

LA LETTRE  
ACADEMIE DES  
BEAUX-ARTS

# ARTBRUT CREATION OUTSIDE OF THE NORMS



# Editorial

To some, the term *art brut* ("gross art") might evoke an impulse, a thoughtless gesture, like a cry.

Obviously, many examples fit this definition, but what should then be said of architectural creations designed and constructed entirely by a single man over decades, such as Postman Cheval's Ideal Palace or Simon Rodia's Watts Towers? These two approaches, forty years apart, are remarkably similar.

Two men of modest origin, both with only rudimentary schooling, who spent 33 years fulfilling their dream strictly on their own.

Simon Rodia, a rough character, was perhaps more of a protestor, almost an anarchist, whereas Cheval was more of a daydreamer.

But both were controversial, as is evidenced in the report that officials of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs wrote when the Ideal Palace was put up for classification as a historical monument: "*The whole thing is absolutely hideous. An appalling collection of insanities, scrambled in a lout's brain...*". Fortunately, this did not prevent Edmond Michelet from completing the steps that André Malraux had taken to classifying it in 1969.

As for the Watts Towers, the City of Los Angeles ordered their destruction, which they narrowly escaped thanks to considerable support from many artists, architects and public figures.

What ultimately saved the towers, however, was a test carried out in 1959 to assess their soundness, which demonstrated the incredible resistance of the steel cables and cement constructions, of which the tallest is over 30 metres high.

With the argument of fragility debunked, the municipality had to give in.

When good fortune brings one face to face with this complex, on the south side of the city, one is struck by the power of the act, the imagination, the contrast between steel, concrete and seashells that afford an incredible feeling of freedom. But this freedom comes from ignoring the rules.

There is another freedom, which consists in knowing and forgetting that we know!

**Laurent Petitgirard**, Permanent Secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts



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Number90  
Summer 2019

Editorial • page 2

Installations under the Coupole:  
**Jiří Kylián, Régis Campo, Muriel Mayette-Holtz**

• pages 3 to 5

Exhibition : "**Mondrian figuratif – an unknown story**"

Musée Marmottan Monet

Exhibition : **The Académie des Beaux-Arts Pierre-David Weill Drawing Prize**  
Cité Internationale des Arts

• pages 6 to 9

Subject file: "**Art brut, creation outside of the norms**"

• pages 10 to 34

News: **Symposium: "Can art live without the art market"**

News: **Creation of the Foundation for the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Photography Prize**

Publication: "**Notre-Dame de l'humanité**" by Adrien Goetz

Tribute: **leoh Ming Pei**

News: **Inaugural exhibition in the Comtesse de Caen hall after its renovation**

Elections: **Blanca Li, Thierry Malandain, Angelin Preljocaj and Frédéric Mitterrand**

• pages 35 à 37

Talk: "**The construction of a pyramid, the example of Abu Rawash: findings from a recent study**"  
by Michel Vallallogia

Talk: "**Restoring Leonardo**"  
by Cinzia Pasquali

• pages 36 à 39

News: **Decentralized and public plenary session at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles**

**Academy Members**

• page 40



On Wednesday, 13 March 2019, Jiří Kylián, who was elected foreign associate member on 25 April 2018 to the seat previously held by Leonardo Cremonini (1925-2010), was welcomed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts by his colleague Hugues R. Gall under the Coupole of the Palais de l'Institut de France. On this occasion, William Christie, from the Unattached Members' section, conducted his ensemble *Les Arts Florissants*, in the presence of Minister of Culture Franck Riester and HRH Princess Caroline of Hanover.



Dancer and choreographer Jiří Kylián was born in 1947 in Prague, in former Czechoslovakia. In 1962, he was admitted as a student to the Prague Conservatory. Despite the omnipresence of the Communist Party, which ruled the country with an iron rod at the time, the Conservatory had many excellent teachers who themselves had been trained in pre-war liberal and democratic Czechoslovakia. Professor Zora Šemberová thus had a decisive influence on the young Jiří.

In 1967, Jiří Kylián was awarded a scholarship to continue his studies at the Royal Ballet School in London. There he met choreographer John Cranko who offered him a contract with the Stuttgart Ballet. Before embarking on this new path, Jiří Kylián returned to Prague where, in the meantime, a revolt against the communist regime led by Alexander Dubček had begun. Dubček had tried to create "socialism with a human face", but this ideal was crushed in 1968 by the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact. A week after the invasion, Jiří Kylián left his country and went to Stuttgart, where Cranko also encouraged him to create his first choreographies. In the early 1970s, he went to the Netherlands to join the Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) as a guest choreographer. In 1975, he became the artistic director of the NDT.

His creation *Sinfonietta*, which premiered in 1978 at the Charleston Festival, was a turning point that made the NDT internationally famous and allowed it to embark on a world tour. Aware of the importance of good training for young dancers, Kylián launched a junior ensemble, the NDT2. He also valued the specific quality of experienced dancers, which led him to form a senior group, the NDT3, for which he created, along with his colleagues Hans van Manen, Mats Ek and William Forsythe, the choreographies that constituted the programme of its world premiere. This event was immediately recognized by audiences and critics as an important new development, as NDT3 had a very positive impact on the dance community.

In 1987, the NDT built its own headquarters: a set of dance studios and a theatre designed by architect Rem Koolhaas. Kylián remained associated with the Dutch dance company for 34 years. In recent years, he has gradually turned towards video performances, cinema and photography. His award-winning films, *Car-Men* and *Scalamare*, as well as the photographic installation *Free Fall*, were made in close collaboration with his lifelong muse and companion, Sabine Kupferberg.

Excerpt from Hugues R. Gall's speech:

“Your work wanders with the greatest freedom: no form escapes you, your fantasy is constrained in no way, and you very quickly defied the constraints of great pre-existing scores such as in *Sinfonietta*, the *Symphony of Psalms*, and *The Child and the Spells*, notwithstanding the inspiration you had drawn from them in your early days, to venture into unprecedented forms of music or sound. You conceive of dance as the elementary human expression: it is, as you say, “the oldest, most archaic and most vulnerable art... the most sincere too; you cannot lie while dancing, because if you lied, you would make a lie of yourself, of your own body.” ■

Top left: Dancer Sabine Kupferberg, the choreographer's companion, in a dance interlude, in the centre of the Coupole at the Institut de France.

On the right: Jiří Kylián with Permanent Secretary Laurent Petitgirard, Hugues R. Gall and William Christie, of the Unattached Members section.

Photo credit: Juliette Agnel, Patrick Rimond





# RÉGIS CAMPO



**On 17 May 2017, at the age of 50, Régis Campo was elected member of the Musical Composition Section in the seat previously held by Charles Chaynes (1925-2016). On Wednesday, 3 April of this year, he was welcomed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts by his colleague Michaël Levinas under the Coupole of the Palais de l'Institut de France.**

Régis Campo, born in 1968, studied composition with Georges Boëuf at the Conservatoire de Marseille and then joined Jacques Charpentier's composition and musical civilizations class at the Conservatoire National de Région de Paris. He subsequently entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris in the classes of Alain Bancquart and Gérard Grisey, where he was awarded his first composition prize in 1995. In 1992, he met the Russian composer Edison Denisov, who considered him "one of the most gifted of his generation". From 1999 to 2001, he was a resident at the Villa Médicis. Since 2003, his composition class at the Conservatoire de Marseille has been a place of sharing and openness to various musical aesthetics. His style, often described as playful and colourful, emphasizes melodic invention, humour, joy and a great vitality of tempos.

In Europe and thirty countries throughout the world, many artists have played his music. His work has received numerous awards, including the Gaudeamus Prize (1996), the Dutilleux Competition Prize (1996), the Sacem's Hervé Dujardin (1999) and Pierre Cardin Prizes of the Académie des Beaux-Arts (1999), the Sacem Prize for Young Composers (2005), the Georges Bizet Prize (2005) and the Simone et Cino del Duca Foundation Commission Prize of the Institut de France (2014).

In 2001 his work *Lumen*, for orchestra, was premiered in California by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Kent Nagano, and in April 2003 the same performers garnered great acclaim with his first symphony.

His second opera, *West Pier*, based on Bernard-Marie Koltès' play, was premiered in 2014 at the Opéra national du Rhin and then performed in German at the Staatstheater in Nuremberg.

In 2018, the Ars Musica festival commissioned two works from him: *Dancefloor With Pulsing* for theremin and orchestra, and an *Omaggio affettuoso ed eccentrico al Maestro Morricone* for orchestra, created by the Brussels Philharmonique Orchestra and the Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège. In 2019, his work *Heartbeats* for orchestra was premiered with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal under the direction of Kent Nagano. His rich catalogue (Éditions Henry Lemoine) contains over three hundred works. These include *Commedia* (1995) for 19 musicians, the *Violin Concerto* (1997), the *Piano Concerto* (1998-1999), *Pop-art* (2002), *Symphony No. 1* (2002-2003) for orchestra, *Bestiaire d'après Apollinaire* for soprano and orchestra (2007-2008), *Les quatre binelles*, opéra-bouffe for 4 singers and 9 instruments (2008), *Street-Art* (2015-2017), and many more.

Excerpt from Michaël Levinas' speech:

“In welcoming you today under the Coupole into our Compagnie, the Académie welcomes a composer who, in his youth, went through the turn of this century marked by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of many ideologies and hopes for humanity. There was a real sense of disorientation, from which the world of art and contemporary creation did not escape. Today, you are recognized as a leading contemporary creator. You have produced works that have made a strong impression on us, including two operas, concertos, symphony orchestras. As a creator, you are resolutely free and independent of any dated dogmatism, and that is an immense strength. You continue to create in the dazzling youth of this century which is fully yours, the twenty-first century, still in its teens...” ■

Above: Composers Laurent Petitgirard, Régis Campo and Michaël Levinas.

Photo credit: Patrick Rimond



# MURIEL MAYETTE-HOLTZ

**A new female figure has joined our Compagnie: on Wednesday 15 May, Muriel Mayette-Holtz, elected to the Unattached Members section on 17 May 2017, in the seat previously held by Maurice Béjart (1927-2007), was welcomed to the Académie des Beaux-Arts by her colleague Hugues R. Gall.**

After studying at the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique, Muriel Mayette-Holtz became a resident of the Comédie-Française in 1985 at the age of twenty. She was elected its 477<sup>th</sup> member in 1988 and has played under the direction of Claude Régy, Catherine Hiegel, Antoine Vitez, Claude Stratz, Alexandre Lang, Jean Dautremey and others. She has performed in plays by Marivaux, Tchekhov, Molière, and Goldoni with Jacques Lassalle, and by Strinberg, Büchner, Gogol, Lorca and Müller under the direction of Matthias Langhoff.

Since 1986, when she set up her company, "Jeux", she has directed forty-five productions by renowned authors of classical and contemporary theatre. As a professor at the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique from 1996 to 2005, she directed plays by Federico Garcia Lorca, Goldoni, Jean-Claude Grumberg, Racine, Shakespeare and Corneille, with actors of the conservatory, including Louis Garrel, Jeanne Herry, Jonathan Cohen, Laurent Lafitte, Audrey Lamy, and Vincent Macaigne. Chief Executive Officer of the Comédie-Française from 2006 to 2014, she was the first woman to head this prestigious institution. She received the French Excellence Award in 2011 and in 2016. In 2012, the Académie française awarded her a vermeil medal

for her role in promoting the French language and literature.

In September 2015, she was appointed Director of the Académie de France in Rome – Villa Medici, and was also the first woman to head this prestigious French institution abroad. During her term of office, she initiated many cultural events there. In September 2016, she launched ¡VivaVilla!, a festival of artist residencies in association with the Académie de France in Madrid-Casa de Velázquez and the Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, which enabled the public in France to get to know the recent works of artists hosted by these three major French cultural institutions abroad. In May 2018, she staged a Franco-Italian version of Marivaux's *Game of Love and Chance* at the Villa Médicis. In May 2019, she directed Euripides *Trojan Women* in the Greek theatre of Syracuse as part of the festival of the Instituto nazionale del dramma antico. This year, Muriel Mayette-Holtz became the director of the Dufraine Foundation, owned by the Academy and located in Val-d'Oise, which hosts a dozen artists in residence.

Excerpt from Hugues R. Gall's speech:

“On 1 January 1988, Jacques Lasalle appointed you as a member, the 477<sup>th</sup> since Mademoiselle de Brie. You were 23 years old. [...]

Much like all those who have preceded you, but perhaps a little more so, you mark your roles with your personality; roles that you accept, but especially roles that you assert! You have made no distribution mistakes, neither for yourself nor, later on, for others. [...]

You have fitted with immense pleasure into the troupe that has become your family forever. According to Françoise Giroud, happiness is “to do what we want and want what we do”. If so, everything indicates that these years were happy ones for you. ■



Above: Muriel Mayette-Holtz and Frédéric Mitterrand.

Opposite: Professor François-Bernard Michel, Patrick de Carolis, Muriel Mayette-Holtz, Hugues R. Gall and Adrien Goetz, of the Unattached Members section.

Photo credit: Juliette Agnel





Above: *The Windmill in Sunlight*, 1908, oil on canvas, 114 x 84 cm  
 Centre: *House*, 1898-1900, watercolour and gouache on paper, 45.6 x 58.4 cm  
 Opposite: *The Windmill in the Evening*, around 1907-1908, oil on canvas, 67.5 x 117.5 cm  
 Right: *Devotie (Devotion)*, 1908, oil on canvas, 94 x 61 cm

© Kunstmuseum Den Haag



Musée Marmottan Monet

# “MONDRIAN FIGURATIF AN UNKNOWN STORY”

**Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), a member of the Dutch De Stijl artistic movement founded in 1917, is best known for his abstract paintings with uncluttered lines and red, yellow and blue squares. The Musée Marmottan Monet is dedicating an exhibition to him from 12 September to 20 January, with an emphasis on his major figurative oeuvre.**



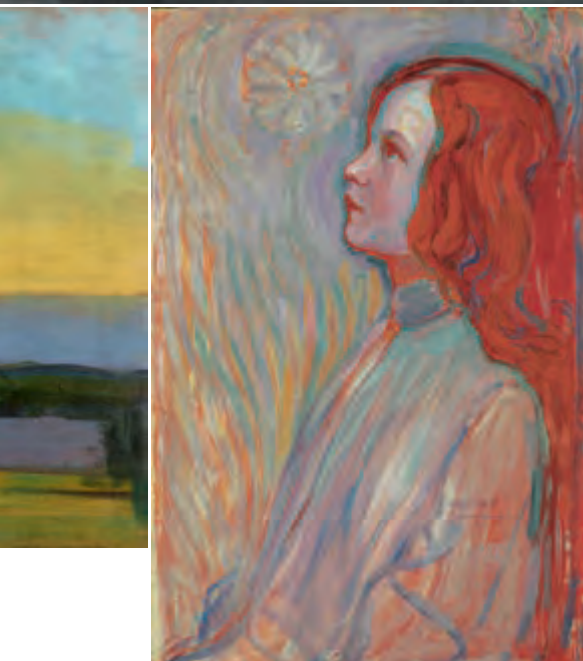
The figurative paintings of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) have long remained unknown. However, the man who now stands out as the artist's main collector, Salomon Slijper (1884-1971), was passionate about this long forgotten aspect of his work. Having met the master in the Netherlands, where he took refuge during the First World War, Slijper, the son of a diamond dealer from Amsterdam, collected a unique set of paintings and drawings by the artist, with whom he made friends. Mondrian selected a series himself to represent his production between 1891 and 1918, to which he added a few of his later abstract works. Most acquisitions took place between 1916 and 1920. Slijper's support for the painter was considerable, even life-changing. At a time when Mondrian could not make a living from his work and made copies at the Rijksmuseum to make ends meet, the large purchases made by his new patron opened up new opportunities for him and enabled him to finance his return to Paris in June 1919.

The Marmottan Monet Museum has entered into an exceptional partnership with the Kunstmuseum in The Hague to organise a completely new exhibition paying tribute to Slijper and Mondrian's figurative works by presenting major paintings and drawings exclusively from the art lover's collection.

This exhibition of nearly seventy Mondrian paintings is outstanding in terms of the number and quality of the works presented, which were classified as masterpieces by the Hague Museum. Of the 67 works exhibited, half are travelling to Paris for the first time, 12% have not been there for half a century, and 20% for almost 20 years. Unseen in Paris for almost a generation, this event is unique in many ways, as some of its most important pieces, such as the iconic *Windmill in Sunlight* (1908), are being moved for the last time due to their fragility. ■

Curator: Marianne Mathieu, Scientific Director of the Musée Marmottan Monet

An exhibition organized in partnership with the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.



12 September 2019 to 20 January 2020 | [www.marmottan.fr](http://www.marmottan.fr)



Cité internationale des arts

# PIERRE-DAVID WEILL DRAWING PRIZE ACADÉMIE DES BEAUX-ARTS

This prize, created in 1971 by member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, Pierre David-Weill (1932-1982), and actively supported for over forty years by his son and fellow member of the Académie, Michel David-Weill, is intended to encourage drawing, a fundamental practice in artistic creation. The jury was composed of members of the Painting, Sculpture and Engraving sections. This year's exhibition of the works of winners and finalists took place at the Cité internationale des arts from 28 March to 13 April, as part of the Drawing Week organized by the Salon du Dessin.

The Pierre David-Weill Drawing Prizes for 2019 were awarded respectively to Viktoriia Sviatiuk (first prize, worth €8,000), Eve Malherbe (second prize, worth €4,000) and Maximilien Hauchecorne (third prize, worth €2,000). The work of María Chillón was highly commended.

**Viktoriia Sviatiuk**, born in Kiev in 1989, graduated in 2008 from the Republican School of Fine Arts in Kiev. In 2010, after two years of studies at the Faculty of Graphic Art and Publishing of the National Polytechnic University of Kiev, she decided to come to France where she enrolled in the TALM École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Angers. In 2016, she was awarded a Master's degree in Media Arts. Since then, Viktoriia Sviatiuk has participated in numerous exhibitions with various institutions such as the Musée des Beaux-Arts and the Château d'Angers. In 2015, her paintings were published as illustrations for the Éditions Hackoeurs, Paris Sorbonne. This year, her first solo exhibition "Les Nuances du Bleu" was held at the Espace Art Contemporain À Vous De Voir, in Saint-Mathurin-sur-Loire.

**Eve Malherbe** was born in 1987 near Paris and lives and works in Marseille. After studying graphic designs and interior design, she decided to concentrate mainly on graphic work. She has developed a pictorial practice in which she critically examines the representation of the subject and in particular of women, both in photography and in the history of painting. Interested in themes such as identity and memory, she explores the means of illusion and artifice offered by "story-painting" and "matter-painting". Re-enacting the past, portrait make-up, diverting myths, etc., her



projects reflect a desire to combine her respect for art history with her contemporary personal practice.

**Maximilien Hauchecorne** was born in Rouen in 1989. In 2018, after a Master's degree in Interior Design and Graphic Design at ESAG Penninghen in Paris, he chose to devote all of his work to drawing. His passion for architecture and his obsession with volume inform his compositions with a refined geometry. He now lives between Paris and London and, during his travels, is building up a large collection of photographs, polaroids, textures and travel diaries, all of which feed his inspiration.

**María Chillón**, born in 1982 in Ourense, Spain, holds a Master's of Fine Arts degree from the University of Salamanca and a Diploma of Advanced Studies in drawing and engraving from the Complutense University of Madrid. Her engraving work has received many awards (e.g. the Lacourrière Prize and Graver maintenant). ■

Above: painter Vladimir Velickovic, engravers Pierre Collin and Érik Desmazières, members of the Engraving Section, Bénédicte Alliot, Executive Director of the Cité Internationale des Arts, Astrid de la Forest, member of the Engraving Section, Viktoriia Sviatiuk (first prize), Eve Malherbe (second prize), Maximilien Hauchecorne (third prize) and Maria Chillon (highly commended).





Top: Viktoriia Sviatiuk (first prize), *Même la guerre est quotidienne*, black stone on paper, 50 x 65 cm.

Opposite: Eve Malherbe (second prize), *Ce qui précède et ce qui suit la catastrophe, la Passion*, a series of five charcoal drawings on satin paper, 55.5 x 43.5 cm.

Above: Maximilien Hauchecorne (third prize), *Composition n°8*, ink on paper.



# ART BRUT CREATION OU

The northern facade of the "Ideal Palace", by Joseph Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1924), better known as the Facteur Cheval (seen here in the centre), in Hauterives (Drôme) around 1907. Photo DR

The Ideal Palace is totally unique and has inspired artists for more than a century. Independent from any artistic movement and built without regard for any architectural rules, it was admired by the surrealists and has been recognized as a work of Art Brut. In 1969 it was classified as a historical monument, in the category of naïve art, by the Minister of Cultural Affairs Edmond Michelet who thus followed up on the steps that his predecessor André Malraux had initiated in this respect.





# TSIDE OF THE NORMS







# ART FOR AN *ESCAPE TO FREEDOM*?<sup>(1)</sup>

By **Lydia Harambourg**, art historian and critic, correspondent of the Painting section

*“There is no vigorous mental secretion but what is derived from the raw foods of daily personal life”*

Jean Dubuffet, *Asphyxiating Culture*

How can one describe this new aesthetic category of unknown artists and their works, that establish a new relationship with art? A first answer could be that these “singularities of art” are singular insofar as they do not play the game of culture. Their productions could therefore not be alienated by any institution (museum, gallery) and therefore by any social or financial process likely to misappropriate them. They thus represent an anonymous art that does not refer to “Art” as defined by art history: art brut, naïve art (in 1948, writer and art critic Michel Ragon organized an exhibition called “Art brut, naïvisme et littérature” at the Portes de France gallery in Paris), folk art, marginalized art, art of madmen, art of mediums, singular art, all of which are proposals for an art that is not subject to any form of recognition. All these assumptions work in opposition to art that is scholarly and recognized as such. From the moment it was first named, art brut became controversial. In 1963 Dubuffet defined it as follows: “Productions of all kinds... of a spontaneous and highly inventive nature... and whose authors are not from professional artistic circles”. Michel Ragon argues that Dubuffet did not invent “art brut”, any more than Alain Bourbonnais invented “art outside of the norms”. For him, the “singularities of art” are only singular insofar as they are not made for cultural events or for the art market. The day they enter a museum, when they are bought by collectors, they lose the intrinsic value of the power of their creation, and the quintessence of their life.

Therein lies the cornerstone of an ambiguity related to the interpretation and reception of art brut. Being marginal, rebellious and solitary in nature, it ceases to be so as soon as it is appropriated by the art world. And yet, by showing these pseudo-artists, who entered the institution in spite of themselves, we save from oblivion the unique works of protesters who are unaware of themselves.

A non-cultural art? That would bring face-to-face Henri “Le Douanier” (the custom officer) Rousseau and the Le Facteur (the postman) Cheval.

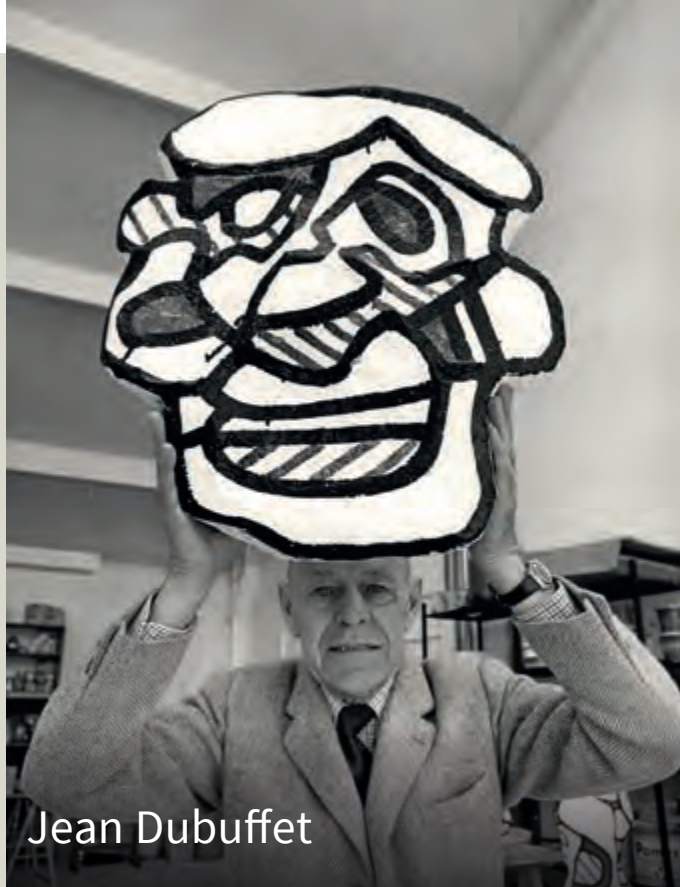
At which point in time do we pinpoint the origins of an art of

(a)normality? It probably traverses all ages and civilizations, but a census records it more officially around 1800, when Dr. Benjamin Rush built the first collection of works by mentally ill people in the United States. The close relationship that exists between the figure of the non-professional artist and the discoveries of medicine linked to psychiatric conditions as well as to the unconscious mind should be acknowledged from the very start. Peasants and workers who were interned as abnormal and deemed to be simple-minded were elevated to the rank of poets and artists despite having never seen a painting or a sculpture. Their neurosis became the challenge of a creativity that they were unable to understand. In 1802, French philosopher Maine de Biran used the term “automatism” to describe mental processes carried out under the control of consciousness, which André Breton and Philippe Soupault experimented with in 1919, with automatic writing and the book *Les Champs magnétiques* (*The Magnetic Fields*), which they published in 1920. The development of spiritism in the 1850s (Victor Hugo), studies on the insane and, as early as 1875, Dr Charcot’s observations on the graphic expressions of hysterics, followed by studies on hysteria conducted by Freud and Joseph Breuer (1895), brought to light new forms of artistic expression.

In 1882, Jules Lévy founded the group *The Incoherents* in Paris. The term could have been used to describe art brut during an exhibition, held at the journalist’s home, of “drawings by people who do not know how to draw”. In 1900, a first exhibition of works by mental patients was held at the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London, a selection of which was presented in Paris in 1929 at the Max Blin Gallery. The drawings of madmen became the focus of Marcel Réja (the pseudonym of Dr. Paul Meunier) who made connections with the drawings of children and “savages”, and published *L’art chez les fous* (literally, “Art in mad people”) in 1907 (ed. Mercure de France). 🖋

In 1924, the first Manifesto of Surrealism granted it pride of

Left: Müller, Heinrich Anton (1865-1930), *Untitled*, between 1925 and 1927, coloured pencil on paper. Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne.



Jean Dubuffet

*“Their only common feature is the ability to follow paths other than those of certified art”*

Jean Dubuffet <sup>1</sup>

In 1947, the painter Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) inaugurated the Foyer de l'Art Brut in the basement of the René Drouin gallery on Place Vendôme in Paris. Two years later, in 1949, he clarified his definition of art brut in *L'art brut préféré aux arts culturels*, which acted as a manifesto to support the first exhibition of the Compagnie de l'Art Brut at the Drouin gallery.

As early as 1945, he had undertaken a trip to Switzerland to visit psychiatric asylums and hospitals, as well as prisons, and to meet doctors, artists and museum curators, and had forged friendships there. He coined the term to name the works of the insane and marginalized that he had been collecting since the 1920s, and that his friends Raymond Queneau and Jean Paulhan had helped to bring to his attention at the time. Among those creators was Augustin Forestier, interned in Saint-Alban-sur-Limagnole (Switzerland), where an exhibition was organized in July 1945, “*Trait d’union, les Chemins de l’art brut*”. In the same year, Dubuffet visited Antonin Artaud, who was interned in Rodez.

Still in 1947, he wrote and published the first issue of his collection, *Les Barbus Müller et autres pièces de la statuaire provinciale*, devoted to the anonymous sculptures he called “Barbus Müller” after the famous Swiss collector Josef Müller who had acquired them in the 1940s. Transferred in 1948 to one of Gallimard Publishing’s buildings on 17 rue de l’Université, the Foyer de l'Art Brut became the Compagnie de l'Art Brut, which presented exhibitions until 1951, when it was dissolved and transferred to the painter Alfonso Ossorio who kept it in East, near New York. André Breton had just resigned from it; he was one of its founding members, along with Dubuffet, Jean Paulhan, Charles Ratton, Henri-Pierre Roché, Michel Tapié and Edmond Bomsel.

À gauche : portrait de Jean Dubuffet au masque.  
Photo Kurt Wyss / Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger.

Ci-dessous : vues de la Collection de l'Art Brut, installée dans le château de Beaulieu, à Lausanne.

Photos Marino Trotta et Caroline Smyrliadis.



The collection was repatriated in 1962 and is now located in Paris in the building that houses the headquarters of the Dubuffet Foundation, 137 rue de Sèvres. Faced with delays in the French administration, Dubuffet offered the collection of La Compagnie de l'Art Brut, consisting of over five thousand works, to the city of Lausanne. Located in the Château de Beaulieu, it was inaugurated in 1976, with an extension called “La Neuve Invention” opened in 1982. Michel Thévoz (author of the book *L'Art Brut* published by Skira, 1975) was appointed curator and remained so until 2001. He was to be succeeded by Lucienne Peiry, in office until 2011, then Sarah Lombardi.

Symposiums and conferences on art brut are held in all countries. In 2005, “Dubuffet and Art Brut” took place in Düsseldorf and at the LaM (Lille Métropole - Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art and Art Brut).

Due to renovations, the Lausanne Museum is closed from April to September 2019, but its collections are on display in Marseille at the Mucem, and in Amsterdam. ■

**Lydia Harambourg**

1- In *Art brut préféré aux arts culturels*, Flyer and all following writings, T1, Paris, 1967.



place alongside automatism, while Dr Jean Vinchon published *Art and Madness* in Paris. In 1911, in Zurich, Dr. Eugen Bleuler introduced the term “schizophrenia” to replace “early dementia”. In the same year, Augustin Lesage (1876-1954), a native of Pas-de-Calais, a minor, began painting at the age of thirty-five under the injunction of a voice he heard in the mine, which made him quit his job to devote all his time to this calling. He painted eight hundred pieces representing imaginary constructions made up of patterns of repetitive symmetry, very finely crafted with a small brush. In 1922, his works were exhibited at the City Hall of Douai.

From 1920, Dr Hans Steck showed interest in his patients’ drawings, particularly those of Aloïse, at the Cery asylum in Lausanne, while his colleague Dr Walter Morgenthaler from the Waldau clinic near Bern published a book on Adolf Wölfli.

Another emotionally disturbed figure was Abbé Fouré who, from 1884 to 1907, sculpted the rocks on the Rothéneuf coast near Saint-Malo. With his life-size characters he told the story of the first Rotheneuvians.

Psychiatry, paranormal phenomena, and primitivism intertwined with the drawings of children and of the insane, to which Paul Klee, Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Nolde, the expressionists Kiechner and Kokoschka, as well as Picasso, the surrealists Philippe Soupault and André Breton and, in the late 1940s, the artists from CoBrA, especially Asger Jorn, paid close attention. This goes to show how permeable the boundaries were between artists and instinctive inventors of underground worlds who required no artistic training. Thus, in parallel to psychological pathologies, the artistic creations of strictly self-taught artists started to emerge, such as the obsessive work of Joseph Ferdinand Cheval, known as the Postman Cheval. He began building his Ideal Palace in Hauterives (Drôme) in 1879, André Breton discovered it in 1931, and it was classified as a historical monument by André Malraux in 1969.

The history of the distribution of art brut began in November 1947 at the René Drouin Gallery, where Dubuffet opened the Foyer de l’Art Brut, directed by critic Michel Tapié. The same year saw the inauguration of the Les Mages gallery in Vence, which was renamed the Galerie Alphonse Chave in 1960 and became one of the meeting points of art brut and singular art in France – which it still is to this day.

In 1978, the Musée d’Art moderne de la ville de Paris, as part of its Arc 2 section, presented “Les singuliers de l’art”, an exhibition organized by Michel Ragon and Alain Bourbonnais. It revealed to the public a vaguely defined creative field that asserted its otherness, with inspired vagrants whose productions had never been made to be exhibited. The great irregulars of art prevail over a pantheon of incredible richness, including Gaston Chaissac (1910-1964); Aloïse Corbaz (1886-1964), a Swiss woman suffering from schizophrenia, who was interned for life in 1920 in Gimel; Émile Ratier (1894-1984) who, in his workshop in the French county of Lot, manufactured “wooden articles” with noisy cranks and mechanics, and gas-powered buses, all to fight the nervous breakdown that crept over him as he lost his sight; Joseph Crépin (1873-1948) who was introduced to



spiritism in 1930 (a practice similar to Dali’s “critical paranoid method” and Max Ernst’s practices of self-hallucination); Scottie Wilson (1888-1942), a Scottish peddler in Canada, whose drawings were made of extensive hatching; Louis Soutter (1871-1942) who painted an intimate theatre directly with his finger since he was interned against his will in an old people’s shelter in Switzerland.

This art without artists surprises, amazes, disconcerts and stupefies us. With Claude and Clovis Prévost, Michel Thévoz, Gilles Ehrmann and Bernard Lassus filming and recording “builders of the imagination”, “inhabitant-landscapers”, an anthology took shape. The journey began with the oldest one, Postman Cheval, who built palaces and magical gardens from stones that he brought back at night in his wheelbarrow, for more than twenty years. Camille Vidal (1894-1977), a cement manufacturer, retired to Agde where he made reinforced cement sculptures installed in his garden. Part of his *Jardin d’Eden* and *Arche de Noé* were partially destroyed when his house was sold. •

Alain Bourbonnais saved 54 of them, which he installed in





front of a red wall at La Fabuloserie; Fernand Chatelain (1899-1988), a former baker in the Sarthe region, created a humorous garden in his house in Fye, near Alençon, with animals made from wire mesh, stuffed with paper, cemented and painted; Irial Vets (1908-2001), a shoemaker, began at the age of sixty-six to transform a church for sale in Saint-Vincent-de-la-Rivière near Broglie (Eure). He bought it to make his dream come true: to make a new Sistine by copying Michelangelo's paintings on the ceiling and walls, and to furnish his chapel with statues of the popes. Railway worker Marcel Landreau (1922-1992), originally from Deux-Sèvres, settled in Mantes-la-Ville where he began in 1961 to furnish a bare mound in his garden. He carried tons of stones and flint with surprising shapes and built a universe surmounted by a cathedral that was destroyed in 1990 after his estate was sold.

These self-taught artists created fabulous worlds where minerals, plants and humans were skilfully blended together. In 1962, Robert Tatin (1902-1983), a house painter from Cossé-le-Vivien, and his wife Lise began to build a city, La Frénouse, near Laval (the city of Douanier Rousseau where the museum of naive art is located). Tatin created a historical summary of civilizations, inspired by his travels and the artistic currents that have established links between the West and the East. He made sculptures and buildings, arches and doors in coloured cement. At André Malraux's request, the site became a museum that was inaugurated in 1969. Silvette Galmiche is a more discreet figure among these poets working under the impetus of their inner world. Her embroidery tells the story of distant imaginary countries. Today, in his Parisian lair, Michel Nedjar mixes fabrics, shells and buttons to give life to rag dolls that he started to make in 1975. The last art brut artist Dubuffet was interested in was André Robillard.

All of them teach us to look at the world differently, by revealing

## La Fabuloserie

La Fabuloserie is dedicated to *hors normes* creations that "naively create the fantastic with the ordinary", as Caroline Bourbonnais, who passed away in 2014, put it.

This is a private museum created by Caroline and Alain Bourbonnais (1925-1988) on an estate set up to house their *hors normes* art collection which was opened to the public in Dicy (Yonne) in 1983. Alain Bourbonnais is an architect, a designer and a collector. In 1972, he opened an extraordinary art gallery, the Atelier Jacob, on rue Jacob, which he placed "under the wind of art brut". Supported by Dubuffet, whose collection had just left France for Lausanne, he organized monographic and collective exhibitions of singular artists for ten years. He maintained fruitful contact with Alphonse Chave and Claude Massé. In 1982, he moved to Burgundy where he created two spaces: the "house-museum" and the "inhabited garden" which brought together more than 1000 creations by self-taught artists. ■

Above: the inhabited garden of La Fabuloserie (1979), landscaped by Alain Bourbonnais around a piece of water; this open space is decorated with sculptures, weather vanes, and so forth.

## L'Aracine

L'Aracine is the name given to the collection of raw art founded by Madeleine Lommel in 1982 and opened to the public in 1984, in Neuilly-sur-Marne. She headed it until 2009, along with Michel Nedjar and Claire Teller, who published *L'Art Brut* (Ed. Flammarion) in 1997. L'Aracine was donated to the LaM (Museum of Modern Art Lille Métropole in Villeneuve-d'Ascq) by its founder in 1999. With 3500 works by 170 artists, it made the LaM the largest public collection of art brut. ■

Right: Carlo Zinelli (1916-1974), *Alpino stellato rosso e giallo e alpino seduto* (Red star alpine hunter and seated alpine), 1967, gouache on paper, 70 x 50 cm. Donation of L'Aracine in 1999.

© Fondazione Culturale Carlo Zinelli. Photo credit: Cécile Dubart



their own world in an inexhaustible range of emotions. What André Laude calls “art from elsewhere” has been brought into the open by informed and sharpened eyes. In 1972, Cérés Franco opened her gallery “L’Œil-de-bœuf” on rue Quincampoix, which became an anchor point for visionary and non-conformist artists. She added popular art objects, ex-votos, works of naïve art, undefinable expressions, to the works of non-conformists such as Jean Rustin, Marcel Pouget, Jacques Grinberg, Corneille, Paella Chimicos. Some are close to Surrealism, to Cobra, but have got rid of all criteria, all rules, and oppose the realistic and abstract currents which were in vogue at the time. In 1994, she moved to Lagrasse (Aude) where her rich collections of more than 1300 works, most of which she purchased and some of which have been donated by artists since 1960, are now exhibited in her “house-museums”. Thanks to her donation, in 2015, to the city of Montolieu (Aude), her collections are visible in the former cooperative that became the Cérés Franco museum. There, visitors can discover artists whom painter and art critic Yvon Taillandier calls “imaginative *imagiers*”, due to their colourfully inventive creations, charged with an intense degree of emotion, and to whom other places have also been dedicated, such as L’Aracine, La Fabuloserie, and Gérard Sendrey’s Site de la Création Franche in Bègles, near Bordeaux. With the Cérés Franco Museum, all these collections echo those of the Musée d’Art Brut de la Neuve Invention de Lausanne.

Art brut now enjoys renewed interest owing to the visibility of French and international institutions for naïve, singular and spontaneous art, medium art, Folk Art, and Outsider Art,

named after Roger Cardinal’s eponymous work (London 1972). In France in 1995, the Halle Saint-Pierre in Paris founded its cultural project with its inaugural exhibition, *Art brut et Compagnie, la face cachée de l’art contemporain* (“Art brut and co., the hidden side of contemporary art”) and, in 2010, the LaM (Lille Métropole - Musée d’art moderne, d’art contemporain et d’art brut) reopened in Villeneuve-d’Ascq, after extending a building to house the donation from Aracine made in 1999 by its founder and head Madeleine Lommel. With 3500 works and 170 artists, LaM now presents the largest public collection of art brut. The first exhibition held there in 2004 showed “The Paths of Art Brut” (*Les chemins de l’art brut*).

We are now reaching the crossroads of art brut, probably because no other definition could be more appropriate to denote an art that defies fashion and norms. It evolves, shifts, weaves aesthetic affinities with artistic movements that discover it and are inspired by it, and regenerates an art scene that opens up to these self-taught artists. The border between these realms is growing thinner as we move away from the first works of the insane inventoried in the early 19th century, which are now included in



exhibitions. In 1995, the Musée d’Art Brut de Lausanne presented works from the collection of Dr. Prinzhorn, who published *Bildneri der Geeisteskranken* in Berlin in 1922, in which the coloured works from the collection of the Heidelberg University Psychiatric Centre, of interest to Dubuffet, are reproduced. Other pictorial and graphic dialogues were initiated with the exhibitions organized at the Maison Rouge in Paris by Antoine de Galbert from 2004 to 2018, and by the Cartier Foundation with “*Histoire de voir*” in 2013. Jean Hubert Martin, for one, built bridges between all these expressions in his exhibition “*Carambolages*” at the Grand Palais in 2016. ■

1- André Breton’s article, *L’art des fous, La clé des champs*, published in 1949 at the édition La Pléiade, literally translates as “The art of the mad, The escape to freedom”.

Above: Auguste Forestier (1887-1958), *La bête du Gévaudan*, 1935-1949, wood, tire rubber, leather, metal, animal teeth, glass beads and braided fiber, 31.5 x 89 x 26 cm. Donated by L’Aracine in 1999.

© LaM - Lille Métropole Museum of modern and contemporary art and of art brut. Photo credit: Cécile Dubart

The history of “art brut” is linked to the history of clinical medicine. What a medicine, though! It locked up those it called “mad” and wrote about “madness” offhandedly, in offensive ignorance.

The word madness was used broadly, facily, for easy diagnosis devoid of any objective criteria. Those whose mental state did not correspond to the norms of an equally arbitrarily undetermined “normality” were declared “insane”. In the times of mental asylums, chains and straitjackets, these “madmen” were readily abandoned to whichever doctor would take them into custody. The concept of madness would gradually be developed later, and it was not until 1911 that Eugen Bleuler individualized schizophrenia.

Some doctors of “madmen”, however, found that some of their patients’ creations bore traits of artistic talent. As early as 1894, a psychiatrist from Turin, Cesare Lombroso, published “*Genio e Follia*”, crossing a line that should have been toed. The equally vague concepts of genius and madness had thus been tethered together, forming the source of a lasting confusion by implying that creative genius would necessarily come with some kind of madness, and conversely that madness would predispose one to genius. In the following years, mental illness specialists focused on studying the “insane” and their works.

They drew, painted, and photographed the “mad”, especially women. On Tuesday mornings at the Parisian hospital of La Salpêtrière, the star of neurology Professor Jean-Martin Charcot performed his show of listed hystericals, who, knowing their role, swooned at the master’s request.

Fortunately, other Parisian neurologists, Jules Dejerine and Paul Sollier, cleared up the field of “psychoneurosis”, but it was Charcot’s former intern, Dr Sigmund Freud, who first discovered the fundamental importance of the unconscious mind, in 1895. Although Freud did not play a role in the history of “art brut”, he did bring some clarity to it: what is “the art of the madmen”, if not the free expression of mental images that have escaped from the censorship of cultural and aesthetic codes when the “superego” is absent or deficient?

Dr Paul Meunier, a doctor at the mental asylum of Villejuif, published a first article in 1901 in *La Revue Universelle*: “L’art malade: dessins de fous” (“Art of the ill: the drawings of madmen”) and then, in 1907, the book *L’Art chez les Fous* (Le Mercure de France), under the pseudonym Marcel Réja (it is unclear whether he chose it as a way to conceal his profession or as a precaution). Although it was clumsy at times, the book had the merits of being a pioneering work, of reporting clinical observations



Above:

Marcel Réja, Doctor Paul Meunier (1873-1957), *L'Art chez les Fous*, le dessin, la prose, la poésie, 238 pages, illustrated by 26 drawings. Société du Mercure de France, 1907.

André Breton (1896-1966), *Le Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924, Éditions du Sagittaire. Conceived as a preface to *Poisson soluble*, which was published in the same year, it was followed by a *Second manifeste du surréalisme* in 1929, published by Éditions Kra.

Right: Adolf Wölfl (1864-1930), *Irren-Anstalt Band-Hain* (1910), coloured pencils on paper, 99.7 x 72 cm. Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.





# MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AT THE ORIGINS OF ART BRUT

By **François-Bernard Michel**, of the Unattached Members' section

supplemented Drawings, and of affirming that “the insane reveal the mechanisms of creation in their nakedness”.

In 1921 in Bern, Dr. W. Morgenthaler reported and commented on the pictorial work of one of his patients, Adolf Wölfli, which has since become a classic in the history of art brut (left), and held a first exhibition on “The drawings of madmen”.

Also in Bern that same year, Dr. H. Prinzhorn published his seminal book *Expressions of Madness*, which specifically mentioned the concept of **artistic creation** in his patients.

As early as 1917, Dr André Breton, a junior doctor at the hospitals of Paris, opted for a career as an asylum doctor before publishing, in 1924 in a preface, the first Manifesto of Surrealism (revised in 1929, final text in 1930), which combines the ideas of Jean Dubuffet, Philippe Soupault and Max Ernst in this definition: “Pure psychic automatism by which one proposes to express, be it verbally, in writing or in any other way, the real functioning of thought in the absence of any control exercised by reason, without any aesthetic or moral concern”.

The following year, well before his quarrels with Dr. Ferdière at the Rodez asylum (1942), Antonin Artaud denounced psychiatrists who claimed “the right to measure the mind” in an article in *La Révolution surréaliste* (1925). His call, denying them the privilege of monopolizing the art of the madmen, was never fully heard. In 1950, after the first World Congress of Psychiatry at the Salpêtrière, Professor R. Volmat published *L'Art Psycho-pathologique*: a detestable title implying that all mental illnesses (psychoses, neuroses, etc.) have a common art form. Dr. Henri Ey, for one, had wisely kept to a conference on “Mental Medicine faced with Surrealism”.

In 1945, Jean Dubuffet made a decisive clarification. After an in-depth study based on visits to psychiatric hospitals, meetings with their doctors, patients and their works, prisons and their directors, artists and publishers, he proposed a first definition of art brut: “works executed by people who are free of artistic culture, in which mimicry, unlike what happens among intellectuals, has little or no part, so that their authors draw all of it (subjects, choice of materials used, means of transposition, rhythms, ways of writing, etc.) from their own background rather than from the clichés of classical or fashionable art”.

Three years later, along with André Breton, Jean Paulhan and others, he founded the Compagnie de l'Art Brut (1948), from which he resigned a year later, and which was dissolved soon afterwards.

Today, although art brut has largely escaped the field of the “medicine of madmen”, it has not severed its ties with psychiatry but, on the contrary, strengthened them. In and out of psychiatric settings, “Art therapy” is exponentially popular. With or without art, the pictorial and manual expression of children has taken on an essential place in current school education – one that Marcel Réja could not have imagined when he put face-to-face, in chapter two of his book, the “drawings of children and savages”. ■

Top: André Brouillet (1857-1914), *Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière*, representation of neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot examining the hysterical patient Blanche Wittmann, 1887 (detail), oil painting, 290 × 430 cm. Fonds national d'art contemporain, Université Paris Descartes.



# ART BRUT ENRICHES OUR AWARENESS OF THE WORLD

Interview with **Martine Lusardy**, specialized in the study of art brut and similar art, director of the Musée de la Halle Saint-Pierre since 1994



*Nadine Eghels: How did the Halle Saint-Pierre adventure come about?*

Martine Lusardy: The Halle Saint-Pierre was born in 1986, from the conversion of an old market into an art centre to bring more cultural life to the 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, with both a naive art collection and a children's museum. This project gradually ran out of steam, and in 1994 I was commissioned to design and implement a new project for this space. After fruitful discussions with the two booksellers at the Halle Saint-Pierre, it didn't take me long to decide... I chose art brut, which fascinated us. Not only did this preserve the link with naive art, but it also gave real momentum to the Halle Saint-Pierre. Drawing the general public's attention to this concrete yet mysterious, vaguely defined

"notion": art brut. In 1995, the Halle Saint-Pierre presented *Art brut et Compagnie, la face cachée de l'art contemporain* ("Art brut and co., the hidden face of contemporary art"). For the first time, this exhibition brought together six museums into one: five major collections of second-generation art brut and the Lausanne mother collection, the core of which dates back to Dubuffet's first explorations in the late 1940s. In short, this was a review exhibition for France, where public events around art brut and art singulier were sufficiently rare for the exhibition at the Halle Saint-Pierre to draw considerable attention. Since this exhibition, which founded a new cultural project, the Halle Saint-Pierre has played a unique role in the past and present of contemporary popular art in France and abroad.

The bookshop plays a very important role at the Halle Saint-Pierre. In the beginning and for a long time, it was the only one specialized in this field. It has expanded its stock to poetry, literature, the humanities and psychoanalysis, to present books on creation in general or on subjects related to art brut. It liaises with other institutions and private collections in order to stay up to date with events in France and abroad. This bookshop has become an international reference.



*N.E.: How do you distinguish between art brut and naive art?*

M.L.: Before Dubuffet, works by self-taught artists were referred to either as naive art, or as “art of the insane” when they were produced in a psychiatric context. With the notion of art brut, Dubuffet drew new boundaries of culture and sensibility. He saw art brut as the quintessence of artistic creation, “which manifests only the function of invention, and not those, constant in cultural art, of the chameleon and the monkey”. He stressed this “pure, raw artistic operation, reinvented at every stage by their author, based only on the latter’s own impulses”. The ideal art brut creator that Dubuffet dreamed of probably never existed. But some characters can embody it, through the freedom, spontaneity and inventiveness of their works. To think about the difference between art brut and naive art, it is better to move beyond questions of labelling or rigid definitions, to consider questions of degree and polarity, which does not remove the need to define the limits of one and the other. Naive art remains within the orbit of cultural art through its techniques, processes and themes. It is an art of representation that “naive” artists treat clumsily – which is the charm of these works with one foot in culture and the other in savagery. Art brut is completely at odds with cultural art, particularly its purposes. Naive art has a popular tradition, it has its schools – the Haitians, the Senegalese, the Yugoslavs –, whereas art brut is motherless, invented from scratch with very personal procedures, and will never have a tradition. Séraphine de Senlis, Anselme Boix-Vives and even Scottie Wilson were once categorized as naive art and are now considered to be closer to art brut since Dubuffet changed our perspective.

*N.E.: Is art brut a concept?*

M.L.: “Art brut” does not have the objectivity and stability of a concept. It is a discourse, a subversive, revolutionary way of thinking: that of Dubuffet. As Michel Thévoz points out, “art brut ultimately does not define anything: it denotes that which cannot be bound by a definition. It would thus be tempting to see it as the beginning of a liberation”. That is why it is efficient and always current. Whether one wants to criticize Dubuffet, reduce art brut to a collection, to the idealistic project of an anti-conventional painter, or deny the validity of the notion of art brut, art brut is constantly raising questions.

*N.E.: Why?*

M.L.: By associating notions such as creation, art, culture, insanity and marginality, art brut critically examines humans’ relationship with culture and society. We can read and reread *Asphyxiating culture*, a book published by Jean-Jacques Pauvert in 1968. In it, Dubuffet states his position: “The word culture is used with two different meanings, sometimes to denote knowledge of works of the past... and sometimes referring more generally to the activity of thought and art creation. This ambiguity of the word is used to persuade the public that knowledge of works of the past and the creative activity of thought are one and the same”. Intellectual power – an ally of social power – wields a kind of violence by appropriating the values of creativity and freedom. Dubuffet denounces the conditioning and deference to culture from which we cannot totally free ourselves. Art brut is Dubuffet’s project to free himself of it. As he puts it, it is “the desire to free oneself from it or, at the very least, to distance oneself from it, the desire to explore, to experiment, to adopt vehicles other than that which culture has imposed on us (I hereby mean another outlook on the world, another interpretation thereof, another vocabulary and, consequently, another form of articulation of this vocabulary, therefore another way of thinking). This desire exists: it is found in some people – to differing degrees...”

Art brut authors are people for whom the notion of artist is meaningless. They have a completely different relationship to art from that of professional artists – which is why we mostly use the terms authors or creators. They are totally indifferent to the cultural norms of the society in which they live, to the way their works may be judged, and to their works’ market value or their fate. It is therefore problematic to exhibit these works that were not intended to be shown, and even more so to sell them!

*N.E.: Do we have the right to do so?*

M.L.: Yes, this is a real question. Dubuffet named works that until then had no artistic existence. By naming them, he gave them an anti-cultural value; he transformed not only their status, but also the way they were perceived. Paradoxically, he freed them and at the same time exposed them to the commercial threat. He helped preserve them through their future institutionalization, but threatened them ideologically. Many art brut works have been saved from destruction, others have been bought and some gifted, therefore given away by their authors. How is the social contract of reciprocity of giving and the moral contract of trust respected when the works are then sold? No law prohibits this except for moral law itself, that is, ethics. 🖌️





*N.E.: What values does art brut challenge?*

M.L.: Art brut is the art of the common people. In other words, people of the community, as opposed to the scholarly, the elite. Dubuffet critiques the aesthetic values of beauty, the social values of the normative, the ethical values of normality, and the anthropological values of culture. He does not oppose the ugly, the subversive, insanity or nature to these values, but proposes art brut. Dubuffet's great strength is that he refuted the dualist frame of mind. He made the nature/culture or natural art/cultural art opposition redundant and invented a third term: art brut. This art is therefore invented in opposition to the myth of origins, in opposition to the history of art. Art brut is a collection of singularities, it is not a movement, nor a moment in the history of art. The art originates in each work.

*N.E.: So would this mean that culture is detrimental to creation?*

M.L.: I wouldn't frame it like that. I would side with Dubuffet for whom there must be insanity at the source of all creation, thus challenging the primacy of dominant reason. We have to accept the idea of an insanity specific to the human species, which is a source of innovation and change if we are able to manage it. An insanity that is not pathological but becomes so as soon as one seeks to repress it. Culture becomes asphyxiating when it forces you to surrender your personal insanity, forces you to align yourself with social norms and injunctions.

*N.E.: Where is art brut at today?*

M.L.: In 25 years, the art brut landscape has changed considerably. It no longer belongs to just a handful of enthusiasts and is no longer the preserve of initiates. It has been introduced in museums, universities, and the media. The art market and its parameters have considerably broadened Dubuffet's original vision. Of course, we can immediately point out the threats raised by putting in the spotlight works whose authors are so insensitive to collective values and so unconcerned with public opinion. Speculation on the art market and intellectual opportunism could well strip art brut of its particularity. But we need much deeper reflection on what has been happening in recent decades. The artistic and cultural context is no longer what it was at the time of Dubuffet's first explorations; the great inspired insane, the mystics and the marginalized loners probably no longer exist and above all are no longer considered as unsurpassable models. We have ceased to think that art brut is untouchable, frozen in time. We now understand art brut or outsider art as a living, open and critical way of thinking, even though it is important not to lose sight of the question of the particularity of art brut, and even if the catch-all term outsider art is problematic.



*N.E.: And at the Halle Saint-Pierre specifically?*

M.L.: We don't have a collection, I didn't want one because I didn't see the point in starting an institutional collection in 1994. You can't do better than the Collection de l'Art Brut de Lausanne, the one Dubuffet initiated in 1945, which is historical and continues to explore and enrich its collection. There are other public and private collections working to explore and preserve this "brut" heritage. With our temporary exhibitions, we opted for an approach that questions the historical, cultural and social particularity of art brut and art singulier. There have been thematic exhibitions such as "spiritualist, medium and visionary art", monographs, presentations of collections and most importantly research on and studies of singular forms of creation in other countries, mainly in non-European and non-Western cultures. The aim today is not to find "culture-free" creators – we are the fruit of a culture – but rather to find out how singular, highly individual paths can emerge in all cultures, whatever they may be. For example, I approach Bill Traylor differently now. He is not only the emblem of US Black Folk Art, but also an artist who, within African-American culture, with his own experience of slavery, conveys a totally personal, inventive and novel vision of the world. I am interested in the fact that mental disability, with its expressive dysfunction and its disruption of cultural codes, can also enrich the heritage of art brut. Art brut in Japan, which was showcased in two exhibitions at Halle Saint-Pierre, is evidence of the surprising richness and diversity of this field.





Roger Ballen, *Addict*, 2014, and *Discussion*, 2018, works to be presented at the exhibition "Le monde selon Roger Ballen" at the Musée de la Halle Saint-Pierre, from 7 September 2019 to 31 July 2020.

*N.E.: Is there any evolution in the work of these artists?*

M.L.: Yes, of course. Most of them are self-taught and their works often emerge in confinement. There is no emulation, and therefore evolution is not the product of an external influence but the result of internal progressions, regressions or upheavals.

*N.E.: What is the relationship between art brut and contemporary art?*

M.L.: Art brut is no longer a kind of parallel avant-garde, marginal and excluded from the regular circuits of contemporary art. That is why, in my opinion, the controversy surrounding its inclusion in contemporary art exhibitions is futile. But this crossover can only materialize at the cost of certain compartmentalizations. There is as much distance between one of Heinrich Anton Müller's machines and a meta-mechanical sculpture by Jean Tinguely, or between an assemblage by Bispo do Rosario and a ready-made by Duchamp, as there is between an African mask and *Les Femelles d'Avignon*. This means that these aesthetic comparisons cannot overlook the psychological and social frameworks that were once used to study art brut creators. Creation, for art brut authors, is an existential and highly private practice; it is a new approach to making the world intelligible. While art brut and contemporary art both transgress the boundaries of art, contemporary art intentionally produces provocation and malaise, whereas art brut produces objects as expressions of an individual interiority. Art brut and its derivatives are not opposed to contemporary art; they even communicate with it, but in the way that radically opposed planes communicate. I like this passage by Régis Debray in *Vie et mort de l'image*: "The contemporary mind posits that the 'eye

exists in the wild' but, at the same time, that it knows how to decipher a raw image as a fragment of a discourse on the last ends. [...] Beneath its avowed project, "art equals life", hides this contradictory and outrageous ambition: to combine the prestige of sensation and that of language, the return to texture and textual exegesis. Our old babies – since every artist is a child – dream of combining the emotion of the primal cry with the conceptual interpretation of their cry."

*N.E.: Is it necessary to choose between cultural art and art brut?*

M.L.: Why choose? It is better to adopt a pluralist perspective and consider that there is on the one hand the cultural path, which draws its richness from a complex social dialectic. Professional artists inherit a cultural heritage, they learn codes and standards that they adopt, reject or subvert, but they are confronted with them. They aspire to communicate and to meet the public's expectations and the judgment of legitimizing bodies, which are taken into account in the parameters of their creation. On the other hand, there is the asocial expression known as "brute", where culture and communication have little or no role to play. These are two distinct paths that lead to distinct results as well, with as always a few paths that cut across, marking the so-called "Neuve Invention" field. The choice is elsewhere. It is to refuse the fake art brut which, like naive airport art, is inauthentic, manufactured to obey a commercial rationale, just like a certain avant-garde kitsch promoted by official and financial authorities. My proposition would therefore be art brut or cultural art, as long as they stay away from a hegemonic, industrial, commercial culture, built with the aim of entertaining the world. ■



# THE DAZZLED GAZES OF FORGOTTEN ARTISTS

By **Paul Duchein**, artist and collector, passionate about Surrealism and popular art, organizer of the “Rencontres d’Art” at the Ingres Museum in Montauban

*“We’re all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”*

Oscar Wilde

**T**here are beings inhabited by a mad and irrepressible desire, that of expressing a world, their world, free of earthly contingencies.

Far from the lowly concerns of everyday life, these individuals who have never thought of themselves as artists transport us into their world, animated by a mysterious energy.

Some feel guided, answering secret calls, others interact with characters who feed their strange and seemingly irrational visions, and yet others transport us into landscapes magnified by a singular gaze.

Are they psychics, spiritualists, outsiders? They fit no box, but for the sake of convenience, we could situate them on the fringes of art brut. Their field of inquiry is infinite; it leads these seers to explore a world that only they can decipher, translate and express.

Seraphine invented flowers by imploring the Lord; Augustin Lesage heard a voice at the bottom of the mine saying “You will be a painter”; Modrego felt “catapulted onto the wall”; Rifi claimed his head was “full of gardens”; Madge Gill communicated with a spirit called Myrninerest; Labelle was inspired by planet Mars; and so on. We could talk endlessly about these wonderful and often painful worlds. They bring us face-to-face with strange creators, far from an art market fuelled by financial speculation.

To be sure, some of them enjoy relative and posthumous fame, like Gaston Chaissac, Scottie Wilson, Crepin and Augustin Lesage, first defended by Dubuffet and by the Surrealists, but many are those who sleep forgotten. We have selected five among many others. ■

## Jules Godi (1901-1986)

Jules Godi, of Italian origin, was a mason. The Malpasset dam disaster, in 1959 in the Var, engulfed his whole family and one can only imagine that this tragedy influenced his fate, for in addition to his professional activity, he was also a dowser.

Using his pendulum, this singular creator would set landmarks on the white surface, a kind of triangulation of space, in some cases using the stars as markers. His works have been exhibited at the Galerie Chave in Venice.

Top left: *Untitled*, painting, oil on cardboard, 46 x 55 cm, 1976.

## Fernand Michel (1913-1999)

Fernand Michel was born in 1913 in the Vosges. He started working in a pottery factory at the very young age of 12. He then learned the bookbinder’s trade and moved to Montpellier where he met poets such as René Char and Jean Paulhan.

In 1962, fascinated by an oxidized metal plate found near the beach in Palavas, he began to work with zinc, first creating small landscapes before composing rather feminine figures, often erotic. He also drew inspiration from the nuns of the convent near his workshop.

His first exhibition was held in 1964 at the Galerie Chave; many others would follow. He died in 1999. His studio, which has been integrated into a museum of art singulier, will be inaugurated in Montpellier, thus ensuring the long-term survival of his work.

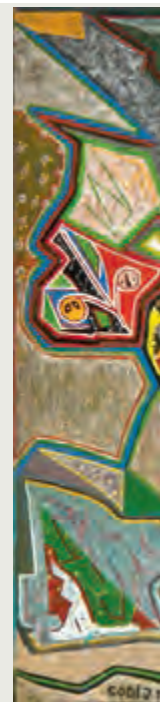
Bottom left: *Marie-Madeleine* and *Sœur Angélique*, studded zinc, 180 x 50 cm. Collection from the Musée d’Art Brut et Singulier, Montpellier (ADABS).

## Marcelo Modrego (1912-1997)

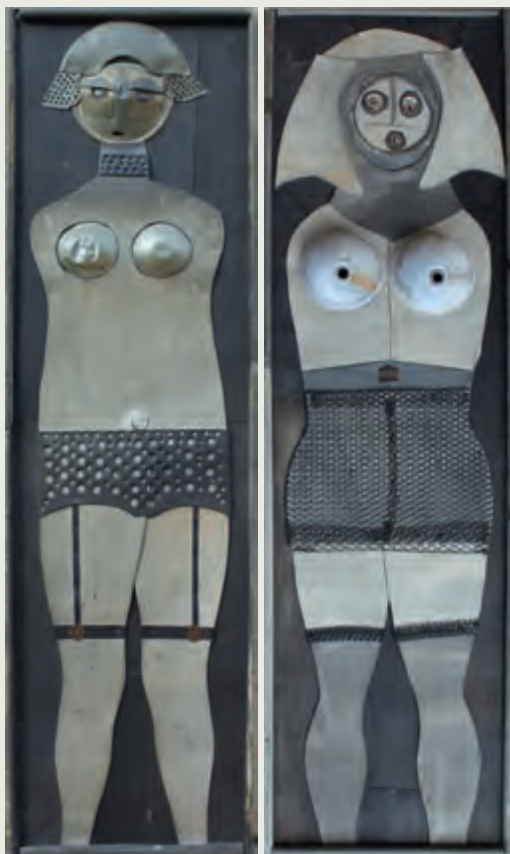
Marcelo Modrego, born in a village in Aragon, into a family of nine children, worked in various professions. After going into exile and being interned in several camps in the south of France, he settled in Montauban. When his wife died, he felt “propelled onto the walls”, as he himself put it. He decorated his small apartment and then instinctively painted brightly coloured paintings.

His first exhibition was held in the hall of the newspaper *La Dépêche du Midi* in 1971; he then exhibited in Bordeaux and Toulouse, and at the Galerie Chave in Venice. For the centenary of his birth, Modrego’s works were presented in the hall of the Conseil Général in Montauban.

Top right: “Les homes qui vien du ciel” (sic), oil on canvas, 58 x 73 cm.







#### Abdelkader Rifi (1920-2005)

Abdelkader Rifi worked as a mason at a very young age. Drawing and painting were however his daily concern and at dawn, before leaving for his ten hours of daily work, he felt compelled to paint. He thus created a heavenly world. On a small plot of land in Gagny, in the suburbs of Paris, this North African craftsman built a house decorated in the style of his paintings, inside and out. Following his retirement in 1975, he liked to say: "I have a head full of gardens". His works are kept at the LaM (Lille Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, Contemporary Art and Art Brut). I dedicated an article to him in the magazine *Création Franche* in April 2014.

Centre right: *Untitled*, oil on canvas, 35 x 55 cm.

#### Anna Zemánková (1908-1986)

Anna Zemánková, the daughter of a hairdresser, was born in Moravia and first worked as a dental technician. After her marriage she moved to Prague, in 1948. During a period of severe depression, she found refuge in painting, convinced she could "capture magnetic forces that elude representation", and she invented flowers. Following a serious illness, both her legs were amputated, but she kept on drawing until her dying day. In 2013, the Christian Berst Gallery in Paris presented a tribute to Anna Zemánková titled "La floraison fertile".

Bottom right: *Imaginary flower*, ink and watercolour on paper, 63 x 87 cm.





# CHOMO, “BUILDER OF THE IMAGINARY”

By **Clovis Prévost**, filmmaker, photographer and author

Most of Clovis Prévost’s work as a filmmaker and author focuses on domains, sanctuaries, monuments and gardens that are the work of exceptional artists. With his wife Claude, they dedicated a book and a TV series of eight films to them, entitled *Les Bâtisseurs de l’Imaginaire* (“builders of the imaginary”)<sup>1</sup>.

One of these artists, Roger Chomeaux (known as Chomo), was a fascinating character who spent the end of his life in the middle of a forest where he created obsessive imagery, both mystical and epic, with paintings-sculptures-buildings that challenged the visitor-spectator and did not leave them unscathed. In the late 1980s, Clovis Prévost directed *Le Débarquement Spirituel – Images de Lumière*, a film entirely conceived by Chomo, who authored the staging, the “images of light” and the poems, as well as the sculptures, paintings and cosmic music.

## Chomo’s *Village d’Art Préludien*, in Aschères-la-Forêt (77)

Chomo (1907-1999), a man of the earth, spent the end of his life in the midst of the great pines of the Fontainebleau forest: “30,000 works await your gaze...”. Chomo would invite visitors to intuitively rediscover and meet, with him, the spirit and spell of the mythical images that haunted his domain. A “lyrical inflation” concentrated in a confined space. These images with cosmic vitalist references punctuated and articulated the initiatory scenario of the expanse and the journey.

They constituted an obsessive “imagery” of mysticism and the great poetic play of an “epic” imaginary with stars, eyes, crosses, hands, and faces.

Everywhere paintings-sculptures-landscapes of multiplied eyes, black holes, eye rings and spiral eyes pierced the space: the constant presence of the wizard’s eye, fascinating and captivating, a window of the world, able to pierce through the wall, intensifying the luminous effect of its hypnotic function.

Of his legal name, Roger Chomeaux remembered only the echo of the sounds, the initial value of the assonances, the evocative power of the vowels. He stripped himself to the core of the name, to the root, and signed three “O’s” crossed by the arrow of speech: an interpellation, an immediate new meaning, his thought-light in movement. A bare, Roger-des-Aurores-Chomo, O O O. The effigy of the three circles related to cycles of terrestrial evolution, hidden perfections. Magic circles of attachment to the invisible and defence lines. This was Chomo’s way of saying and repeating his essential referent: the original matrix, the dark space from which all life-light emerges, the seed-egg-chaos, the infinite void, the ring-zero. The arrow indicated a crossing of constraints and opposites, dissenting speech, and the will to achieve one’s profound identity: *the madman is at the end of the arrow*. He hereby referred to himself in his ultimate and absolute difference. The difference is innate; a passage into another world of individuation, true eternity.

To touch another planet on earth.

1) *Les Bâtisseurs de l’Imaginaire*, 2016, 417 pages, Éditions Klincksieck.

Above: Chomo and, in the background, his “Church of the Poor”. Picture by Clovis Prévost





Excerpt from Chomo's notes about the filming of *Chomo, le Débarquement Spirituel – Images de Lumière* (1991) ("Chomo, the Spiritual Landing – Images of Light")

“Spiritual landing” is about 600 boats reaching another planet more advanced than ours...

We have already shot half of the film, that is, the Earth part with its benefits and struggles to reach the end of the cycle. At the moment we're shooting the second part, the actual landing on the other planet and its redemption...

... I do the decoration, the staging, I compose the music. We shoot exclusively at night because night time is more mysterious for us than day time. In fact, when the day breaks after a night of shooting, we find it extremely bland...

... For the first time, cinematographically speaking, Chomo paints sets and moving scenes with flashes of colour on my sculptures... I paint with lights. We also use superimposition a lot, because for me superimposition is the stuff of dreams. And then, you see, a real director is someone who does sculpture, music, painting, poetry... It is a whole...

Poem for the film: "Tonight... I let myself drift in the language of ordinary words me Chomo forbidden slave of mannequins of the arts of museums of sanctuaries of all sorts to hell with you for I have nothing to lose I will burn the images inspired by the cosmic forces that govern me even if it pisses you off I will even burn my bullshit of having believed in beauty I will not sell my soul for a piece of flopped pudding like those who claim to govern us even if it kills me even if fire must sing in me in the satanic path of the spell to erase all thoughts of an imaginary sin and listen to the sound spasms that consume. See the light butterflies of ashes rising from their own nature. Pray! Yes, after recovering my human condition, you see me on my knees before my lost images."

Chomo. *Pour un langage parallèle* (12 May 1988)

Above: Chomo and his masks. Picture by Clovis Prévost

In the centre and below: images from *Le Débarquement Spirituel – Images de Lumière*, film, 40 minutes, directed by Clovis Prévost (1991), staged, images of light, paintings, cosmic music, poems by Chomo. Camera and production by Clovis Prévost, with the collaboration of Jean-Pierre Nadau (1987-1990). Clovis Prévost Productions.





Eugène von Bruenchenhein, born in 1910, married Evline Kalke in 1943 and renamed her Marie. He photographed her until his death in 1983. Hundreds of portraits in sets and in many costumes, as well as nude and in erotic poses.

28 | Above: *Untitled (Marie)*, 1945, coloured silver print, 23.4 x 21.6 cm. Right: *Untitled (Marie)*, 1945, silver print, 17.8 x 17.7 cm.

Courtesy of the Christian Berst gallery.

# CAN WE SPEAK OF “PHOTOGRAPHIE BRUTE”?

By **Bernard Perrine**, correspondent for the Photography section

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French psychiatrists began to reveal and describe interest in the “creations” of the insane. In 1872, Ambroise Tardieu wrote in no uncertain terms: “I am not afraid to say that there is often interest in examining the drawings and paintings made by the insane...”<sup>1</sup>.

At the turn of the century, these graphic and pictorial “creations” had no institutional or commercial value. Only doctors and specialists saw semiological value in such productions, which could be used in an attempt to characterize mental pathologies, to therapeutic ends. When Dr Auguste Marie organized a museum and exhibitions within the Villejuif asylum, his aim was to bring the insane closer to “normal” people and “facilitate a perhaps more effective fight against the 1838 law which ostracize[d] them”. Although the word “art” did feature cautiously in these initiatives, psychiatrist Paul Meunier, better known as Marcel Réja, used it in his first book *L’art malade : dessins de fous*, yet without acknowledging any so-called “artistic” value, and describing the pieces as “crude”.

As Marc Décimo<sup>3</sup> points out, this “openness nevertheless resonated among avant-garde artists and writers”. This was indeed a time when they were in search of new forms: African and Oceanian art, arts that did not yet have the name of “first arts”... children’s art and the “art of the insane”.

The creative drive within the psychiatric hospital of Saint-Alban (Lozère, France), encouraged DR Maxime Buisson from 1914, became emblematic of “art of the insane”. In the 1920s, the work and publications of Walter Morgenthaler on Adolf Wölfl and those of Hans Prinzhorn, defended by André Breton, did not prevent Jean Dubuffet from broadening the concept he referred to in 1945 as “art brut”, which he described in 1949 in the preface to the catalogue *L’art brut préféré aux arts culturels*<sup>4</sup>: “I hereby refer to the works produced by any person free of artistic culture... little informed and deliberately distancing themselves therefrom... These works reveal the pure, raw artistic operation, reinvented at every stage by their author, based only on the latter’s own impulses. Art, therefore, which manifests only the function of invention, and not those constant in cultural art, of the chameleon and the monkey”.

This “art [which] does not fit into the mould” has the merit of synthesizing previously disparate artistic expressions: “art of the insane”, the “mediumistic art” of the surrealists, “psychopathological art” and generally speaking all obsessive and marginal artistic productions. But while Jean Dubuffet’s “art brut” was above all iconoclastic with regard to the canons of

institutional art, by calling it “art” he ghettoized all of this raw imagery. Reacting against the dominant abstraction, he gave it access to the history of art and the art market.

As the exhibitions at the Rencontres d’Arles and the Rencontres de Lausanne showed, Jean Dubuffet used photography extensively as a referencing tool<sup>5</sup> from the beginning of his artistic activity in the 1940s, and as a creative tool in the mid-1960s<sup>6</sup>; yet there are no photographs in his art brut collection. However, while he did not include any photography, he did not exclude it either. His *Notes pour les fins lettrés* (1945) feature a sub-note in which he claims to be “more inventive than the Kodak”, something which has often been interpreted as a rejection of mechanical processes without any authentic creative “drive”.

With his exhibition of *Life as Panoramic* by the American Albert Moser in the spring of 2012, gallery owner Christian Berst clearly raised the question<sup>7</sup>. According to André Rouillé, “by introducing into the ‘art brut’ realm a piece atypically based on photography, it challenges the widespread idea that nothing artificial, nothing cultural and of course nothing mechanical should interfere in the works of so-called “artistes bruts”. This may therefore be a photographic version of “art brut”, and a challenge to its supposed “manual essence”. 🐒

1- Ambroise Tardieu, *Étude médico-légale sur la folie*, Paris, J.-B. Baillière et fils, 1872, p. 610.

2- Marcel Réja, *L’art chez les Fous, le dessin, la prose, la poésie*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1907, p. 19.

3- Marc Décimo, “De l’art des fous à l’Art brut et ses extensions: une histoire de la réception”, *Critique d’art* [online], no. 48, spring/summer 2017, uploaded on 15 May 2018.

4- Jean Dubuffet, *L’art brut préféré aux arts culturels*, Paris, Galerie René Drouin, 1949, 52 pages.

5- Jean Dubuffet, *L’outil photographique*, exhibition co-produced by the Dubuffet foundation, the Musée de l’Élysée and the Rencontres d’Arles, with the participation of the Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne, France. 2017 Photosynthèses catalogue.

6- His exhibition “Edifices”, in 1968, shows photomontages integrating his architectural creations in public space, while from the 1970s onwards, his exhibitions were often accompanied by multi-screen projections.

7- “Photographie et art brut, sortir des clichés” (*Photography and art brut, escaping clichés*), debate organized in 2012 alongside Albert Moser’s exhibition at the Christian Berst gallery, with Marc Lenot, André Rouillé and Christian Caujolle.



The photograph was developed and printed by a local photographer. The work, however, obsessively panoramic and steeped in secrecy, meets the criteria of mental otherness. Moser cut his prints and assembled them with adhesives. Perhaps it was a “cathartic exercise”, as Philipp March Jones suggests, materializing a projection of mental images onto the world, generated after his years of war in Japan from 1946 to 1948. In November 2013, the same Christian Berst showed for the first time in France the work of the American artist Eugène von Bruenchenhein, *American Beauty*. Bruenchenhein, born in 1910, married Evline Kalke in 1943, renamed her Marie and photographed her until his death in 1983. He thus produced hundreds of portraits in sets and in many costumes, as well as nude and in erotic poses. His work, discovered after his death, was revealed in 2004-2005 during the exhibition “Create and be recognized, Photography on the edge”. Directed by John Turner and Deborah Klochko and presented at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco in 2004, this exhibition brought together 17 “artists” from “outsider photography” such as Adolf Wölfl and Howard Finster, among others. These “artists” used photographic prints, printed photographs, and cut-out or pasted documents<sup>8</sup>. It was also the first event devoted to what could be called “photographie brute”, raising questions about the concept of art brut and prompting debate around the evolution of its limits.

Zdenek Kosek, covering images from erotic magazines with esoteric formulas “to ward off the threats of history”, along with Horst Ademeit, obsessively covering polaroids with writing and numbers, also raised the question of the existence of “photographie brute”. Likewise, the drawings, signs and writing on prints of José Manuel Egea, fascinated by “the werewolf”<sup>9</sup>, exorcize this “monstrous double” allegedly lying dormant in most humans.

In 2015 Bruno Dubreuil contemplated (in the web magazine OAI 13), with regard to the Miroslav Tichy case, whether photography could be an art brut: could we speak of a “photographie brute”? Tichy knew the mysteries of photography and art, but he would fix up his cameras with strings and adhesives, tinker with his enlarger, deliberately spoil his prints with stains, scratches, folds, etc. His obsession with voyeurism was detached from the art world and, as Marc Lenot<sup>10</sup> pointed out in 2009 in *Miroslav Tichy's Invention*, the Czech artist, revealed by psychiatrist Roman Buxbaum, “first appeared unsuccessfully in the world of art brut, before later being accepted and gaining legitimacy in the contemporary art circle”.



Be it the work of Eugène Atget, revealed by Bérénice Abbott, that of Jacques-Henri Lartigue, revealed by Richard Avedon, that of Vivian Maier, promoted largely by the gallery owner Howard Greenberg, or yet that of the Swiss policeman Arnold Odermatt, we could mention many works revealed at the end of these “artists” life or after their death. So why is the photography of the autistic man Maier not considered as “photographie brute”? Too professional, not trashy enough, wrote Bruno Dubreuil. Are the works of Roger Ballen or Joel-Peter Witkin too elaborate? For the last 60 years, the latter has certainly remained faithful to his original ideas: “to create photographs that show the beauty of marginalized people by placing them in paintings that are references in the world of art... In his eyes, all people are beautiful...”. Recently, just before his 80th birthday, he revealed to Catherine Edelman<sup>11</sup> that he suffers from dementia and how this has affected his creative process and his life... That is why he believes in the supremacy of imagination over reason. For Roger Ballen, *Asylum of the Birds* (2014) is a place where humanity and animality meet, while *The Theatre of Apparitions*

8. *Create and Be Recognised: Photography on the Edge*, exhibition catalogue, Chronicle Books, September 2004, 156 pages.

9. *José Manuel Egea, lycanthropos #2*, bilingual catalogue, 212 pages. Foreword by Christian Berst, texts by Graciela Garcia and Bruno Dubreuil. Édition Christian Berst art brut, Paris, 2019.

10. Marc Lenot, *L'invention de Miroslav Tichy*, *Études photographiques* no. 23, May 2009.

11. At the age of six, Witkin witnessed a car accident that would influence his creative process: a young girl's severed head rolled at his feet.

Opposite: José Manuel Egea, *Untitled*, 2019, acrylic marker on photographic print, 28.2 x 20.5 cm. Courtesy of the Christian Berst gallery.

Bottom: Alexander Lobanov, circa 1960. Bruno Decharme collection, present in the Photo/Brut exhibition, as part of the 2019 Rencontres d'Arles, in collaboration with abcd and the American Folk Art Museum, New York.



reaches the depths of his “psyche” and reflects the limits of its mental space, where reality becomes imaginary: “fiction, where the conscious merges with the subconscious, dreams become real and reality becomes like a dream. In it, he explores primordial chaos, which he interprets as humans’ natural state, marked by its inevitable goal: death and nothingness”<sup>12</sup>.

As it is envisaged by critics and institutions, so-called “photographie brute” therefore belongs to a category with specific criteria. Neither a vernacular, an intellectual creation by institutional actors in need of demarcation, nor amateur, linked to a memory that has become ephemerizable: it lies outside artistic currents and advanced technical practices, and must be guided by obsessions of private origin. This necessarily excludes works such as those of Pierre Molinier or Claude Cahun.

It should however include *Zorro*, a series of 120 prints and glass plates found in a box by Philippe et Marion<sup>13</sup>. They show a man with a whip and an aviator helmet dressing up, surrounded by accessories: a Zorro poster, an aircraft propeller, leather thigh-high boots, a turban, and so on. Over the years, the man made himself scarce and made way to still lifes in colour featuring whips and thigh-high boots. Who is he, what has he become?

The same issues and questions apply to the *Photo/Brut* collection compiled by Bruno Decharme & Compagnie<sup>14</sup>. With the support of abcd (art brut connaissance & diffusion), a research centre on art brut, he collated over 300 photographs by 45 artists around four main themes: “Private matters”, “Anonymous”, “Reformatting the world” and “Performing, or another I”.

There is no more “brute” photography than there is “brute” painting or sculpture; these categories belong to the specialized world of art and its market. Christian Berst<sup>15</sup> explains that, “as it stands, art brut therefore encompasses works produced off the beaten track by characters living in mental or social otherness and seeking – often secretly, most of the time for their own use – to materialize their individual mythology. And the fact that we are able to recognize and love these productions is simply a sign that they border on the universal.” ■

12. Jasna Jernejsek, Galerija Fotografija 2019.

13. Philippe et Marion, *Lumière des roses* gallery in Montreuil, 2018 catalogue, 70 pages with a text by François Cheval.

14. *Photo/Brut* collection by Bruno Decharme & compagnie, published by Flammarion and abcd in parallel with the exhibition, 322 pages, format 28 x 24 cm, 400 prints. Interview with the collector Bruno Decharme by Paula Aisemberg, texts by Sam Stourdé and by Michel Thévoz. An essay on the four themes: “Private matters” by Brian Wallis, “Reformatting the world” by Camille Paulhan, “Performing, or another I” by Valérie Rousseau, “Warding off reality” by Barbara Safarova. 53 records.

15. *BeauxArts Magazine*, “Qu’est-ce que l’art brut ? On a posé la question à 3 spécialistes” by Marie-Charlotte Burat, 24 September 2015.



# BUILDING BRIDGES

Interview with **Christian Berst**, curator, collector and gallery owner specialized in art brut

*Nadine Eghels: How did you come to open a gallery dedicated to art brut?*

Christian Berst: I was working in publishing and I was totally foreign to the art world. It all started when I discovered the artist Wölfli. In 1992, I came across a book about him in a bookstore and it was a shock. I looked for more information about him but I couldn't find anything, and yet he was the emblematic figure of early 20<sup>th</sup> century art brut. When I reread Dubuffet, I was surprised to see that his definition of it, in my mind, left no room for work such as that of Wölfli. This was the Imaginaire Gallimard edition, so there were no illustrations; one had to imagine the works discussed based on the way Dubuffet defined art brut. The approach deliberately depicted something closer to popular art, naïve and self-taught, and works referring more to these fields, which reflected Dubuffet's desire to firmly oppose art brut and art that he described as cultural art.

*N.D.: How do you situate yourself in relation to Dubuffet?*

C.B.: To his credit, he put a name to an art field that had until then been overlooked, or even reduced to what was called the art of the insane in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike him, I build bridges, not walls. Though I emphasize the particularity of this field, I invite the art world to engage with it and to conceive it... but also to do away with a number of dogmas, restrictions and taboos. In this sense I have considerably freed myself from Dubuffet's position; mine is deliberately more open... Some would say that I have claimed my right to be a part of the conversation.

*N. E.: By opening a gallery?*

C.B.: I had the idea of doing something related to art brut but I didn't know how. Coming from the publishing world, I first considered publishing a collection that would give readers something to think about and to look at. I got the opportunity to work in offices in Bastille which lent itself to which lent itself to exhibiting artwork ... and that's where I got the momentum. Hence the next step: getting a space where I could organize exhibitions, host artists, offer a selection of books, etc., to be at the heart of the art brut matrix, and thus was born this gallery – that is indeed what we must call it!

*N.D.: How does a gallery specialized in art brut operate differently to another gallery, with artists who do not create to exhibit, let alone to sell?*

C.B.: For them, the relationship with the market is indeed totally incongruous, irrelevant. There were several difficulties. The first was to convince contemporary art collectors of the relevance of the project, by encouraging them to overcome a number of prejudices they may have had. These often related to the almost exclusively figurative and narrative iconography of art brut that had prevailed over time.

*N.E.: They believed that we were still stuck on the art of the insane and the marginalized...*

C.B.: It wasn't so much the social origin or the place of the creation that was the problem, but rather the formal spectrum to which it could be confined. Abstraction, for example, was absent, as were more ascetic or conceptual works. Anything with a formal grammar similar to that of contemporary art was rejected by proponents of a conservative, even reactionary, line of art brut. The art world had stopped there. The difficulty was getting it to reconsider and open it up, without taboos, to the full spectrum of art brut, ranging from works that could be confined to naïve or popular art, to more demanding productions, with greater interiority.

*N.D.: Through exhibitions?*

C.B.: I have already held an exhibition dedicated to "Abstraction in art brut". It upset many people because it's a little-known dimension of art brut, and one which Dubuffet tended to sweep under the rug. Many things had been side-lined, and potential amateurs had left it at that. So I needed to get them to reconsider their position. It was complicated but interesting! The same went for the authors who wrote for my catalogues. These were authors who, for the most part, had never written about art brut: writers, historians or art critics specialized in modern or contemporary art, who discovered art brut in a way they had not imagined – and with their fresh perspectives, they also enriched my own perception.

Right: Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930), *Untitled*, 1920, graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 28.8 x 22 cm. This work once belonged to André Breton.

Below: Francis Palanc (1928-2015), *Essai de texte rendu géométrique - une géométrie poétique - une géométrie animée*, circa 1955, mixed technique on wood, 81 x 54 cm.

Courtesy of Christian Berst Art Brut.



*N.E.: It's the origin of the work that is different.*

*C.B.:* Of course, it's often an expression of mental or social otherness. But that's not to say we can't judge the work on its own merits, and point out formal – or informal – connections with the art of the time.

*N.D.:* But art brut artists are different from professional artists. How do you approach them? How do they react when their work is exhibited? Do they come to the opening?

*C.B.:* It depends... Take José Manuel Egea, for example, whose work I'm currently exhibiting. Three years ago I held the first monographic exhibition dedicated to him. I invited him and his mum. He left his institution for the opening. Today I have no way of telling you whether he liked the experience, whether he found it interesting; I'm not sure at all! He remains in a deep state of otherness and all of this may seem totally absurd to him. At the opening, I gave him the catalogue. He sat down and started flicking through it. Suddenly, he felt that one of the

drawings had to be continued or completed, he took a pen and started to draw in the book, then he ripped out the page and put it in his pocket. He was not interested in the exhibition at all, he didn't look at it.

*N.E.:* In fact, creation isn't intended for others... but for some sort of "great other"?

*C.B.:* There are two key questions here, that of the addressee – assumed or not –, and that of the work's reception. One day we discover someone's work, and we decree that it's art... It's not he who said it, it is we who state it, as has been done with primal arts works. 🖊️





*N.D.: How did you find this artist?*

C.B.: It's been 25 years since I started taking an interest in art brut, so I have networks. I've worked with Graciela Garcia Munoz, who wrote the Spanish reference book on art brut. She's the one who identified it and told me about it. I immediately sensed that there was a work there that ought to be revealed to the public. One needs to have as precise knowledge as possible of the processes at play and of the person, to know whether or not it constitutes art brut! We can often have an intuition, but we never have certainty. We are never guided by a text, references, as with art history. Just a few snippets of explanation... sometimes.

*N.D.: Do the artists comment on their works?*

C.B.: Rarely, and in such a way that it's not about art but about what they do, their action, the materialization of their vital impulses. They almost never see themselves as artists. But they are fully-fledged artists and it is by discovering their biography that we're able, from time to time, to get some clues to interpret their work.

*N.D.: Who are addressees of the works?*

C.B.: They are almost never indicated. Through their works, art brut artists often seek to build an inhabitable world. So, for themselves. But with some of these artists, there's reason to believe that they are addressing someone. For example, this was the case with Anibal Brizuela, an Argentinean man who was schizophrenic and whose drawings worked like *dazibao* that he displayed on the walls of the hospital. The Facteur Cheval, with his Ideal Palace, was also inspired by the gaze of others.

But in most cases, they are works without an address, without a designated addressee. The proof is that they are usually discovered by chance or because someone, in these artists' circles, played the mediator.

*N.D.: How do you know if you are really dealing with an artist?*

C.B.: First of all, we must ask ourselves if we are dealing with an individual mythology, removed from any current, or not. Self-learning, for example, is not an operational criterion at all. Wölfler had access to almanacs... In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, everyone had access to popular imagery, at least that found in churches. From the 1950s onwards, the reign of mass media began, with images, magazines, advertisements, television and so on. No one escapes some form of acculturation.

It is clear that art brut forces us to take a real step back, to reconsider the very definition of art. Are the spectacular works for the nouveaux riches that all too often occupy the media scene still art or, precisely, spectacle? Are true artists those who respond to the expectations of their time or those who have an almost mystical relationship with art? I hope that we will be able to shed some light on these and other questions at the Cerisy symposium on art brut, which I will have the honour of chairing, alongside Raphaël Koenig, in June 2020. ■

Top: Melvin Way, *Cinnamaldehyde*, circa 2014, ballpoint pen on paper and adhesive tape, 20 x 29.2 cm. Courtesy of Christian Berst Art Brut.



## Symposium: “Can art live without the art market?”

Gallery owners, artists, art professionals, curators, academics and journalists were present at the first symposium organized by the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Conseil des Ventes, in the auditorium of the Institut de France, in partnership with *Le Quotidien de l'Art* and Drouot Digital, on 17 April. Picture by the Académie des Beaux-Arts

It was a day of fascinating discussions which, with four round tables, explored in depth the ties between today's art and its economic system. The opposition between art, supposedly free and non-commodified, and its market, supposedly constraining and interested, seems outdated. Yet some phenomena that have recently emerged and been studied, such as the redistribution of places of trading or legitimization, and the development of information networks, are tending to revive it.

By analysing these trends and their effects on the functioning of the art world, this symposium fostered reflection on the new relationships between art and its market, as the participants (artists, collectors, curators, experts, gallery owners, dealers, auctioneers and academics) shared and discussed their different views.

After the opening by Laurent Petitgirard, Permanent Secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and Catherine Chadelat, President of the Conseil des Ventes, a number of speakers took the floor: Philippe Chalmin, professor of economic history at Paris Dauphine University, Sophie Cras, art history lecturer at the University of Paris, Nathalie Moureau, economics professor at the University of Montpellier, Emmanuel Perrotin, gallery owner, Roxana Azimi, journalist at *Le Monde* and editorial advisor for the *Quotidien de l'Art*, François Curiel, president of Christie's Europe, Emmanuel Pierrat, lawyer at the Paris Bar and collector, Pierre Wat, art historian, art critic, and professor at the University of Paris 1, Alain Bublex, artist, Victoria Mann, founder of the AKA fair, Jean-Hubert Martin, curator and exhibition organizer, Pierre Assouline, writer and art historian, Nicolas Kugel, antique dealer, and Thomas Schlessner, art historian and director of the Hartung Bergman Foundation.

Christophe Lérubault, director of the Petit Palais and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, and Minister of Culture Franck Riester concluded the day, which was rich in information and discussions. ■

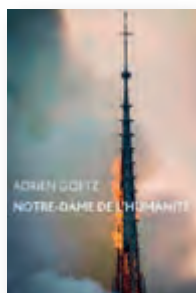
Video link: <https://youtu.be/Z8vn89xoGLw>



## Creation of the Foundation for the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Photography Prize

On 15 March, Laurent Petitgirard, Permanent Secretary (right), and Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, member of the Académie and President of Fimalac, signed the agreement creating the Fondation du Prix de Photographie Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière (Photography Prize Foundation), housed at the Académie. The creation of this foundation will ensure the long-term funding of the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Photography Prize in partnership with the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Created in 2007, this prize allows an experienced photographer to pursue a project culminating in an exhibition at the Institut de France. The prize, which from this year is now biennial, amounts to 30,000 euros. ■

Picture by the Académie des Beaux-Arts



## Publication

### *Notre-Dame de l'humanité*

By **Adrien Goetz**, from the Unattached Members section

On 15 April 2019, before the eyes of all of humanity, Notre Dame was ablaze. All of humanity, indeed: from the United States to China, from Senegal to Russia, throughout the world the reactions were immediate. [...]

Beyond nations, even beyond religions – for dignitaries of all faiths conveyed their emotions –, it is art that unites people. That is the lesson to learn from this astounding event. [...] It raised the question of the preservation of art, of Notre Dame, of churches, of the shared heritage of humanity that are works of art.

The rights to this book, published by Éditions Grasset, will go to the Fondation du Patrimoine. ■





Tribute

# IEOH MING PEI

Our colleague Ieoh Ming Pei passed away during the night of 15-16 May 2019, at the age of 102. He was elected a foreign associate member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts on 9 February 1983, replacing Gabriel Ollivier. Picture DR

Ieoh Ming Pei was born on 26 April 1917 in Canton. In 1935 he moved to the United States to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1940. In 1943 he joined Walter Gropius's studio at Harvard University, and became a member of the US National Defence Research Committee until 1946, when he graduated from Harvard with a Master of Architecture. From 1945 to 1948, he was an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He was awarded a scholarship there in 1951. After gaining US citizenship in 1954, he created his own architectural firm (I.M. Pei and associates) in 1955.

The construction of the Mile High Centre in Denver, Colorado (1956) was his first of many major commissions, including the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado (1967) and the John Hancock Tower in Boston (1973). In 1983, French President François Mitterrand entrusted him with the construction of the Grand Louvre. His bold project was launched in 1988. After the Louvre Pyramid, France entrusted Ieoh Ming Pei with the interior renovation of the Guimet Museum in Paris in 1989, and the EDF tower in La Défense in 2002.

Throughout his career, Ieoh Ming Pei was awarded the most prestigious prizes. In addition to the Pritzker prize (1983), he received the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architecture (1979), and the Grand Gold Medal of the Académie Française d'Architecture (1981). Two presidents honoured him: George H.W. Bush presented him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1992), the highest civilian distinction, and François Mitterrand with the badge of Officer of the Legion of Honour (1993). ■



Inaugural exhibition in the Comtesse de Caen hall after its renovation



The hall, bequeathed in 1872 by the Countess of Caen and allocated to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, was built to host exhibitions of the works of artists, painters and sculptors upon their return from a visit to the Académie de France in Rome.

This mission has grown over the centuries, and the Comtesse de Caen hall now hosts exhibitions by artists

returning from the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, and by the winners of the Académie's various prizes, including the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière photography prize since its creation, and the Mario Avati engraving award.

The scenography for its renovation was carried out by **Jean-Michel Wilmotte**, member of the Architecture section. The "new" Comtesse de Caen hall will soon open its doors and will host, from 17 September to 13 October 2019, the exhibition "Jean Lurçat, un homme dans le siècle. Œuvres sur papier de la collection de la Fondation Jean et Simone Lurçat" ("Jean Lurçat, a man in the century. Works on paper from the Jean and Simone Lurçat Foundation collection").

The revival of interest in drawing has prompted the Foundation, owned by the Académie des beaux-arts, to show a selection from the 1,200 drawings in the artist's collection kept in his home studio, Villa Seurat. Françoise Huguier's photographs, presented as part of the exhibition, will take us into this intimate space of preserved authenticity. ■

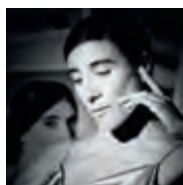
Top: view of the renovation project by architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

Above: Jean Lurçat, *Vevey, deux hommes*, 1934, gouache and ink on paper, 28 x 24 cm. Fondation Jean et Simone Lurçat.

# ELECTIONS

During the plenary session on Wednesday 24 April 2019, the Académie des Beaux-Arts elected Blanca Li, Thierry Malandain and Angelin Preljocaj in the Choreography section created by presidential decree in October 2018.

During this same session, the Académie elected Frédéric Mitterrand to the seat previously held by Jeanne Moreau, in the Artistic Creations in Film and Audiovisual section.



**Blanca Li**, born in Granada in 1964, is a choreographer, film director, dancer and actress. At the age of 17 she moved to New York where she spent five years studying at Martha Graham's school. Back in Spain, she created her first contemporary dance company in Madrid, selected for the Seville Universal Exposition programme. In 1993 Blanca Li founded a dance company in Paris, and has since added many creations to her repertoire. She opened the Suresnes Cités Danse festival in 1999 with a hip hop creation, *Macadam Macadam*, which became an international reference in the genre and received the 2007 Crystal Globe award for Best Opera/Ballet. With her company, she has broached a wide variety of themes, from Gnawa trance ceremonies in Marrakech (*Nana et Lila*, 1993) to the insanity of the contemporary world in the context of the 9/11 attacks (*Borderline*, 2002) or the work of Jérôme Bosch (*Le jardin des délices*, 2009). *Corazón Loco* (2007) brought together the company's dancers with the opera singers of the *Sequenza 9.3* vocal ensemble, performing to a contemporary musical creation, and was the subject of her second film. Her latest creation, *Elektrik*, was presented at the 2018 Suresnes Cités Danse festival. Picture DR



**Thierry Malandain** was born in 1959. With over 80 works to his name, he has developed a very personal idea of dance: deeply linked to the concept of "ballet", it gives centre stage to the dancing body, to the celebration of its sensuality and humanity. In 1980, he joined the Ballet Théâtre Français in Nancy, where he successfully carried out his first choreographic experiments. In 1986 he founded the company *Temps Présent*, and in 1992 he moved to the Esplanade Saint-Étienne Opéra as an Associate Company. In 1998 the Minister of Culture and Communication appointed him as head of the new Centre Chorégraphique National in Biarritz. In 2009 he was appointed as Artistic Director of the Biarritz dance festival, and in 2012 he was awarded the Grand Prix du Syndicat de la Critique award for *Une dernière chanson*. His latest creations include *La Belle et la Bête* (2016), *Noé* (2017), and *Marie-Antoinette* (2018). Picture by Frédéric Néry/Yocom




**Angelin Preljocaj**, born in France in 1957 to Albanian parents, began studying classical dance before turning to contemporary dance with Karin Waehner. He left for New York in 1980 to work with Zena Rommett and Merce Cunningham, then continued his studies in France where he created his own company in December 1984, the Ballet Preljocaj, which has been based at the Pavillon Noir in Aix-en-Provence since October 2006. He has since choreographed some 50 pieces, from solos to large ensemble works. His creations began featuring in the repertoire of the Paris Opera Ballet in the early 1990s and have been performed by many companies from which he has also received commissions, such as La Scala in Milan and the New York City Ballet. He has also directed short films and several feature films, including *Un trait d'union* and *Annonciation* (1992 and 2003), for which he received the "Grand Prix du Film d'Art" award in 2003. He received the Grand Prix National de la danse awarded by the French Ministry of Culture in 1992, the Bessie Award for *Annunciation* in 1997, the Victoires de la musique award for *Roméo et Juliette* in 1997, and the Crystal Globe for *Blanche Neige* in 2009. For the Lyon Dance Biennale in 2018, he created *Gravité*, in which he returned to a new form of abstraction. His latest creation, *Winterreise*, was presented at La Scala in Milan in January 2019. Picture by Jörg Letz



**Frédéric Mitterrand** was born in Paris in 1947. After a PhD in history and geography, he joined the Institut d'Études Politiques (IEP) in Paris. A passionate cinephile, he began his career as a cinema manager, managing the art-house cinemas Olympic Palace, Entrepôt and Olympic-Entrepôt from 1971 to 1986. In the early 1980s he became a TV show producer, director and host. From 1997 to 2006, he hosted a literary programme on the radio channel Europe 1 and, from 2002 to 2006, the programme *Ça me dit* on the radio channel France Culture. He was Deputy Director General in charge of programming for the TV channel TV5 from 2003 to 2005, and Director of the Académie de France in Rome from 2008 to 2009, and was appointed French Minister of Culture and Communication in June 2009, a position he held until May 2012. As a filmmaker, Frédéric Mitterrand directed *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* (1981), *Les lumières de Lausanne* (1982), *Paris vu par, vingt ans après* (1984), and *Madame Butterfly* (1995). He has also directed many history documentaries and documentaries dedicated to major events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Picture by Bruno Klein





# THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PYRAMID, THE EXAMPLE OF ABU RAWASH:

## FINDINGS FROM A RECENT STUDY

By **Michel Valloggia**, foreign associate of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres

**Based on an examination of the building methods used, the resumption of excavations in the royal necropolis of Abu Rawash offers a coherent representation of this immense site, which has now disappeared.**

**F**rom 1900, archaeological excavations were undertaken by the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in the royal necropolis of Abu Rawash, located 25 km northwest of Cairo, under the authority of Emile Chassinat. Two field campaigns yielded a wealth of information and quality statuary elements. Due to the state of destruction of the site, the excavations were however stopped, and the site has since remained excluded from systematic investigations. From Roman times until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had been mistreated and intensively exploited by quarries.

If, however, this destruction is seen as the remains of an ongoing project, it becomes possible to examine some of the construction processes used at this monumental site. In this necropolis, the probable completion of the pyramid led to the search for other components of this funerary complex. Thus, after 13 excavation campaigns conducted by the Egyptology department of the University of Geneva, with the support of the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology, a coherent image of this heritage site has now emerged.

The “Firmament of Djedefre” was about 106m long and 67m high, which was close to the dimensions of the Menkaure pyramid in Giza. A longitudinal section of the tetrahedron revealed the significance of the central limestone core, the mass of which made up 44% of the volume of this superstructure! Currently, the native rock therefore retains only the mass of the pyramidal nucleus.

The pyramid has kept a T-shaped layout, including an incline and a central shaft to house the royal funeral chamber. This infrastructure, obstructed by piles of blocks, was gradually cleared using cranes.

At the centre of the tetrahedron, the shaft has kept only a few traces of the sepulchral chamber accessible via the incline. This chamber was demolished in Roman times, as evidenced by the location of ancient cranes.

Two outer walls had been built around the pyramid. In addition to this, five structures were linked to the funerary temple, itself dedicated to the service of offerings (see the illustration). From the eastern access, three rows of outbuildings surrounded a porticoed courtyard. To the southwest was a building with a naviform cavity in its basement. To the west, an entrance gave access to a paved courtyard leading to a hypostyle hall and two chapels. To the south of this space was the chapel of the royal cult.

Finally, a satellite pyramid built inside the first precinct had a shaft leading to a hypogeum. Dishes were found inside this queen's tomb, including a cup engraved with the name of Khufu, a gift from a father to Queen Khentetka, wife of Djedefre. ■

Grande salle des séances, Wednesday 10 April 2019

Top: aerial view of the entire Djedefre funerary complex, facing northwest.  
IFAO-University of Geneva.

# RESTORING LEONARDO

By **Cinzia Pasquali**, heritage restorer

Owing to his artistic quality and remarkable personality, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), a Renaissance genius, still enjoys the keen attention of art professionals and the public to this day. The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death is an opportunity to rediscover the restoration of some of his masterpieces carried out in recent years, and the restorations currently underway.



The Louvre Museum holds the largest number of the artist's masterpieces, the most famous ones being *Mona Lisa*, *Virgin of the Rocks*, *La belle feronnière*, and *Saint John the Baptist – Bacchus*.

In late 2010, the restoration of *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* began, for a period of 18 months. As with many of Leonardo da Vinci's works, the painting remained unfinished. With the varnishes thinned and the pentimenti becoming visible, the rich chromatic palette was revealed, including a lapis blue used for the landscape and the Virgin's coat. This restoration was coupled with extensive scientific research and imaging. The artist's fingerprints were thus found in several places in the pictorial layer.

The *Madonna of the Yarnwinder*, borrowed from a private collection, has also recently been restored. It will probably be presented at the next exhibition dedicated to the artist at the Louvre Museum this autumn. This painting was mentioned in 1501 in a letter from Pietro da Novellara, emissary of the Marchioness of Mantua Isabelle d'Este, written when he was visiting Leonardo's studio. Also known as the *Lansdowne Madonna*, the work seems to have reappeared in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at an auction. Another version, known as the *Buccleuch Madonna*, is also well-known and is preserved at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. The cleaning of the *Lansdowne Madonna*, which had undergone two transpositions, revealed the same lapis lazuli blue that Leonardo had used in other works.

Another painting is currently being restored at the Centre de Recherche et Restauration des Musée de France (C2RMF): *Saint John the Baptist – Bacchus*. Issues with its conservation were caused by a series of heavy interventions previously carried out. The work was originally painted on a wooden panel and was subsequently transposed onto canvas twice. These earlier treatments led to deep lacunas, which is one of the problems being addressed by the current restoration. The canvas itself is in a fairly good state of preservation. The attribution of the painting to Leonardo is now being challenged; the work is thought to be not by the Master's own hand but rather by his workshop.

The enthusiasm surrounding Leonardo da Vinci among the general public and his place in the collective imaginary often give rise to strong emotions when restoration work is undertaken on one of his works. For *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, some press articles referred to the painting as "a threatened work". Even if restorers are the only people who intervene technically and physically on a work of art, their intervention does also rely on the work of curators and scientists. This collegial effort ensures that both the work itself and the restoration code of ethics are respected. ■

Grande salle des séances, Wednesday 29 May 2019



## Bureau 2019

President: Pierre Carron  
Vice-president: Jean Anguera

## Section I - Peinture

Pierre Carron • 1990  
Guy de Rougemont • 1997  
Yves Millecamps • 2001  
Vladimir Velickovic • 2005  
Philippe Garel • 2015  
Jean-Marc Bustamante • 2017  
Gérard Garouste • 2017  
Fabrice Hyber • 2018

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Claude Abeille • 1992  
Antoine Poncet • 1993  
Brigitte Terziev • 2007  
Pierre-Édouard • 2008  
Jean Anguera • 2013  
Jean-Michel Othoniel • 2018

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Jacques Rougerie • 2008  
Aymeric Zublena • 2008  
Alain Charles Perrot • 2013  
Dominique Perrault • 2015  
Jean-Michel Wilmotte • 2015  
Marc Barani • 2018  
Bernard Desmoulin • 2018

## Section IV - Engraving

Trémois • 1978  
Érik Desmazières • 2008  
Astrid de la Forest • 2016  
Pierre Collin • 2018

## Section V - Musical Composition

Laurent Petitgirard • 2000  
François-Bernard Mâche • 2002  
Édith Canat de Chizy • 2005  
Michaël Levinas • 2009  
Gilbert Amy • 2013  
Thierry Escaich • 2013  
Bruno Mantovani • 2017  
Régis Campo • 2017

## Section VI - Unattached Members

Michel David-Weill • 1982  
Pierre Cardin • 1992  
Henri Loyrette • 1997  
François-Bernard Michel • 2000  
Hugues R. Gall • 2002  
Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière • 2005  
William Christie • 2008  
Patrick de Carolis • 2010  
Muriel Mayette-Holtz • 2017  
Adrien Goetz • 2017

## Section VII - Artistic Creations in cinema and audiovisual

Roman Polanski • 1998  
Régis Wargnier • 2007  
Jean-Jacques Annaud • 2007  
Jacques Perrin • 2017  
Coline Serreau • 2018  
Frédéric Mitterrand • 2019

## Section VIII - Photography

Yann Arthus-Bertrand • 2006  
Bruno Barbey • 2016  
Jean Gaumy • 2016  
Sebastião Salgado • 2016

## Section IX - Choreography

Thierry Malandain • 2019  
Blanca Li • 2019  
Angelin Preljocaj • 2019

## Foreign Associates

S.M.I. Farah Pahlavi • 1974  
Leonard Gianadda • 2001  
Seiji Ozawa • 2001  
William Chattaway • 2004  
Woody Allen • 2004  
SA Karim Aga Khan IV • 2007  
SA Sheikha Mozah • 2007  
Sir Norman Foster • 2007  
Antonio López García • 2012  
Philippe de Montebello • 2012  
Jiri Kylián • 2018



## Decentralized and public plenary session at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles

For the second time since its creation in 1816, the Académie des Beaux-Arts “decentralized” its weekly plenary session and opened it to the public on Wednesday 22 May 2019, in the auditorium of the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles.

This event was organized as part of the first Biennale d'Architecture et de Paysage of the Ile-de-France region. The Bureau of the Académie had decided to devote the “debate” part of this session to a discussion on **the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral and its restoration**.

In addition to its missions supporting artistic creation and defending France's artistic heritage, the Académie des Beaux-Arts, as an advisory body to the public authorities, also examines artistic issues at its weekly meetings. It regularly invites personalities from the cultural and political worlds to participate in these discussions.

Picture by the Académie des Beaux-Arts



Page 1 and above: the *Watts Towers* by Sabato Rodia (1875-1965), an Italian builder who immigrated to the United States in 1890. Located in the Watts district, in the suburbs of Los Angeles, this complex consists of nine towers, the tallest of which is 33m high. The author used metal bars that he bent after sliding them under the rails of a nearby railway track, as well as concrete, covered with shells and mosaics of broken dishes or glass.

Source: Musée de Lausanne, picture by Christina Czybik



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