which understood the hospital, its architecture, activities, patients, and staff as a “healing collective.”<sup>26</sup> Care was administered not only to individual subjects deemed “mad” but also to the institution itself and to the social relations produced within it, developing situations (as in the various ateliers) for which the patients were responsible. Such collaborative work displaced divisions between caretaker and cared for, the healthy (sane) and others who are sick (mad), to reconfigure the ensemble of relations and dynamic of care. It remains unclear whether, in fact, Clark ever visited La Borde, though the institution and its work, as the letter makes clear, were familiar to her.<sup>27</sup>

In October 1972, Clark was invited to teach a course on gestural communication at the Sorbonne, a history that is now well known. There she developed sensorial propositions and collective experiences with a group of students; that same year she also began psychoanalysis with Pierre Fédida. Already in the mid-1960s, Clark had investigated the emancipatory power of sensory experience outside of codified language. She developed her artistic practice by moving from the act to the body, from the body to the relation between bodies, ultimately developing her celebrated *Baba antropofágica* (1973) with her students, a work that explores, as Susan Best explains, the “enigmatic nature of the body.”<sup>28</sup> Thread pulled from spools placed in various participants’ mouths covers the body of an individual lying down in the center of the group; the wet and colored threads create a kind of second skin. Here bodies affect other bodies, while the tangled thread is eventually removed. In relation to such work, Clark explains, “one must deinstitutionalize both the body and every concrete relation.”<sup>29</sup> This and other work from these years have been associated with the “desiring machines” described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their seminal *Anti-Oedipus*, as well as with their conceptualization of a “body without organs,” a phrase they borrowed from Artaud that refers to processes of embodiment without organization, to vital forces instead of forms, and to a shift from what it is to be to what it means to *become*. Suely Rolnik has meaningfully mapped such concepts onto Clark’s sensorial work.<sup>30</sup> Yet what interests me here is that Clark’s use of the term “deinstitutionalize” is also historical in relation to the “opening” of the psychiatric asylum walls. In neighboring Italy, for example, Basaglia’s work in radical psychiatry and with the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1960s

<sup>25</sup> Lygia Clark, letter to Hélio Oiticica, March 31, 1971, reproduced in *Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica: Cartas*, 191.

<sup>26</sup> See the discussion in Camille Robcis, “François Tosquelles and the Psychiatric Revolution in Postwar France,” *Constellations* 23, no. 2 (2016): 212–22.

<sup>27</sup> See *Lygia Clark: de l’œuvre à l’événement*, exh. cat. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes (Dijon: Les Presses de réel, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 65.

<sup>29</sup> Lygia Clark, Untitled, in *Lygia Clark*, 301.

<sup>30</sup> See Suely Rolnik, “Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark,” in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom: Lygia Clark, Gego, Mathias Goeritz, Hélio Oiticica, and Mira Schendel* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1999), 59–108; Suely Rolnik, “Politics of Flexible Subjectivity: The Event Work of Lygia Clark,” in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 97–112.

and 1970s was central to psychiatric reform, as was the increasing visibility of other clinics/institutions closer to her Parisian home, among them La Borde and Saint-Alban mentioned above. In these years, there is also evidence that Clark was reading R. D. Laing.<sup>31</sup>

What is more, Clark's 1969 *Camisa de força* was inspired by a film documentary about an experimental mental health facility for children. *Warrendale* (1967) by Allan King pictures the lives of emotionally challenged children at the Warrendale clinic outside of Toronto. Toward the film's end there is a scene in which the caretakers tell the children that one of the clinic's workers had died, news that ignites despair and uproar among many of the children. Clark describes the difficulty she had watching the scene and later writes, "I was very impressed because instead of a straight-jacket the method used was the body of the nurses who tried to pacify all the violence of the children during their crisis."<sup>32</sup> What Clark describes is a "holding" session in which a child, while physically held by a member of the staff, can express her or his emotional frustration without harming themselves or others.

In 1976, after definitively returning to Rio, Clark began to adapt her sensorial propositions for individual therapeutic treatment, engaging with subjectivity itself in her *Estruturação do self* (Structuring of the Self) sessions and through the use of what she called *Objetos relacionais* (Relational Objects), which she placed on the body of her clients. The years when Clark began working with individual clients in Rio was a time when the media began to denounce the horrors of the psychiatric institution and the *reforma psiquiátrica* gained momentum in Brazil, leading to nationwide changes in the mental health care system that coincided with the final years of the military regime. Key figures of radical psychiatry in Europe, from Basaglia to Guattari, also regularly visited and lectured in Brazil in these years.<sup>33</sup>

On October 14, 1983, in a letter to Guy Brett, Clark describes how she trained others in her therapeutic practice in addition to describing her work with clients. From this letter, I would like to isolate one phrase: "Never deal with a psychotic as a madman, but rather as an artist without work."<sup>34</sup> Clark inverts Michel Foucault's phrase, when he insists, "*Where there is an oeuvre, there is no madness.*"<sup>35</sup> In the context of Foucault's discussion in *The History of Madness*, modern art such as that produced by van Gogh and Artaud remains on *this side of reason* by the very fact that the works constitute an oeuvre, a body of work, and respond to what Foucault elsewhere describes as the "author-function" — the various arrangements, social and institutional, that actualize the author's work in society.<sup>36</sup> Where Foucault displaces the author to draw attention to the multiple forces through which an author is instantiated in discourse, with her therapeutic work Clark moved beyond the institution of art, the discursive constraints of an oeuvre, though she never abandoned being an artist. Until

<sup>31</sup> See Lygia Clark, "Mute Thought," in *Lygia Clark*, 271.

<sup>32</sup> Lygia Clark, "January 15th, 1969," in *Lygia Clark*, 241. See also the entry "January 13th, 1969." I would like to thank Sam Di Iorio for helping me identify the film to which Clark refers.

<sup>33</sup> See Paulo Amarante, *Locos por la vida. La trayectoria de la reforma psiquiátrica en Brasil* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Lygia Clark, letter to Guy Brett, October 14, 1983, reproduced in *Lygia Clark*, 338.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness* (1961), trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006), 537 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" (1969), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113–38.

this day, Clark's practice challenges what art professionals and the institution of art legitimate as artistic work.

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By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the “artist as therapist” model and address my seemingly unlikely pairing of Isidore Isou and Lygia Clark. Admittedly, not only do the two have very different artistic origins but they also elaborated opposing therapeutic models. Isou's psychokladology embraced all facets and stages of a subject's existence as well as all epistemic and creative domains, though in practice his therapeutic approach remained primarily within the “medium” of language (i.e., the interview), while he nevertheless proposed a radical expansion of the “origins” of neurosis/psychosis to which the talking cure may lead. Isou also had a cohort of Lettrist devotees who put his theories into practice, as in *Un cas de “folie”* described above. Clark similarly put her relational objects to use, and trained individuals such as Gina Ferreira and Lula Wanderley in her *Estruturação do self*. But her therapy is largely bodily, tactile, and imagistic, whereby deinstitutionalizing the body was to also divest psychotherapy of its dependence on verbal language (though, like Isou's psychokladology, she recorded notes on her clinical cases).

Where Isou multiplied categories seemingly ad infinitum to arrive at a more specific and precise nosology, Clark continued to blur them. As her therapist Fédida affirmed, “one must be capable of displacing categories. Because one of the strongest things ... with Lygia Clark is a kind of instability compared to categories.”<sup>37</sup> Where Isou was a disciplined reader of psychiatric and psychoanalytic theory, Clark worked more intuitively and went about un-disciplining the mind and body as well as the spaces they inhabit, by working, as she maintains, “from what I see, from what I feel.”<sup>38</sup> Despite these differences, for almost eight years these two budding artists as therapists shared a common identity as foreigners in Paris (from October 1968 to July 1976, the years of Clark's second residence in the city) and also a cultural context—one informed by the critique of the psychiatric institution in Paris and beyond. Without knowing one another, they came together around a similar ambition: to change psychiatric practice and conceptions of what is mad and sane. It is thus that they participate as artist therapists toward an expanded understanding of, and genealogy of, art as “creative care.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Fédida, “Ne pas être en repos avec les mots,” in *Lygia Clark: de l'œuvre à l'événement*, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Lygia Clark, cited in *Lygia Clark: de l'œuvre à l'événement*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> “Creative care” refers to “Art: Creative Care,” a two-day seminar at the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute that I co-convened with Suzanne Hudson. I feel privileged to have worked with such an engaging cohort of scholars and practitioners at this event as well as in its subsequent iteration as a panel discussion at the College Art Association conference in Los Angeles in February 2018.



## **LIST OF WORKS**

**Rogi André (Rosa Klein)**

(Budapest, Hungary, 1900  
– Paris, France, 1970)

*Kandinsky sur son lit de mort*  
(Kandinsky on his deathbed)

1944

Photograph. Gelatin silver print  
on paper

40 × 30.2 cm

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Musée national d'art moderne

/ Centre de création industrielle

Gift from Mme. Renée Beslon-Degottex,  
1982

AM 1982-314

32

**Karel Appel**

(Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1921  
– Zurich, Switzerland, 2006)

*Wilde Pferde* (Wild Horses)

1954

Oil on canvas

194.5 × 113 cm

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid

454 (1976.61)

85

**Wifredo Arcay**

(Havana, Cuba, 1925 – Paris, France, 1997)

*Alroa*

1950

Oil on canvas

67 × 103 cm

Estate of the artist, courtesy of The Mayor  
Gallery, London

64

**Eduardo Arroyo**

(Madrid, Spain, 1937 – 2018)

*Los cuatro dictadores* (Hitler)

(The Four Dictators [Hitler])

1963

Oil on canvas

235 × 140 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AS11049-004

147

**Eduardo Arroyo**

*Los cuatro dictadores* (Mussolini)

(The Four Dictators [Mussolini])

1963

Oil on canvas

235 × 140 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AS11049-002

146

**Jean-Michel Atlan**

(Constantine, Algeria, 1913

– Paris, France, 1960)

*L'épervier* (The Sparrowhawk)

1945

Oil on Isorel

65 × 54 cm

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Musée national d'art moderne

/ Centre de création industrielle

Dation in payment, 2006

AM 2006-821

58

**Enrico Baj**

(Milan, Italy, 1924 – Vergiate, Italy, 2003)

*Al fuoco, al fuoco* (fire! fire!)

1963–64

Oil and Meccano on fabric

128.6 × 97.2 cm

Tate: Presented by Avvocato Paride Accetti

1973

T01777

45

**Enrico Baj, Roberto Crippa**

(Monza, Italy, 1921 – Bresso, Italy, 1972),

**Gianni Dova** (Rome, Italy, 1925 – Pisa, Italy,

1991), **Erró** (Ólafsvík, Iceland, 1932),

**Jean-Jacques Lebel** (Paris, France, 1936),

**Antonio Recalcati** (Bresso, Italy, 1938)

*Grand tableau antifasciste collectif*

(Great Collective Anti-Fascist Painting)

1960

Oil on canvas

400.5 × 497 cm

Fonds de dotation Jean-Jacques Lebel

D.2013.1.1.P

120–21

**Marcel Barbeau**

(Montreal, Canada, 1925–2016)

*Virgin Forest*

1946

Oil on plywood

56 × 60.8 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Purchased 1977

18819

53

**Jean Bazaine**

(Paris, France, 1904 – Clamart, France, 2001)

*Couple dans les bois* (Couple in the Woods)

1947

Oil on canvas

130.3 × 88.8 cm

Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva

FGA-BA-BAZAI-0001

61

**Romare Bearden**

(Charlotte, North Carolina, US, 1914

– New York, US, 1988)

*Map of Paris*

ca. 1950

Collage, ballpoint pen, ink, colored crayon  
on paper

29.5 × 22.5 cm

Romare Bearden Papers, Archives

of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

14198

19

**Anna-Eva Bergman**

(Stockholm, Sweden, 1909

– Grasse, France, 1987)

*La grande montagne d'argent n.º 4 – 1957*

(Large Silver Mountain No. 4–1957)

1957

Tempera and metal sheets on canvas

162 × 130 cm

Fondation Hartung Bergman

125

**Antonio Berni**

(Rosario, Argentina, 1905

– Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1981)

*Juanito va a la ciudad*

(Juanito Goes to the City)

1963

Wood, paint, industrial trash, scrap metal,

leather, cardboard, fabric on wood

327.7 × 200.7 × 38.1 cm

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Museum

purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law

Accessions Endowment Fund

2007.1167

148

**René Bertholo**

(Alhandra, Portugal, 1935

– Vila Nova de Cacela, Portugal, 2005)

*Christo in his storage room in the basement*

*at 4 Avenue Raymond Poincaré, Paris*

1960

Photograph (modern copy)

29 × 19 cm

© 1960 Christo

142

**Gianni Bertini (Giovanni Bertini)**

(Pisa, Italy, 1922 – Caen, France, 2010)

*Le procès d'Andromaque*

(The Trial of Andromache)

April 7, 1962

Oil on newsprint affixed to cardboard

130 × 81 cm

Centre national des arts plastiques

(France)

FNAC 93056

150

**Roger Bissière**

(Villereal, France, 1886  
– Boissière, France, 1964)  
*Vénus blanche* (White Venus)  
1946  
Oil on canvas  
110 × 76 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-BISSI-0008  
59

**Walerian Borowczyk**

(Kwilcz, Poland, 1923  
– Paris, France, 2006) with the collaboration  
of **Chris Marker** (Neuilly-sur-Seine, France,  
1921 – Paris, France, 2012)  
*Les Astronautes* (The Astronauts)  
1959  
35mm film transferred to video  
Color and black and white, sound, 14 min.  
Argos Films  
141

**Guy Bourdin**

(Paris, France, 1928–1991)  
Untitled (Shinkichi Tajiri in his studio  
on the Rue d'Odessa, Paris)  
1952  
Photograph (period copy)  
22.5 × 16.8 cm  
Giotta Tajiri / Ryu Tajiri

Guy Bourdin  
Untitled (In the courtyard of Tajiri's studio  
on the Rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris)  
1952  
Photograph (period copy)  
21.5 × 15.5 cm  
Giotta Tajiri / Ryu Tajiri

**Robert Breer**

(Detroit, Michigan, US, 1926  
– Tucson, Arizona, US, 2011)  
*Form Phases IV*  
1954  
16mm film transferred to video  
Color, no sound, 4:55 min.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD05258  
107

**Robert Breer**

*REcreation*  
1956–57  
16mm film transferred to video  
Color, optical sound, 2 min  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD05260

**Robert Breer**

*A Man and His Dog Out for Air*  
1957  
16mm film transferred to video  
Black and white, optical sound, 1:50 min.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD05262

**Robert Breer**

*Jamestown Baloos*  
1957  
16mm film transferred to video  
Color and black and white, optical sound,  
4:37 min.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD05261

**Robert Breer and Pontus Hultén**

(Stockholm, Sweden, 1924–2006)  
*Un miracle* (A Miracle)  
1954  
16mm film transferred to video  
Color, no sound, 30 sec.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD05259

**Robert Breer and Pontus Hultén**

*Le mouvement* (The Movement)  
1955  
16mm film transferred to video  
Black and white, no sound, 14:03 min.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Gift from Galerie Denise René, Paris, 2008  
AD05127  
106

**Baird Bryant**

(Columbus, Indiana, US, 1927  
– Hemet, California, US, 2008) and  
**Shinkichi Tajiri** (Los Angeles, California,  
US, 1923 – Baarlo, Netherlands, 2009)  
*The Vipers*  
1955  
16mm film transferred to video  
Black and white, sound, 9 min.  
EYE Filmmuseum, Netherlands  
FLM126371

**Bernard Buffet**

(Paris, France, 1928  
– Tourtour, France, 1999)  
*Trois nus* (Three Nudes)  
1949  
Oil on canvas  
191 × 225 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMVP 296  
46

**Rafael Canogar**

(Toledo, Spain, 1935)  
*Composición* (Composition)  
1956  
Oil on canvas  
80.5 × 117 cm  
Colección Alberto Cortina  
124

**Jean-Philippe Charbonnier**

(Paris, France, 1921 – Grasse, France, 2004)  
Untitled (Juliette Gréco and Miles Davis)  
1949  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 21 cm  
Jean-Philippe Charbonnier / GAMMA  
RAPHO  
92

**Eduardo Chillida**

(San Sebastián, Spain, 1924–2002)  
*El espíritu de los pájaros I*  
(The Spirit of the Birds I)  
1952  
Iron and stone  
56 × 92.5 × 42.5 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AS01337  
133

**Chu Teh-Chun**

(Xunzhou, China, 1920  
– Paris, France, 2014)  
*Composition n° 22*  
1959  
Oil on canvas  
115.8 × 72.8 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-CHU-0001

**Minna Citron**

(Newark, New Jersey, US, 1896  
– New York, US, 1991)  
*Measure of Fate*  
1955  
Oil and collage on paper  
122.2 × 81 cm  
Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Bocour  
65.61  
128

**Ed Clark**

(New Orleans, Louisiana, US, 1926)  
Untitled  
1954  
Oil on canvas  
130 × 162.1 cm  
Private collection  
66



**Ralph Coburn**

(Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, 1923  
– Miami, Florida, US, 2018)  
*Orange and White Abstraction*  
1950  
Oil on canvas  
61 × 51 cm  
David Hall Fine Art, Wellesley,  
Massachusetts, USA  
88

Ralph Coburn  
*Arranged by Choice Composition*  
1951  
Ink on paperboard  
31 × 31 cm  
David Hall Fine Art, Wellesley,  
Massachusetts, USA

Ralph Coburn  
Maquette for painting formed by five canvases  
1955  
Paper cutouts on paperboard  
28 × 21 cm  
David Hall Fine Art, Wellesley,  
Massachusetts, USA

**Denise Colomb (Denise Loeb)**

(Paris, France, 1902–2004)  
Untitled (Pierre Loeb with his artists on the  
first floor of the Galerie Pierre; from left to  
right: Jean-Paul Riopelle, Jacques Germain,  
Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Pierre Loeb,  
Georges Mathieu, and Zao Wou-Ki)  
1953  
Photograph (period copy)  
25 × 23 cm  
Archives Albert Loeb, Paris  
10

**William Copley**

(New York, US, 1919  
– Key West, Florida, US, 1996)  
*The Cold War*  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
89.5 × 130.2 cm  
The Menil Collection, Houston  
1978-063 E  
153

**Dominique Darbois**

(Paris, France, 1925–2014)  
Untitled (Algeria and the Algerian War)  
ca. 1960  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 21.2 cm  
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
(980024)

**Dominique Darbois**

Untitled (Algeria and the Algerian War)  
ca. 1960  
Photograph (modern copy)  
23.8 × 29 cm  
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
(980024)

**Roberto David**

(Unknown)  
Untitled (View of the exhibition of Jeanne  
Coppel at Galerie Arnaud, Paris)  
ca. 1955  
Photograph (modern copy)  
18.6 × 29 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise  
Arnaud

**Beauford Delaney**

(Knoxville, Tennessee, US, 1901  
– Paris, France, 1979)  
Untitled  
1957  
Oil on canvas  
114.2 × 162 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne  
/ Centre de création industrielle  
Gift of Solange and Jacques du Closel, 1994  
AM 1995-59  
99

**Robert Doisneau**

(Gentilly, France, 1912  
– Paris, France, 1994)  
Untitled (Autumn Salon, Paris)  
1944  
Photograph (modern copy)  
41 × 38.8 cm  
Robert Doisneau / GAMMA RAPHO

**Robert Doisneau**

Untitled (Policeman and woman  
at the Autumn Salon, Paris)  
1944  
Photograph (modern copy)  
41 × 43.2 cm  
Robert Doisneau / GAMMA RAPHO

**Mario Dondero**

(Milan, Italy, 1928 – Petritoli, Italy, 2015)  
Untitled (At the studio of Roberto Crippa,  
in Milan, during the completion of *Grand  
tableau antifasciste collectif* [Great Collective  
Anti-Fascist Painting]; from left to right:  
Jean-Jacques Lebel, Valerio Adami, Tancredi  
Parmeggiani, and Alain Jouffroy)  
1960  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 18.9 cm  
Archives Jean-Jacques Lebel  
Cover, 8

**Ed van der Elsken**

(Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1925  
– Edam, Netherlands, 1990)  
*Devant "Le Mabillon," Saint-Germain-  
des-Prés* (In Front of "Le Mabillon,"  
Saint-Germain-des-Prés)  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
1950 (period copy 1957)  
Photograph. Gelatin silver print  
23.5 × 22.5 cm (with support: 30 × 22.5 cm)  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On temporary loan from a private collection,  
Madrid, 2014  
DO02089  
25

**Ed van der Elsken**

*Vali Dancing, Paris, Saint-Germain-des-Prés*  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
1950 (period copy 1953)  
Photograph. Gelatin silver print  
9.6 × 9.6 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On temporary loan from a private collection,  
Madrid, 2014  
DO02091  
27

**Ed van der Elsken**

*Vali Lifted by a Man Looking in the Mirror,  
"Chez Moineau," Saint-Germain-des-Prés,  
Paris*  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
1953  
Photograph. Gelatin silver print  
10.2 × 10 cm (with support 10.6 × 10.6 cm)  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On temporary loan from a private collection,  
Madrid, 2014  
DO02097  
26

**Ed van der Elsken**

*Vali & Claudi Sitting*  
Series: *Love on the Left Bank*  
ca. 1950–52  
Photograph. Gelatin silver print  
22.8 × 26 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On temporary loan from a private collection,  
Madrid, 2014  
DO02098  
24

**Erró (Guðmundur Guðmundsson)**

*The School New-Par-Yorkis*  
1959  
Oil on canvas  
130 × 200 cm  
Artist's collection  
145

Erró (Guðmundur Guðmundsson)  
*The Background of Pollock*  
1966–67  
Glycerophthalic paint on canvas  
260 × 200 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne  
/ Centre de création industrielle  
State purchase, 1970; assigned  
to the Centre Pompidou, 2008  
AM 2009-215

**Claire Falkenstein**

(Coos Bay, Oregon, US, 1908  
– Los Angeles, California, US, 1997)  
*Sun #4*  
ca. 1954  
Steel, metal sheet, bronze, glass  
55.9 × 97.8 × 85.1 cm  
Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery,  
LLC, New York  
78

**Luis Feito**

(Madrid, Spain, 1929)  
*N.º 16 B*  
1957  
Oil and sand on canvas  
71.5 × 101 cm  
Colección Luis Feito  
126

**Marcel Fleiss**

(Paris, France, 1934)  
Untitled (Thelonious Monk playing  
the piano at the Salle Pleyel, Paris)  
June 1954  
Photograph (period copy)  
29.5 × 21 cm  
Collection Marcel Fleiss, Paris

Marcel Fleiss  
Untitled (Red Mitchell, Gerry Mulligan,  
and Bob Brookmeyer at the Salle Pleyel,  
Paris)  
June 1954  
Photograph (period copy)  
23.6 × 32 cm  
Collection Marcel Fleiss, Paris  
28

Marcel Fleiss  
Untitled (Thelonious Monk at the Salle  
Pleyel, Paris)  
June 1954  
Photograph (period copy)  
23.8 × 23.5 cm  
Collection Marcel Fleiss, Paris  
29

**Peter Foldes** (Budapest, Hungary,  
1924 – Paris, France, 1977) and  
**Joan Foldes** (Budapest, Hungary, 1924)  
*Animated Genesis*  
1952  
35mm film transferred to video  
Color, sound, 22 min.  
BFI National Archive

Peter Foldes and Joan Foldes  
*A Short Vision*  
1956  
35mm film transferred to video  
Color, sound, 6:05 min.  
BFI National Archive

**André Fougeron**

(Paris, France, 1913  
– Amboise, France, 1998)  
*Bretagne (Composition)*  
(Brittany [Composition])  
1946  
Oil on canvas  
196 × 131 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne  
/ Centre de création industrielle  
Purchase, 1947  
AM 2684 P  
44

**Sam Francis**

(San Mateo, California, US, 1923  
– Santa Monica, California, US, 1994)  
*Composition*  
1950  
Oil on canvas  
60.5 × 60.5 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMVP 2416

Sam Francis  
*Composition bleue sur fond blanc*  
(Blue Composition on White Background)  
1960  
Oil on canvas  
130 × 97 cm  
Centre national des arts plastiques (France)  
On long-term loan to the Musée des beaux-  
arts de Rennes since April 10, 1989  
FNAC 27462  
146

**Jean Gabanou**

(Unknown)  
Untitled (John-Franklin Koenig)  
1966  
Photograph (modern copy)  
22 × 29 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise  
Arnaud

**Herbert Gentry**

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US, 1919  
– Stockholm, Sweden, 2003)  
Untitled  
1959–60  
Oil on canvas  
81 × 60 cm  
Estate of Herbert Gentry  
USHG02-106  
98

**Stephen Gilbert**

(Wormit, United Kingdom, 1910  
– Frome, United Kingdom, 2007)  
Untitled  
1948  
Ink on paper  
31.4 × 23.4 cm  
Tate: Purchase 1987  
T04933  
80

**Jean-Luc Godard**

(Paris, France, 1930)  
*2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*  
(Two or Three Things I Know About Her)  
1967  
35mm film transferred to video  
Color, sound, 87 min.  
Argos Films  
140

**Henri Goetz (Henri-Bernard Goetz)**

(New York, US, 1909 – Nice, France, 1989)  
Untitled  
1953  
Oil on canvas  
130 × 195 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne  
/ Centre de création industrielle  
Gift of the artist, 1981  
AM 1981-635  
103

**Tony Golsowski-Saulnier**

(Unknown)  
Untitled (John-Franklin Koenig  
on a Paris Rooftop)  
1950  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 44.4 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise Arnaud  
31 (top)

Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
Untitled (John-Franklin Koenig at the rear  
of Galerie Arnaud, Paris)  
ca. 1951  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 25.3 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise Arnaud

Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
*Vue Cuisine rue du Four 1952*  
(View of Kitchen at Rue du Four 1952;  
top: Jean-Robert Arnaud; bottom:  
John-Franklin Koenig)  
1952  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 22 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise Arnaud  
30

Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
*John in Paris*  
(In the image: John-Franklin Koenig  
and Jean-Robert Arnaud)  
ca. 1952  
Photograph (modern copy)  
19.7 × 29 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise Arnaud  
31 (bottom)

Tony Golsowski-Saulnier  
Untitled (Editorial board of *Cimaise*; from left  
to right: Michel Ragon, Jean-Robert Arnaud,  
John-Franklin Koenig, Herta Wescher, Roger  
van Gindertael, and Julien Alvard)  
ca. 1955  
Photograph (modern copy)  
19 × 29 cm  
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre and Françoise Arnaud

**Leon Golub**  
(Chicago, Illinois, US, 1922  
– New York, US, 2004)  
*Head IX*  
1960  
Oil and lacquer on canvas  
86.7 × 79.3 cm  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC,  
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966  
66.2094  
134

**Brion Gysin**  
(Taplow, United Kingdom, 1916  
– Paris, France, 1986)  
Untitled  
1958  
India ink on paper  
26.5 × 34 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMD 1220

Brion Gysin  
Untitled  
1959  
India ink and colored ink on paper  
34 × 26 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMD 1225

Brion Gysin  
*Dreamachine*  
1964  
Gouache on paper, section with roller  
on gray background  
66.5 × 102 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMD 1206

Brion Gysin  
*Ivy*  
1959  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 60 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMVP 2659  
100

**Simon Hantaï**  
(Biatorbágy, Hungary, 1922  
– Paris, France, 2008)  
Untitled (*Panse* [Paunch] series)  
1964  
Oil on muslin  
135.5 × 105 cm  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC,  
Gift from the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest,  
1981  
86.2479  
127

**Hans Hartung**  
(Leipzig, Germany, 1904  
– Antibes, France, 1989)  
*T 1947-14*  
1947  
Oil on canvas  
96.9 × 130 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-HARTU-011  
55

**Al Held**  
(New York, US, 1928  
– Todi, Italy, 2005)  
Untitled  
1952–53  
Oil on canvas  
46.3 × 61.59 cm  
Al Held Foundation, Inc.  
AS08115  
76

**Carmen Herrera**  
(Havana, Cuba, 1915)  
Untitled  
1949  
Acrylic on canvas  
66 × 127 cm  
Colección Estrellita B. Brodsky  
89

**Gloria de Herrera**  
(Los Angeles, California, US, 1929  
– Brive-la-Gaillarde, France, 1985)  
*Algeria and the Algerian War*  
ca. 1960  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 21.7 cm  
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
(980024)  
119

**Jean Isidore Isou**  
**(Jean Isidore Goldstein)**  
(Botoșani, Romania, 1925  
– Paris, France, 2007)  
*Traité de Bave et d'Éternité*  
(On Venom and Eternity)  
1951  
35mm film transferred to video  
Black and white, optical sound, 123 min.  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
AD06001  
82–83

Jean Isidore Isou (Jean Isidore Goldstein)  
*Les nombres, n° 5* (The Numbers, No. 5)  
1952  
Oil on canvas  
65 × 54 cm  
Collection Letailleur  
81

**Paul Jenkins**  
(Kansas City, Missouri, US, 1923  
– New York, US, 2012)  
*Phenomena Breakwater*  
1962  
Watercolor on paper  
137.8 × 149.5 cm  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
Purchased with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Allan  
D. Emil through the Friends of the Whitney  
Museum of American Art  
63.52  
102

**Asger Jorn**  
(Egtved, Denmark, 1914  
– Aarhus, Denmark, 1973)  
*Den forhadte by* (The Detested Town)  
1951–52  
Oil on plywood  
159.6 × 127.6 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
On temporary loan from the Collection  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva, 2015  
DO02191  
84



**Wassily Kandinsky**

(Moscow, Russia, 1866  
– Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, 1944)

*Un Conglomérat* (A Conglomerate)  
1943

Oil and gouache on cardboard  
58 × 42 cm

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Musée national d'art moderne

/ Centre de création industrielle

Bequest of Mme. Nina Kandinsky, 1981

AM 81-65-73

**Wassily Kandinsky**

*Autour de la ligne* (Around the Line)

1943

Oil on cardboard

42 × 57.8 cm

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

606 (1972.8)

37

**Karskaya (Ida Schraybman Karsky)**

(Bender, Moldova, 1905 – Paris, France, 1990)

*Gauloise bleue* (Blue Gauloise)

1952–53

Collage

80 × 80 cm

Artist's collection

**Karskaya (Ida Schraybman Karsky)**

*L'araignée* (The Spider)

1960

Collage

45 × 55 cm

Artist's collection

77

**Ellsworth Kelly**

(Newburgh, New York, US, 1923 –  
Spencertown, New York, US, 2015)

*La Combe I*

1950

Oil on canvas

96.5 × 161.8 cm

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York

Gift of The American Contemporary Art

Foundation, Inc., Leonard A. Lauder, Chairman

2002.249

87

**János Kender**

(Baja, Hungary, 1937 – West Palm Beach,  
Florida, US, 2009) and **Harry Shunk**

(Leipzig, Germany, 1924

– New York, US, 2006)

*Christo in Front of the Iron Curtain*

1962

Photograph (modern copy)

29 × 20 cm

© 1962 Christo

**Mohammed Khadda**

(Mostaganem, Algeria, 1930

– Algiers, Algeria, 1991)

*Kabylie*

1960

Oil on canvas

114 × 162 cm

Musée de l'Institut du Monde Arabe,

Paris

AC 87-55

132

**Peter Klasen**

(Lübeck, Germany, 1935)

*Femme-objet* (Object-Woman)

1967

Acrylic on canvas

151.2 × 161.5 cm

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Musée national d'art moderne

/ Centre de création industrielle

Purchase, 2004

AM2004-86

150

**John-Franklin Koenig**

(Seattle, Washington, US, 1924–2008)

*Blues for Charlie Parker*

1955

Oil on canvas

96 × 130 × 3 cm

Private collection

**John-Franklin Koenig**

Original design of the poster for the exhibition

of Rafael Canogar at Galerie Arnaud

1956

Collage

50 × 65 cm

Collection Jean-Pierre et Françoise Arnaud,

France

71

**John-Franklin Koenig**

Untitled (Record cover)

Collage

18.4 × 18.6 cm

Collection Jean-Pierre et Françoise Arnaud,

France

**John-Franklin Koenig**

Untitled (Cover of a Thelonious Monk

record)

Collage

26 × 26 cm

Collection Jean-Pierre et Françoise Arnaud,

France

**Jan Křížek**

(Dobroměřice, Czech Republic, 1919

– Gouilles, France, 1985)

*Statuette*

1954–59

Wood

32 × 7 × 5 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(1)

50 (group photo)

**Jan Křížek**

*Statuette*

1954–59

Terracotta and ink

30.5 × 8 × 6 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(3)

50 (group photo)

**Jan Křížek**

*Statuette*

1954–59

Terracotta

20.5 × 14 × 4 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(4)

50 (group photo)

**Jan Křížek**

*Statuette*

1954–55

Terracotta

28.5 × 6 × 7 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(5)

50 (group photo)

**Jan Křížek**

*Statuette*

1954

Terracotta

25 × 10 × 7 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(7)

50 (group photo)

**Jan Křížek**

*Statuette*

1954–55

Terracotta

15.5 × 8.5 × 8.5 cm

Collection Fonds régional d'art

contemporain Bretagne, Rennes

84317(8)

50 (group photo)

**Jean-Dominique Lajoux**

(Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, France, 1931)  
*Wall of Oil Barrels—The Iron Curtain*  
 Rue Visconti, Paris, 1961–62  
 Photograph (modern copy)  
 29 × 23 cm  
 © 1962 Christo  
 143

**Lisa Larsen**

(Germany, 1925 – 1959)  
 Untitled (Tajiri on his way from Montparnasse  
 to Galerie Huit [8] in Saint-Germain-des-Prés  
 where work from ex-GIs was being shown)  
 1950  
 Photograph (period copy)  
 35 × 26 cm  
 Giotta Tajiri / Ryu Tajiri  
 74

**Julio Le Parc**

(Mendoza, Argentina, 1928)  
*Continuidad luminosa móvil*  
 (Mobile Luminous Continuity)  
 1960–61  
 Steel, lamps, nylon thread, wood  
 200 × 200 cm  
 Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
 AS05739  
 112

**Fernand Leduc**

(Montreal, Canada, 1916–2014)  
*Painting in Blue*  
 1944  
 Oil on paperboard  
 28 × 35.5 cm  
 National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Gift from  
 the Bruno M. and Ruby Cormier Collection,  
 Montreal, 1995  
 38040  
 51

**Jacques Lucas**

(Unknown)  
*Man Ray and Gloria de Herrera*  
*at the SS De Grasse ocean liner party*  
 March 1, 1951  
 Photograph (modern copy)  
 19 × 25.2 cm  
 Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
 (980024)

**Alfred Manessier**

(Saint-Ouen, France, 1911  
 – Orléans, France, 1993)  
*Soirée d'octobre* (October Evening)  
 1946  
 Oil on canvas  
 99.8 × 81.3 cm  
 Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
 FGA-BA-MANES-0007  
 60

**Matta (Roberto Matta)**

(Santiago de Chile, Chile, 1911  
 – Civitavecchia, Italy, 2002)  
*La question* (The Question)  
 1957  
 Oil on canvas  
 189.9 × 294.6 cm  
 Federica Matta Collection, courtesy  
 of Pace Gallery, New York  
 122

**Vincente Minnelli**

(Chicago, Illinois, US, 1903  
 – Beverly Hills, California, US, 1986)  
*An American in Paris*  
 1951  
 35mm film transferred to video  
 Color, sound, 115 min.  
 Contenidos Audiovisuales S. L.

**André Morain**

(Courbevoie, France, 1938)  
*Le soir du vernissage de l'exposition "Mythologies*  
*quotidiennes," diner à la Gare de Lyon au*  
*"Train bleu"* (The evening of the opening of the  
 exhibition *Mythologies quotidiennes*, dinner  
 at the Gare de Lyon on the "Blue Train")  
 Paris, July 7, 1964  
 Photograph (modern copy)  
 29 × 21.8 cm  
 Fonds Gérard Gassiot-Talabot  
 INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art  
 156

**Pablo Palazuelo**

(Madrid, Spain, 1916–2007)  
*Alborada* (Dawn)  
 1952  
 Oil on canvas  
 101 × 220 cm  
 Colección "La Caixa". Arte Contemporáneo  
 ACF 0515  
 90–91

**Pablo Picasso**

(Malaga, Spain, 1881 – Mougins, France, 1973)  
*Étude pour "L'Aubade": le miroir*  
 (Study for "The Serenade": The Mirror)  
 September 18, 1941  
 Pen and black ink on paper  
 21 × 27 cm  
 Musée national Picasso-Paris  
 Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979  
 MP1252

**Pablo Picasso**

*L'enfant aux colombes* (Child with Doves)  
 August 24, 1943  
 Oil on canvas  
 162 × 130 cm  
 Musée national Picasso-Paris  
 Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979  
 MP192  
 39

**Pablo Picasso**

*Nu debout* (Standing Nude)  
 June 28, 1946  
 Colored crayons on paper  
 51 × 32.5 cm  
 Musée national Picasso-Paris  
 Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979  
 MP1356

**Pablo Picasso**

*La cuisine* (The Kitchen)  
 November 1948  
 Oil on canvas  
 175 × 252 cm  
 Musée national Picasso-Paris  
 Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979  
 MP200  
 40–41

**Pablo Picasso**

*Étude pour "Les Femmes d'Alger," d'après Delacroix*  
 (Study for "Women of Algiers," after Delacroix)  
 January 8, 1955  
 Pen and India ink on the back of an invitation  
 to a book sale of the National Committee  
 of Writers on Saturday, October 24, 1953,  
 at the Vélodrome d'Hiver  
 10 × 12.5 cm  
 Musée national Picasso-Paris  
 Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979  
 MP1494  
 123

**Serge Poliakov**

(Moscow, Russia, 1900 – Paris, France, 1969)  
*Composition*  
 1946  
 Oil on panel  
 78 × 78 cm  
 Collection Alexis Poliakov  
 946012  
 54

**Jean Pottier**

(Courbevoie, France, 1932)  
*Bidonville de Nanterre*  
 (Shantytown in Nanterre)  
 1956  
 Photograph  
 30.3 × 30.7 cm  
 Collection du Musée national de l'histoire  
 de l'immigration, Paris  
 2006.236.1

**Jean Pottier**

*Bidonville de Nanterre*  
 (Shantytown in Nanterre)  
 1957  
 Photograph  
 30.3 × 30.7 cm  
 Collection du Musée national de l'histoire  
 de l'immigration, Paris  
 2006.233.1

Jean Pottier  
*Bidonville de Nanterre* (Shantytown in Nanterre)  
1959  
Photograph  
30.3 × 30.7 cm  
Collection du Musée national de l'histoire  
de l'immigration, Paris  
2006.232.1  
23

Jean Pottier  
*Bidonville de Nanterre, la Folie, rue de la Garenne*  
(Shantytown in Nanterre, La Folie, Rue de la  
Garenne)  
1964  
Photograph  
40 × 30 cm  
Collection du Musée national de l'histoire  
de l'immigration, Paris  
2006.237.1  
22

**Joan Rabascall**  
(Barcelona, Spain, 1935)  
*Jazz Hot*  
1966  
Collage on wood  
50 × 73 cm  
Colección MACBA. On long-term loan  
from the Ajuntament de Barcelona  
3220

Joan Rabascall  
*Mass Media*  
1967  
Collage on canvas  
146 × 97.5 cm  
Colección MACBA. On long-term loan  
from the Ajuntament de Barcelona  
3146  
149

**Jean-Paul Riopelle**  
(Montreal, Canada, 1923 – Saint-Antoine  
-de-l'Isle-aux-Grues, Canada, 2002)  
Untitled  
1945  
Oil on canvas  
58.3 × 74 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.  
Purchase 1977  
18848  
52

Jean-Paul Riopelle  
*Painting*  
1950  
Oil on canvas  
60 × 72.7 cm  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC,  
Gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation  
66.4260

**Haywood Bill Rivers**  
(Morven, North Carolina, US, 1922–2001)  
*Tailor Shop*  
1948  
Oil on canvas  
51.4 × 61.6 cm  
The Baltimore Museum of Art: 1948  
Maryland Artists Exhibition Purchase Prize  
BMA 1948.29  
72

Haywood Bill Rivers  
*The Drape Maker*  
1948  
Oil on canvas  
56.4 × 46.2 cm  
The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift  
of the Waters Catering Company, Inc.  
BMA 1948.110

**Larry Rivers**  
(New York, US, 1923–2002)  
*French Money II*  
1962  
Oil and charcoal on canvas  
89.2 × 149.9 cm  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC,  
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966  
66.4283  
144

**Antonio Saura**  
(Huesca, Spain, 1930 – Cuenca, Spain, 1998)  
*Narración* (Narration)  
1964  
Collage on paper  
71.2 × 100 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
DE01544  
155

**Eusebio Sempere**  
(Onil, Spain, 1923–1985)  
*Relieve luminoso móvil*  
(Mobile Luminous Relief)  
1959  
Wood, acrylic, plastic, lightbulbs, and motor  
59.5 × 60 × 14 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
AD02335  
111

**Michel Sima** (Michał Smajewski)  
(Slonim, Belarus, 1912  
– Largentière, France, 1987)  
Untitled (Pablo Picasso in his Antibes  
studio with the canvas *La joie de Vivre*  
[The Joy of Life])  
Summer 1946  
Photograph (modern copy)  
41 × 56.6 cm  
Photo © Michel Sima / Bridgeman Images  
38 (top)

**Siné**  
(Maurice Sinet)  
(Paris, France, 1928–2016)  
Untitled  
1962  
Ink on paper  
53.7 × 50 cm  
Private collection. Courtesy of Catherine  
Sinet  
KON0001A  
117

**Kimber Smith**  
(Boston, Massachusetts, US, 1922  
– Southampton, New York, US, 1981)  
*Blue Bird*  
1960  
Acrylic on canvas  
199.3 × 148.6 cm  
Estate of Kimber Smith  
101

**Loló Soldevilla**  
(Cuba, 1901 – Havana, Cuba, 1971)  
Untitled  
1955  
Casein on wood and metal  
28.3 × 33 × 6 cm  
Sandy and George Garfunkel, United States  
110

**Jesús Rafael Soto**  
(Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela, 1923  
– Paris, France, 2005)  
*Vibración III* (Vibration III)  
1960–61  
Wire, fabric, and synthetic paint on wood  
150.1 × 60.6 × 19 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On long-term loan and commodatum from  
Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros,  
2013  
DO01961  
109

**Nancy Spero**  
(Cleveland, Ohio, US, 1926  
– New York, US, 2009)  
*Homage to New York (I Do Not Challenge)*  
1958  
Oil on canvas  
119.4 × 78.7 cm  
Courtesy of The Nancy Spero and Leon Golub  
Foundation for the Arts and Galerie Lelong,  
New York  
GL7041  
130



**Nicolas de Staël**

(Saint Petersburg, Russia, 1914  
– Antibes, France, 1955)  
*Collage sur fond bleu*  
(Collage on Blue Background)  
ca. 1953  
Collage on paper  
49 × 64 cm  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris  
AMD945  
62

**Kumi Sugaï**

(Kobe, Japan, 1919–1996)  
*Shiro* (White)  
June 1957  
Oil on canvas  
161.6 × 129.5 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
57.1489  
129

**Alina Szapocznikow**

(Kalisz, Poland, 1926 – Paris, France, 1973)  
*Jeu de galets* (Set of Pebbles)  
1967  
Bronze  
Ed. no. 2/7  
6 × 58 × 34 cm  
Courtesy of Estate of Alina Szapocznikow /  
Piotr Stanislawski / Galerie Loevenbruck,  
Paris / Hauser & Wirth  
ASC25363  
108

**Shinkichi Tajiri**

*Prisoner*  
1950–51  
Iron  
51 × 19 × 25 cm  
Giotta Tajiri / Ryu Tajiri. Courtesy  
of The Mayor Gallery, London

**Shinkichi Tajiri**

*Lament for Lady (for Billie Holiday)*  
1953  
Brass, bronze and photograph  
61 × 84 × 34 cm  
Giotta Tajiri / Ryu Tajiri. Courtesy  
of The Mayor Gallery, London  
75

**Rufino Tamayo**

(Oaxaca, Mexico, 1899  
– Mexico City, Mexico, 1991)  
*Mujer en gris* (Woman in Gray)  
1959  
Oil on canvas  
195 × 129.5 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
59.1563  
131

**Hervé Télémaque**

(Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1937)  
*Petit célibataire un peu nègre et assez joyeux*  
(Little Bachelor Slightly Negro, and Quite Happy)  
1964  
Oil on canvas  
80 × 80 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne  
/ Centre de création industrielle  
Purchase, 2002  
AM 2002-239  
152

**Tella****(José García Tella)**

(Madrid, Spain, 1906 – Draveil, France, 1983)  
*Le bal de la Bastille* (The Ball of the Bastille)  
Paris, 1952  
Oil on panel  
100 × 50 cm  
Former Collection Henri-Pierre Roché  
(1879–1959)  
52/17 - R104  
42

Tella (José García Tella)  
*La bouche du métro* (Metro Entrance)  
Paris, 1953  
Oil on panel  
127 × 92 cm  
Former Collection Henri-Pierre Roché  
(1879–1959)  
53/33 - R169

**Tella (José García Tella)**

*La Seine* (The Seine)  
1951  
Oil on Isorel  
60 × 73 cm  
Private collection. Former Collection Henri-  
Pierre Roché (1879–1959)  
51/1 - R95  
43

**Jean Tinguely**

(Fribourg, Switzerland, 1925  
– Bern, Switzerland, 1991)  
*Méta-Malévich*  
1954  
Wooden box, paint, electric motor, pulleys,  
rubber straps, and metal  
61 × 49 × 13.5 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
DE01863  
105

**Unknown photographer**

Untitled (Gloria de Herrera and William Copley)  
ca. 1949–50  
Photograph (modern copy)  
19 × 27.8 cm  
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
(980024)

**Unknown photographer**

Untitled (Claire Falkenstein with sculpture)  
ca. 1950  
Photograph (modern copy)  
25.7 × 19 cm  
Courtesy of Falkenstein Foundation  
Archive and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC,  
New York, NY  
79

**Unknown photographer**

Untitled (Man Ray, Greco, William Copley,  
and Marcel Duchamp on board the SS  
*De Grasse*)  
1951  
Photograph (modern copy)  
19 × 27.5 cm  
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
(980024)

**Unknown photographer**

Untitled (Thelonious Monk and Marcel Fleiss  
at the Salle Pleyel, Paris)  
June 1954  
Photograph (period copy)  
17.7 × 19 cm  
Collection Marcel Fleiss, Paris

**Victor Vasarely**

(Pécs, Hungary, 1908 – Paris, France, 1997)  
*Oeta II*  
1956  
Oil on canvas  
72 × 60 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
On temporary loan from Cisneros Fontanals  
Art Foundation, Miami, 2010  
104

**Marc Vaux**

(Orne, France, 1895 – Paris, France, 1971)  
*Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade  
de Jean Benoit*  
(Execution of the Will of the Marquis de Sade  
by Jean Benoit)  
1959  
Photograph (modern copy)  
29 × 21 cm  
Association Atelier André Breton  
188

**Geer van Velde**

(Lisse, Netherlands, 1898  
– Paris, France, 1977)  
*Composition*  
1949  
Oil on canvas  
100 × 81 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-VELDG-006  
65

**Bram van Velde**

(Zoeterwoude, Netherlands, 1895  
– Leiden, Netherlands, 1981)  
Untitled  
1951  
Oil on canvas  
130.5 × 162 cm  
Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam  
A 29185  
57

**Maria Helena Vieira da Silva**

(Lisbon, Portugal, 1908 – Paris, France, 1992)  
*Paris, la nuit* (Paris by Night)  
1951  
Oil on canvas  
54 × 73 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-VIEIR-2  
63

**Hugh Weiss**

(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US, 1925  
– Paris, France, 2007)  
*Self-Portrait with Boat*  
1951  
Oil on canvas  
92.5 × 64 cm  
Collection Sabine Weiss  
73

**Sabine Weiss**

(Saint-Gingolph, Switzerland, 1924)  
*Shinkichi Tajiri, One-Day Sculptures along  
the River Seine*  
Paris, 1950  
5 photographs (modern copies)  
60 × 50 cm (including frame)  
© Sabine Weiss  
300/30  
300/33  
300/153  
300/169  
300/189

**Sabine Weiss**

*Shinkichi Tajiri, One-Day Sculptures  
along the River Seine*  
Paris, 1950  
4 photographs (modern copies)  
40.5 × 50.5 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
300/32  
300/118  
300/122  
300/182

**Sabine Weiss**

Untitled (contact sheet 24–34)  
1950  
Photograph (period copy)  
28.5 × 23 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
300/24-34

**Sabine Weiss**

Untitled (contact sheet 164–175)  
1950  
Photograph (period copy)  
28.5 × 23 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
300/164-175

**Sabine Weiss**

Untitled (contact sheet 185–196)  
1950  
Photograph (period copy)  
28.5 × 23 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
300/185-196

**Sabine Weiss**

Untitled (Dijon)  
1950  
Photograph (modern copy)  
40 × 30 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
486

**Sabine Weiss**

*Angle boulevard Murat*  
(Corner of Boulevard Murat)  
Paris, 1951  
Photograph (modern copy)  
40 × 30 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
344  
20

**Sabine Weiss**

Untitled (Paris)  
1952  
Photograph (modern copy)  
40 × 30 cm  
© Sabine Weiss  
479  
21

**Wols (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze)**

(Berlin, Germany, 1913 – Paris, France, 1951)  
*Composition*  
1948  
Oil on canvas  
80.3 × 81 cm  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
On temporary loan from Collection  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva, 2015  
DO02192  
56

**Zao Wou-Ki**

(Beijing, China, 1920 – Nyon, Switzerland, 2013)  
*30.10.61*  
October 30, 1961  
Oil on canvas  
130.5 × 195.8 cm  
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva  
FGA-BA-ZAO-0002  
135

**Jaume Xifra**

(Salt, Spain, 1934 – Paris, France, 2014)  
*Pochoir Objets* (Object Stencil)  
1966  
Spray on paper  
50 × 65 cm  
Colección MACBA. Consorcio MACBA  
3606  
134

**Jack Youngerman**

(St. Louis, Missouri, US, 1926)  
Untitled  
1955  
Oil on burlap  
146.2 × 90.9 cm  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.  
Gift from Barbara Rose  
92.243  
86

**DOCUMENTATION**

Poster with group photograph of the  
participants in the 1er Congrès international  
des écrivains et artistes noirs  
(1st International Congress of Black Writers  
and Artists)  
La Sorbonne, Paris, September 19–22, 1956  
Modern print  
42 × 59.5 cm  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 205206

Poster of the XXIII Salón de Mayo Francés  
(23rd French May Salon) in Havana  
July 1967  
Print on paper  
54.6 × 38.8 cm  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204348

**Henri Alleg**

*La question* (The Question)  
Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1958  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204952

*Art d'aujourd'hui*

Paris, January 1953, Series 4, no. 1  
(Contains the article by Léon Degand,  
“La querelle du chaud et du froid”  
[The Hot and Cold Quarrel]: 9–10)  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204955

*Arts*

Paris, August 18, 1950; February 12–18, 1958;  
January 7–13, 1959; October 7–13, 1959;  
October 21–27, 1959; December 23–29, 1959;  
July 1–6, 1964  
7 Periodicals  
Private collection

*Arts et Loisirs*

Paris, April 27 – May 2, 1966  
Periodical  
Private collection

*Arts: lettres, spectacles, musique*

Paris, March 23–29, 1960  
Periodical  
Private collection

**Simone de Beauvoir**

*Djamila Boupacha*

Gallimard, Paris, 1962  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 205737

*CoBra*

Brussels, 1948, no. 1; 1950, no. 7; 1951, no. 10  
3 Periodicals  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 112384

*Coronet*

New York, September 1951, vol. 30, no. 5  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 205735

*Derrière le miroir / Galerie Maeght*

Éditions Pierre à feu, Paris, November 1947,  
no. 6 (dedicated to Baya Mahieddine);  
January 1952, no. 43 (dedicated to Bram van  
Velde); February 1952, no. 52 (dedicated to  
Wifredo Lam); March 1955, no. 73 (dedicated  
to Pablo Palazuelo)  
4 Periodicals  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 113185

**Pierre Francastel**

*Nouveau dessin, nouvelle peinture:*

*l'École de Paris* (New Design, New Painting:  
The Paris School)  
Librairie de Médecis, Paris, 1946  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206648

**Oliver W. Harrington**

*Why I Left America*

University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1993  
(first edition 1961)  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 205734

*Holiday*

New York, August 1954  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206621

*Holiday*

New York, December 1954  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206622

*Le Nouvel Observateur*

Paris, June 1966, no. 83  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206652

*Le Nouvel Observateur*

Paris, September 1966, no. 96  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206653

**Jean-Jacques Lebel**

*Anti-Procès 3* (Anti-Process 3)

Milan, June 1961  
Poster. Print on paper  
77 × 28.5 cm (including frame)  
Fonds de dotation Jean-Jacques Lebel

*Life*

New York, January 14, 1946  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204945

*Life*

New York, March 18, 1946  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204942

*Life*

New York, July 30, 1951  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 204943

**Marshall McLuhan**

*The Gutenberg Galaxy*

University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1962  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206619

Marshall McLuhan

*Understanding Media*

McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206618

*Merlin: A Collection of Contemporary Writing*

Librairie Mistral, Paris, Spring 1952, vol. 1,  
no. 1  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206620

*Paris Match*

Paris, July 28, 1951, no. 123  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206650

*Paris Match*

Paris, October 28, 1961, no. 655  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
Reg. No. 206651

**Elliot Paul**

*The Last Time I Saw Paris*

Random House, New York, 1942  
Book  
Private collection

Elliot Paul

*Springtime in Paris*

Random House, New York, 1950  
Book  
Private collection

Elliot Paul

*Murder on the Left Bank*

Random House, New York, 1951  
Book  
Private collection

*Présence Africaine*

Paris, 1947, no. 1  
Periodical, modern print  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia  
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*Présence Africaine*

Paris, 1959, no. 24  
Periodical, modern print  
Library and Documentation Centre  
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*Revue du Jazz Hot Club*

Paris, June 1946, no. 7  
Periodical  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
Reg. No. 206649

*Sam Francis, Shirley Jaffe, Kimber Smith*

Centre culturel américain, Paris, 1958 (exh. cat.)  
Book  
Private collection

**Irwin Shaw**

with illustrations by **Ronald Searle**  
*Paris! Paris!*  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London, 1977  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
Reg. No. 205736

**Michel Tapié**

*Claire Falkenstein*  
De Luca Art Monographs, Rome, 1958  
Book  
Library and Documentation Centre  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
Reg. No. 204953

Various artists

*Manifeste des 121* (Manifesto of the 121)  
1960  
Print on paper  
39.5 × 32.5 cm (including frame)  
Fonds de dotation Jean-Jacques Lebel

OTHER WORKS

AND DOCUMENTATION INCLUDED  
IN THE PUBLICATION

**Martha Boto**

(Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1925  
– Paris, France, 2004)  
*Plus Hélicoïdal*  
ca. 1967  
Light installation: metal, light, and motor  
45 × 41 × 23 cm (base: 101 × 100 × 80 cm)  
Colección del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina  
221

**Lygia Clark**

(Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1920  
– Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1988)  
*Camisa de força* (Straightjacket)  
1968  
Elastic, nylon, and stone  
150 × 80 cm  
© Associação Cultural “O Mundo de Lygia Clark”  
N.º Ref.: 20400  
239

**Eugène Delacroix**

(Charenton-Saint-Maurice, 1798  
– Paris, 1863)  
*Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*  
(Women of Algiers in Their Apartment)  
1834  
Oil on canvas  
180 × 229 cm  
Musée du Louvre, Paris  
Acquired at the Salon of 1834  
Inv. no.: 3824  
205 (top)

Mohammed Khadda

*Les Casbahs ne s'assiègent pas*  
(You Cannot Besiege a Casbah)  
1960–82  
Oil on canvas  
400 × 262 cm  
Musée national des Beaux-Arts d'Alger  
217

Isidore Isou (Jean Isidore Goldstein)

Collage: *Antonin Artaud soigné avec amour par un psychiatre... à la cravache*  
(Antonin Artaud treated with love by a psychiatrist... at the whip)  
1982  
Published in *Jonas, ou le corps à la recherche de son âme*, Éditions Broutin, Paris, 1984  
Private collection  
216

**Ernest Mancoba**

(Turffontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1904  
– Clamart, France, 2002)  
*Composition*  
1940  
Oil on canvas  
59 × 50 cm  
Private collection  
215

Pablo Picasso

*Les Femmes d'Alger (version O)*  
(Women of Algiers [Version O])  
1955  
Oil on canvas  
114 × 156 cm  
Private collection  
205 (bottom)

Poster: *Les psychiatres et les psychanalystes sont tous des déments dangereux pour eux-mêmes et pour autrui* (Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are all dangerous lunatics for themselves and for others)  
Published in *La Revue de psychokladologie et de psychothéie*, Centre de créativité, Paris, 1970  
Private collection  
234

**Martial Raysse**

(Golfe-Juan, France, 1936)  
*Soudain l'été dernier* (Suddenly Last Summer)  
1963  
Acrylic paint on panel and photograph, straw hat, and plush towel  
106 × 227 × 58 cm  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle  
State purchase 1968, assignation 1976  
Inv. no.: AM 1976-1010  
209

*Robho*

Paris, June 1967, no. 1  
(Cover: Rafael Soto and Julio Le Parc)  
Periodical  
Colección Biblioteca Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires  
223

*Robho*

Paris, second quarter of 1968, no. 3  
(Issue dedicated to Madi art and Uruguayan artist Carmelo Arden Quin, whose *Structure articulable* [Articulable Structure, 1946] is reproduced)  
Periodical  
Colección Biblioteca Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires  
226–228

**Papa Ibra Tall**

(Tivavouane, Senegal, 1935–2015)  
*Couple royal* (Royal Couple)  
1965  
Wool tapestry  
222 × 155 cm  
Private collection  
219

Tella (José García Tella)

*Les étoiles* (The Stars)  
1951  
Oil on canvas  
100 × 81 cm  
Collection Henri-Pierre Roché  
– Collection Louis Guyard  
196

Tella (José García Tella)  
*La mort de García Lorca*  
(The Death of García Lorca)  
1953  
Oil on panel  
128 × 92 cm  
Collection Henri-Pierre Roché  
194

Tella (José García Tella)  
*La mort de Modigliani*  
(The Death of Modigliani)  
1953  
Oil on panel  
127 × 92 cm  
Collection Henri-Pierre Roché  
197

Unknown photographer  
Untitled (View of the International  
Exhibition of Psychopathological Art,  
at the Sainte-Anne psychiatric center)  
Paris, 1950  
Photograph  
15 × 18 cm  
Coleção Instituto Municipal Juliano Moreira  
233 (top)

Unknown photographer  
*Lettrist appeals on the walls of Sainte-Anne*  
Paris, 1970–71  
Photograph  
Bismuth-Lemaître Papers. General  
Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and  
Manuscript Library, Yale University  
233 (bottom)

The images on pages 156 and 188  
respectively correspond to:

André Morain

*Le soir du vernissage de l'exposition*

*"Mythologies quotidiennes," dîner à la Gare  
de Lyon au "Train bleu"* (The evening of  
the opening of the exhibition "Mythologies  
quotidiennes", dinner at the Gare de Lyon  
on the "Blue Train")

July 7, 1964

Marc Vaux

*Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade  
de Jean Benoit* (Execution of the Will of  
the Marquis de Sade by Jean Benoit)

1959



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