



LA LETTRE
ACADEMIE DES
BEAUX-ARTS

ART & LITERATURE

Editorial

"Writing has always been the foundation of my painting and I have been greatly nurtured by it, in my approach as an artist and in the development of my thinking," Gérard Garouste confides in the introduction to his remarkable contribution to the dossier of this issue of the *Lettre*.

This statement, authored by a painter, reveals a reader's profession of faith. The work of this artist, who is familiar with the major texts of world literature and schooled in their complexity, attests to the kind of research and focus without which, as Jean Paulhan remarked, art like literature is only a "rather mediocre joke"; proof that this artistic project, because it relies on illusion and fiction, is indissociable from an interpretative approach and from a questioning of the power of language and images.

From this nuanced and revealing insight on the links between aesthetics, ethics and politics, the conclusive statement to remember: "I love this paradox whereby we shed our rational mind but do so in the practice of a true discipline." As the times lend themselves to the irrational and to simplification, one is quite likely to voluntarily agree with the project, without endorsing the method.

Because, to put it mildly, the "extravagant" function of art – art as a surplus, as something for nothing, which represents God, the sacred or what lies beyond – is now in jeopardy. The same is true for the function of the artist, who, once converted to the new religion of production, was freed from the heroic figure of the creator, inherited from the Industrial Revolution and late Romanticism: a creator whose appetite for novelty and whose attachment to the sacred were combined with mistrust of the established order and nostalgia for a bygone era.

Facing the "disenchantment with the world," and owing to our acute and painful awareness thereof, there is a strong temptation to lean toward the negative. However, denouncing the system and opposing industry and technology would lead to deadlock. This is why it is our responsibility to accompany the future; to claim it and support it, instead of rejecting it, in order to transform what the world is becoming into a future. And, as far as we are concerned, by assuming our role as the inheritors of the radical question of aesthetics and of the long history of art and ideas.

François-Bernard Michel, of the Unattached (Free) Members section
with **Serge Velay**, philosopher



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JEAN-MARC BUSTAMANTE

Newly elected member to the Painting section and the former seat of Zao Wou-Ki, 7 December 2016, Jean-Marc Bustamante was inducted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts 23 May 2018 by fellow member Henri Loyrette under the Dome of the Palace of the Institut de France.

Born in Toulouse in 1952, Jean-Marc Bustamante, painter, sculptor and photographer, headed the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris where he began teaching in 1996. He also taught at the Kunstakademie of Munich from 2010 to 2016. A self-taught man and former assistant to the photographer and film maker William Klein, in 1977 he began making large format photographs, which he called *Tableaux*. He subsequently collaborated with Bernard Bazile under the name *BazileBustamante*. Through these projects, essentially research on pictorial codes and sign systems, he earned a reputation in the art world. After 1987, Bustamante pursued a solo career. His work is poetic and singular, employing a complex vocabulary borrowed from a range of media. The current focus of his work is mainly painting.

Jean-Marc Bustamante work has been shown around the globe and namely at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1990), the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume (1996) and the Centre National de la Photographie in Paris (1999), at the Tate Gallery in London (1998), the Kunstmuseum in Wolfsburg (1994), the Kunsthalle of Bern (1994), the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (1992), the Renaissance Society of Chicago (1993), the Yokohama Museum of Art (2003), and in Yamaguchi Japan. He also participated in Documenta 8, 9 and 10 in Kassel and represented France at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003. In 2006, the Kunsthhaus in Bregenz and the Musée de Saint-Étienne dedicated major exhibitions to his work. In 2007, at the Musée de Strasbourg, Fabrice Hergott and Jean-Pierre Criqui presented the exhibition titled *L'Horizon*

chimérique (or fanciful horizon) on the works of Ed Ruscha and Jean-Marc Bustamante. He also served as art director of the Printemps de Septembre festival in Toulouse from 2004 to 2006, mission he held again from 2013 with the creation of *Artist comes first*, the Toulouse International Art Festival. In 2008, several major solo exhibitions were dedicated to him, namely at the MAC's, the Musée des Arts Contemporains du Grand Hornu and at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. In 2012 an exhibition at the he French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici, where his work was shown along with the paintings of 18th century Dutch artist Peter Saenredam, with a focus on the theme of “place”. For this event he imagined a series of large format paintings on Plexiglas for the Grand Salon of the Villa. Another retrospective show of his work was held at the Alcala museum of Madrid Spain. In 2014, he presented a series of new paintings in the galleries of Bärbel Grässlin in Frankfurt Germany and Juana de Aizpuru in Madrid. Three solo shows of his work in this medium were dedicated to him in 2016, at the Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery in Pantin France, at the Foundation Helga de Alvear in Caceres Spain and at the Vera Munro gallery in Hamburg. In 2017, a new solo exhibition was inaugurated at the Susanne Ottensen gallery in Copenhagen. He is represented by the Thaddaeus Ropac gallery in Paris. In addition, he is a “Chevalier” of the French Legion of Honour” and “Commander” of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Excerpt from Henri Loyrette's welcome speech:

“ You imagine artworks as places; but precarious, temporarily occupied and solidified, waiting to go elsewhere. You are never settled. Your works are detached from the wall, the ground, levitating or dangling. They do not halt ones gaze but rather, the transparency of the uncovered Plexiglas, the bars of a cage, obviously sculptured pieces, always allow it to pass through. Barely alighted somewhere, you seek a way out. And this goes hand in hand with your strong attraction to the “unfinished aspect of things”. You are, and the viewer along with you, always in a state of uncertainty.” ■





ASTRID DE LA FOREST

Wednesday 27 June 2018, Astrid de La Forest, elected member of the Gravure (engraving) section June 1 2016 to the seat of Louis-René Berge, was received at the Académie des Beaux-Arts by fellow member Érik Desmazières, under the Dome of the Palace of the Institut de France.

Astrid de La Forest was born in 1962, in Paris. She chose to concentrate on the visual arts very early on. At 17, she entered the École Penninghen in the Rue du Dragon. Upon graduating, she joined the set-designing team of the Théâtre des Amandiers under the direction of Richard Peduzzi and Patrice Chéreau. For the latter, she designed her first monotype, the poster for the staging of Chekhov's *Ivanov*. She worked as an illustrator in a number of media and her talent as a portraitist led her to work as a courtroom artist for the television in political and criminal trials, an art she practiced for ten years, covering such court cases as the Touvier, Action Directe and ETA trials among others. A travelling exhibition organized in 2010 by the Bibliothèque Publique d'information at the Centre Georges-Pompidou titled *Traits de Justice* (or "features of justice"), was a retrospective show on this experience. In parallel, she continued to learn and improve her engraving techniques with Yonne Alexieff in the studio of the Association pour le Développement de l'Association Culturelle.

Settling in Burgundy in the 1990s, Astrid de La Forest was at first fully focused on painting and then beginning 1995 on engraving. She worked in the studios of Lacourière-Frélaud, for whom she held the last exhibition, René Tazé, and finally Raymond Meyer in Pully Switzerland, with whom she developed the specific skills enabling her to produce large formats in both engraving and monotype. She continued to develop her technical skills around the world under the framework of artists' residencies, such as the Institut français de Tétouan in Morocco, in Tasmania, Japan, and Ireland and was recently invited for a month's stay at the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici.

Astrid de La Forest utilizes several engraving techniques, etching, aquatint, dry point and carborundum, which she either practices separately or in association, in limited series or monotype. Her subjects are essentially taken from nature in the form of aquarelles which she then transcribes to large format engravings with occasional incursions into the animal world and portraiture.

Below: Érik Desmazières, Astrid de la Forest and Pierre Collin, all three members of the Engraving section.

Bottom: the actress and film director Agnès Jaoui and the Canto Allegre vocal ensemble sing works by Antoine Boësset, Jean-Sébastien Bach and Rossini.

Photos Juliette Agnel



She has shown her work in Switzerland, Germany, England, Belgium and Paris and is represented by La Forest Divonne and the Documents 15 galleries. Astrid de La Forest taught for four years on the visual arts team of the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville. She was inducted into the Société des Peintres Graveurs in 2016. Her catalogue raisonné, *Gravures, Lithographies, Monotypes (2004-2016)*, was co-edited by the Éditions des Cendres and the Documents 15 Gallery.

Excerpt from Érik Desmazières welcome speech:

“It was with audacity that you discovered these new pathways, you who are rather repelled by a more “traditional” type of engraving and hence the close collaboration that developed over the long term with Raymond Meyer, a printer passionate about experimentation and large formats. There again you demonstrated audacity, not hesitating when tackling very large, harder to manipulate copper plates, which however enabled you to make broader gestures, developing a genuine choreography on metal. In this studio, you never stopped. There was no downtime. You dedicated yourself to monotype printing, a wonderful technique that consists of drawing, of painting on the metal plate and then transferring this image to paper by passing it under a press. And here, you showed even more audacity: the idea came to you to blend engraving and monotype, in process by which each print, run several times under the press and enriched with materials and colours, also becomes a unique piece; you are one of these artists who in engraving see more the art of print-making, of transfer than of multiplication.” ■

JEAN GAUMY

Elected member of the Photography section, 13 April 2016, Jean Gaumy was inducted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts, 10 October 2018. Patrick de Carolis, President of the Académie, gave the welcome speech written by the architect Paul Andreu.

Hailing from the South-West of France, Jean Gaumy has lived in Fécamp since 1995. With a background in literature, he joined the French Gamma photo agency in 1973 at the invitation of Raymond Depardon and in 1975 initiated two long-term reportages on hospital environments (*L'Hôpital*, 1976) and prison environments (*Les Incarcérés*, in 1983).

He joined the Magnum agency in 1977, after being noticed by Marc Riboud and Bruno Barbey at the "Rencontres d'Arles" show in 1976.

In 1984, Jean Gaumy made his first film, *La Boucane*, nominated for a César for best documentary. Other films followed: *Jean-Jacques* (1987), *Marcel, prêtre* (1994), which won a number of awards. That same year, he began a cycle of winter voyages aboard trawlers, which he pursued into 1998 and eventually resulting in the publication of the book titled *Pleine Mer* (Éditions de La Martinière) in 2001.

He went on to produce numerous reportages in Africa, Central America and the Middle East. His first trip to Iran took place in 1986 during the war with Iraq and he continued to travel there into 1997.

In 2001 he was awarded the Prix Nadar for his books on maritime environments and again in 2010 for *D'après nature* (Éditions Xavier Barral), a series on mountain landscapes.

Right: Jean Gaumy was to receive from the hands of Yves Coppens, member of the Académie des Sciences and Professor of the Collège de France, bearing his "sword", a copy of a very rare, fish-shaped Paleolithic spatula.

The ceremony was punctuated by the musical intervals of Morgan, with Celtic harp and voice.

Photos: Juliette Agnel

Beginning in 2005, he scouted locations and then shot the film *Sous-Marin* (2008), which required that he spend four months on a mission in a submerged nuclear attack submarine. In 2008, he was appointed the Official Painter of the French Navy.

Jean Gaumy has undertaken many projects in enclosed human environments that have in recent years been carried out with a more contemplative approach to his photography. Thus, in 2008 he began working on photographic reconnaissance, which led him to the arctic sea and to the lands contaminated by Chernobyl.

In parallel, during this period he took up a series of mountain landscapes which led to the publication of the book titled *D'après Nature* (Éditions Xavier Barral) and the organization of a photographic exhibition *La Tentation du Paysage*.

In 2010, he sailed again, aboard the newest of the submarines dedicated to nuclear deterrence and in parallel began a



photographic series on the cliffs of Normandy; in 2012, he went to Fukushima and thereafter to the Ellesmere Island in Arctic and wound up the year in Kirghizstan. In 2013, He participated on the B.B.Polar mission of the CNRS at LEMAR of Brest, which led him to Spitzberg, followed by voyages to Greenland's northeast in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

He is currently working in Niger with the Jean Rouch ethnographic film committee and the Nigerien designer Sani Djibo.

Excerpt from Paul Andreu's welcome speech:

“As others have, in this period of strong demand for reportages of every kind, you have been travelling around the world. How many countries have you visited? Dozens? Why count them? Every time it has been with the same determination that choose your subjects, to get to the bottom of things, not to seek confirmation of a readymade opinion, or even to answer an overly precise question, but rather to provide food for thought. You leave on your expeditions without any other intention than to observe and take notes, for you but also for others. It is said that you have “a regard,” which I understand to mean a combination of patience and keen awareness and that you trust forms and lines without seeking them out as ornaments. And if it happened that you went where you were called, very quickly you only went to places where you freely decided to go, to test yourself.” ■

Colloquium | Great Hall meeting room of the Institut de France

BAUDELAIRE AND THE ARTS

Following upon a first edition dedicated to Marcel Proust in March 2017, the second colloquium of the Académie des Beaux-Arts on the theme of “Writers and artists” took place Wednesday 16 May in the Palace of the Institut de France. This day of encounters, chaired by the Permanent secretary Laurent Petitgirard, Patrick de Carolis and Adrien Goetz and conceived and presented by François-Bernard Michel, enabled us to explore this particular dimension of the poet.



Above: The Permanent Secretary Laurent Petitgirard, François-Bernard Michel and Patrick de Carolis during the first intervention by Antoine Compagnon (on the right) dedicated to Traviès de Villers.

Right page: portrait of Charles Baudelaire by Étienne Carjat, c. 1863.
Photos CM Pezon

“The critics talked about it!”

By **François-Bernard Michel**, from the Unattached (Free) Members section

JI should like to recall a few key remarks and consecutive texts of Baudelaire’s “artistic criticism”.

The most voluminous one concerns the Salon of 1845. We will be “neither cruel nor insolent” he warns in the introduction, “but impartial.” And he offers a very complete and sometimes cruel analysis of the 29 history paintings, 16 portraits, 26 “genre paintings,” 26 landscapes, 13 drawings and engravings and 17 sculptures. The most relevant and laudatory is obviously dedicated to Eugène Delacroix.

His critique of the Salon of 1846 curiously starts out with a critique “of the bourgeois,” To whom he hammers with a number of aphorisms:

- “You are the majority – in number and intelligence – therefore the force – which is justice.”
 - “However, you need art (...) an infinitely more precious good,” after a tiring day.
 - “You are the natural friends of the arts,” because you are savants.
- And he questions these bourgeois: what is the use of “criticism”? To increase the value, he answers, of works without merit but which *ipso facto* allow one to brag: the critics talked about it! Here, driven to contradicting his preceding assertion: To be fair, that is to say, to have a reason for being, criticism has to be partial, passionate, political ...”

Once again, a long special section is dedicated to Eugène Delacroix.

The artistic critique that followed was published on the subject of the Exposition Universelle of 1855. It began with a violent diatribe against “a highly fashionable error which I wish to avoid like hell.





Colloquium Baudelaire and the arts

I want to speak about the idea of progress (...), the infatuation with and the diagnosis of an already too visible decadence. The idea of progress which is being erected in a gigantic absurdity, a grotesquery that is rising to the level of the appalling. The artist answers only to himself. He only promises his own works to future centuries. He endorses no other than himself. He was his own king, his priest and his God. He dies childless." Here, Baudelaire overdoes it. How can one not identify here some of the characteristics of Matisse and Picasso as children of Cézanne. What follows is a long critique of the works of "Monsieur Ingres" whose canvases cause a hard to characterize impression of "malaise", "ennui" and "fear", similar to the atmosphere of thin air in a chemistry laboratory.

In his final report prior to the voluminous publication of *L'œuvre et la vie d'Eugène Delacroix*, his critique of Salon of 1859, he focuses on the theme of the "Modern Artist". It is an extremely pessimistic analysis, by a man who is suffering and who has only seven more years to live. He approves the impression expressed by the first visitor encountered there: "I have rarely seen a *Salon* this dull (...). One could say, Baudelaire writes, that pettiness, childishness, incuriosity, the dead calm of smugness followed ardour, nobility and turbulent ambition, as much in the Fine Arts as in literature." Furthermore, he concludes, painters have never really fully understood the work of Delacroix and the intellectual level of artists has "significantly declined." ■

Centre: the tribune, from right to left, André Guyaux, Patrick de Carolis and François-Bernard Michel. Photo CM Pezon

Right page: the work of Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), illustrated Sébastien Muller's intervention, "Logic of the art critic: Baudelaire and the paradoxes of painting." Oil on canvas, 392 x 496 cm, Louvre Museum.

The prince of misfortune: Traviès de Villers

By **Antoine Compagnon**, professor at the Collège de France, chair in Modern and Contemporary French Literature

It seems plausible that Baudelaire met Traviès de Villers through the painter Boissard de Boisdénier, while he was living in the Hôtel Pimodan, Quai d'Anjou, between 1843 and 1845. He would accompany him to the cabarets located at the city gates (barriers), and would praise him in *Quelques caricaturistes français*, published in 1857, though developed before 1846, in which he emotionally recounts the "bad fortune" of this "eminent artist", whom he qualifies as the "prince of misfortune." Traviès, according to Baudelaire, "Traviès has a deep feeling for the joys and sorrows of the common people. He knows the scoundrel thoroughly, and he loves him with tender charity." He was the caricaturist, along with Daumier, of ragmen, and his own, Baudelaire notes "are generally quite comparable." This offers an occasion to examine the poet's brotherly feelings. ■



Baudelaire and baroque art

By **André Guyaux**, professor of 19th-century French literature at the Sorbonne University

Baudelaire discovered baroque art late in life, during his stay in Belgium (April 1864 to June 1866), through his visits to churches in Brussels, Malines, Antwerp, Mechelen and Namur. He was searching for a way to define what he called the "Jesuit style." Which he does by highlighting the contrast between life and death he observes in the presence of the theatricality of baroque architecture. Baudelaire's encounter with baroque art was a genuine discovery for him, as evidenced by the wonderment it inspired. Baudelaire experienced this as an aesthetic shock, which ideally positions him moving in the opposite direction of the spirit of his times, in contradiction with the romantic century's bias in favour of the gothic, the responsibility for which he hastened to attribute to Victor Hugo. ■



Logic of the art critic: Baudelaire and the paradoxes of painting

By **Sébastien Mullier**, teacher of Modern Letters in preparatory classes for the grandes écoles

The challenge is to measure how Baudelaire was able to consider the practice of art critic as being a genuine demonstration based on paradox, paradox understood as both a premise of the system – painting is no longer an art of space but rather of time – and as a methodological principle. His often logical approach to the painting of the 19th century underscored the incoherencies of the neoclassical masters (from David to Ingres) and those of their second-rate imitators of the 1840s and 1850s, by arguing against them with the extreme coherence of the romantic master, Delacroix. He is revealed to be the forerunner, or the primitive example, of a new kind of painting, which would come to light in the middle of the 19th century and whose principle is far more paradoxical and whose master, now finally truly modern, remained “unknown.” He agreed to find his name. ■

Baudelaire and the musical exception

By **François-Bernard Mâche**, member of the Music Composition section, PhD

The exceptional musical critique Baudelaire wrote about *Tannhäuser* attained a well-earned celebrity. Its importance is due to a number of merits, which one can only be properly appreciated by first placing them in their historical context. With an extraordinary freedom of thought and prophetic sensitivity, Baudelaire heralded an aesthetic revolution the consequences of which are still perceptible today. Rising high above nationalist jealousies, partisan pettiness and quarrelling authors, he was able to recognize in Wagner, as he had done with Delacroix and Edgar Allen Poe, one of the rare minds with which he could share a new sacred dimension of artistic creation. ■



It is no accident this event is hosted in the ideal setting of a mansion in the Rue Louis Boilly in the 16th arrondissement of Paris. The Marmottan Monet Museum, it should be recalled, is first and foremost a collectors' museum in that its entire permanent collections, including the world's leading collection of Claude Monet's works, are comprised of private donations. Thus, its scientific vocation is to shed light on the importance of art lovers in the life of artists and its duty is to acknowledge their role.

This is the context in which the exhibit "Private collections: a voyage from the Impressionists to the Fauves" is set. Imagined as a follow-up to "Impressionists in private," the 2014 show marking the museum's 80th anniversary, this exhibition not only presents masterpieces of Impressionism, but also major and/or heretofore unseen works of art from the main pictorial currents that marked the life of the art world in France up to the beginning of the 20th century.

The show opens with nineteen works by Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Degas and Caillebotte. Landscapes of Bordighera, Belle-Ile, Rouen, Varengeville, bouquets of chrysanthemums and other still lifes, elegant portraits of women and genre scenes are displayed in this section, which is organized around Gustave Caillebotte's spectacular *Pont de l'Europe*,

the artist's last monumental work still in private hands. Neo-impressionism is represented with rarely seen works by Seurat, Signac, Rysselberghe and Van Gogh. These are followed by Gauguin, along with the Pont Aven School, impressively highlighted with two of Émile Bernard's major works *Springtime* and *The Wrestlers*, paintings presented here for the first time in Paris. The singular figure of Toulouse-Lautrec has not been overlooked with three important paintings of his also on view.

The lion's share for sculpture in the show goes to Camille Claudel's work with four pieces, including a rare plaster cast of *The little chatelaine*. Rodin's marble *Head of St. John the Baptist*, and Bourdelle's gilt bronze *Head of Apollo* are also worthy of mention. Next come Bonnard, Vuillard and finally *The Quadriga, the chariot of Apollo* by Odilon Redon, one of the more striking pieces in the exhibition. The visit continues with Matisse, one of whose works, the precocious *Wild coast, Belle-Ile-en-mer*, recalls *The Pyramids of Port Coton*, an example of Monet's sunlight effect presented at the start of the visit. Organized as an ode to colour and a stroll along a flamboyant path through time, the exhibition ends with works by the Fauves: Derain, Vlaminck, Dufy and Van Dongen. ■

Curators: Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts, art historian and Marianne Mathieu, art historian, assistant director, scientific director of the Marmottan Monet Museum.

Marmottan Monet Museum

“PRIVATE COLLECTIONS: A VOYAGE FROM THE IMPRESSIONISTS TO THE FAUVES”

The Marmottan Monet Museum is currently presenting “Private collections: a voyage from the Impressionists to the Fauves”. Sixty-two paintings, drawings and sculptures held in private hands (Europe, United States and Latin America), many of which have never or rarely been shown in Paris, compose a pictorial itinerary from Monet to Matisse.

On the right: Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), *Unloading wood, quai de la Bourse, sunset*, 1898, oil on canvas, 54 x 66 cm, private collection. © Collection particulière – All rights reserved



Left page: Édouard Vuillard (1868-1940), *Game of bridge at Clos Cézanne*, 1923, tempera on paper on canvas, 100 x 76 cm, Mexico, Pérez Simón collection.

© Arturo Piera

Below: Théo van Rysselberghe (1862-1926), *The Regatta*, 1892, oil on canvas, 61 x 80,6 cm, collection Isabelle et Scott Black. © Trustees of the Portland Museum of Art, Maine

Palace of the Institut de France

“A SIBERIAN ODYSSEY”

Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Photography Prize
in partnership with the Académie des Beaux-Arts

Claudine Doury, winner in 2017 of the Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière Photography Prize in partnership with the Académie des Beaux-Arts for her “A Siberian odyssey” project, exhibited until 25 November 2018 the work produced throughout the year under the framework of the Prize. The exhibition was part of the VIP de Paris Photo – Grand Palais program and of the 7th edition of the Photo Saint-Germain festival. On the day of the show’s preview, the photographer FLORE received the award for the 2018 edition.

A *Siberian odyssey* tells the story of a return: in the project she presented to the jury of the prize, Claudine Doury had proposed returning to find the trace of the people she met over 20 years ago, in 1991 and 1998 along the Amour River. Her goal was to bear witness to the passage of time on the families she had previously photographed, but also the larger-scale changes affecting these populations.

The work presented at the Académie this autumn is a current, intimate portrait of the Nanai, Ulch and Nivkhs families Claudine Doury was able to track down over the course of several trips made this year to the village of Nergen. Imagined as a sort of mental journal revealing several layers of time from the past of these families and these peoples, it also attests to the changes underway on the lands along the border with China, the powerful neighbour that is swiftly redrawing the geopolitics of the entire region.

The exhibition presented forty of her new photographs, photographic albums composed upon returning from Claudine Doury’s previous trips on the Amour River as well as photographs from archives that provide perspective for the history of these living yet vulnerable peoples and cultures. ■

On the right: *Dasha, Nergen*, 2018.

Bottom: *On the Amour River near Blagoveshchensk*, 1991

Photos © Claudine Doury

The photographer Claudine Doury, born in Blois, lives and works in Paris. Her work deals with notions of memory, transition and the passage of time, with a particular focus on adolescence and travel. This quest led her to Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Kirghizstan, and to the discovery of rarely studied and even unknown peoples. In *Peoples of Siberia*, the 1999 winner the Leica Oscar Barnack Prize and the World Press Award, she documented the life and customs of native minorities in this region of the world. This series resulted in her first monograph, published by Seuil under the same title. Since then her work has developed further with notions of transition and identity through both an artistic and documentary approach. In 2004, she received the Niépce award the entire body of her work. She has published four other monographic books: *Peoples of Siberia*, *Artek*, *A Summer in Crimea* (2004), *Loulou Beauty* (2007), *Sasha* (2011) and *The New Man* (2017). Her photographs are on view in France and abroad, and held in various public and private collections, including the FNAC. A member of the VU agency, she is represented in Paris and Brussels by the Galerie Particulière.



Below, left to right: the mayor of the 6th arrondissement of Paris, Jean-Pierre Lecoq, Michel Zink, Permanent Secretary of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres; Xavier Darcos, Chancellor of the Institut de France; FLORE, laureate of the 2018 edition; Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, of the Unattached (Free) Members section and the founder of the prize; Claudine Doury, 2017 laureate; and Laurent Petitgirard, Permanent Secretary of the Académie of Beaux-Arts.

Photo Laurence Stinus



Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904), *By the table*, 1872, oil on canvas, 160 x 225 cm. Musée d'Orsay

Initially imagined as a tribute to Charles Baudelaire, *By the table* bears witness to 19th-century French literary history and in particular to the Parnasse group of poets. Standing, from left to right: Elzéar Bonnier, Émile Blémont (who bought the painting and donated it to the Louvre in 1910) and Jean Aicard. Seated: Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud, Léon Valade, Ernest d'Hervilly and Camille Pelletan.

Absent: Charles Baudelaire, deceased in 1867 and Albert Méral, who did not want to be painted. He is symbolically represented by the bouquet of flowers on the right.



ART & LITERATURE



PAINTING AND LITERATURE, SHARING IDEAS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

By **François-Bernard Michel**, of the Unattached (Free) Members section

The theme of this issue of *La Lettre de l'Académie* is in itself so vast that it could hardly pretend to be exhaustive. Rather, it is intended as an examination of the common denominator, the purpose of these disciplines, that is to say the intimate life of sensitive man (*l'Homme sensible*), which is the focus of the Arts and Literature; to compare, in so far as possible, thanks to a few authors and their works, the respective contributions of paintbrush and quill to the proposed theme.

The project of a broad overview of possible contributors proving untenable, this presentation will focus on the one hand on artists and on the other the writers and poets, who, whether owing to their complementarity or their opposition, mutually enrich the way we view and appreciate the works evoked here.

It should be pointed out from the start that the practices of painting and drawing arose long before writing. 25,000 years ago, in prehistoric grottos such as the one of Chauvet, hands were drawing and colouring beautiful animal figures and more rarely human ones. The desire to reproduce and represent the Seen came first, a complement to more developed thinking would emerge much later. However, there are a few delectable signs, as at Lascaux, the ones that led Leroy-Gourhan to exclaim: "They came very close to writing." As for Egyptian hieroglyphs, the elements comprising them were intended as much for writing as for ideography and phonetics. The characters the Sumerians carved on their clay tablets also present figurative representations, in addition to their graphic purpose.

Writers and painters

One of the authors who is particularly relevant for our approach is Charles Baudelaire and his book *L'œuvre et la vie d'Eugène Delacroix* (*The Works and Life of Eugène Delacroix*). The former's admiration for the latter and his irreplaceable role in painting grew out of the fact that Delacroix was able to express "with admirable vehemence and fervour what others had not known how to do."

According to Baudelaire, the mystery of Delacroix's genius resides in his ability to capture "the invisible, the impalpable (...) the

soul." He "is the most *suggestive* of all the painters," reminding us of feelings we believed buried forever deep in the night of the past. Baudelaire held that the "*littérateurs*" (writers) had better understood these feelings than the painters of his times, whose intellectual level had "singularly declined."

Delacroix's genius, Baudelaire adds, is manifested in the fact that he is "passionately in love with passion" and that he is constantly on a quest for the means to visibly express this. His singularity emanates from his exceptional imagination, the most important faculty when talent is made to serve it.

"Nature is not a dictionary" Delacroix repeats (...) People seek many things in it except for the essential one, "*composition*", the fruit of a combination of drawing and colour. But there are so many artist who limit themselves to copying the dictionary, without adding any creative innovations!

Baudelaire also takes pleasure in recounting Delacroix's judgment of himself, and the distance between what he paints and what he writes about it: "As much as he is sure to *write* what he was thinking on a canvas," he equally doubts "being able to *paint* his thinking on paper (...) the quill, he concluded, is not my *tool*."

Delacroix's contribution to our understanding of painting must also include his long friendship with George Sand, painted with Frédéric Chopin seated at the piano, on a transversal canvas later cut into two separate portraits. In *Histoire de ma vie* (*Story of my Life*) and *Impressions et souvenirs*, George Sand shares with her painter friend the same lack of esteem for Ingres and justifies her admiration for him with his personal qualities and most of all the truth in his paintings: "No one felt (as he) the pain of a type such as Hamlet (...) this hero of suffering, indignation, doubt and irony..." Chopin also shared a friendship with Sand and Delacroix, but did not appreciate his painting, and when there was trouble in the friendship, "found not a word to say to him, Delacroix suffers from this (...). He is a musician, only a musician" and does not know how to abolish distance between himself and the one he admires (he quotes him 59 times in his diary)¹.

Finally, important to remember is the confession of an exhausted Delacroix, working on the ceiling of the gallery of Apollo in the Louvre: "It is this dreadful *art* which is the cause of all our >>

>> suffering” waiting for the judgments of our works by “the envious” and the “mean beggars”. “Fortunately we make them a bit for ourselves, very little for posterity (...) but especially to help us to forget our sorrows a bit”... How to imagine, when one has not experienced it, the work demanded by “this machine” requiring “that we only see one part at a time.” Hence, ma “singular despondency”².

Marcel Proust’s contribution to the theme explored here, as important as it may be, will simply be quickly mentioned here as it was treated in issue 85 of *La Lettre de l’Académie* following the Colloquium organized by the Institut by the Académie des Beaux-Arts on this subject. In particular, during that event, Jean-Yves Tadié recalled that the Proust had created the character of a modern painter, Elstir, “by blending Helleu and Whistler” and others, such as Vuillard, Harrison and Degas. In his *In Search of Lost Time*, painters are recurring “elements” of the story. They pull “the real world into the one of art,” as with Elstir, a victim of the Duc de Guermantes’ stupid jokes about the artist’s impressionist still lifes.

Thus, Jean-Yves Tadié concludes, Proust’s novel seems to emerge from a painting, as if written on paint, and made to be read while imagining an endless number of paintings (...) Proust sees the world in images (...) and a painting becomes an event.”

The contribution of Paul Valéry to the theme of this *Lettre* would fill several volumes! Three references are offered. At the age of 24, the young poet met Edgard Degas, then 61, through his friend Rouart. He was impressed by this “sombre, nervous old man, darkly distracted with abrupt and furious gestures.” Valéry appreciated this “man obsessed with drawing whose exacting demands admitted no convenience, his keen sense of the *truth* when presenting the bodies of male and female dancers.” When Valéry offered to write about his work, Degas answered that “letters explain the arts without understanding them.” Thus, the poet waited until after the artist’s death, in 1917, to make a proposal to the dealer-publisher Ambroise Vollard for a luxurious, large format album, illustrated with Degas’ drawings and engravings Degas.

Valéry’s admiration for Manet was even greater and different than for Degas, and he went as far as to proclaim and write the *Triumph of Manet*³. In the poet’s view, Manet triumphed both through his work as well as the extraordinary near unanimous acclaim he managed to garner for it. This included rallying young painters as different in terms of talent and taste and as jealous of their certainties and their “unparalleled excellence” as Degas, Monet, Renoir, Bazille and Berthe Morisot. These painters rallied around him personally as well as around his work, and Valéry appreciated that Manet had also rallied them to writers as divided and different as Baudelaire, Émile Zola, Mallarmé and Huysmans. Thus, Valéry placed Manet at the very centre of the cultural revolution of his times.

The third reference to Paul Valéry presented here testifies to the complex relationship between artist and writer that inspires the creation of the work. *My Bust* tells the story of the making by Renée Vautier (later Néere then N.R., spouse of Helios of Greek mythology) of a sculptured bust of Paul Valéry (currently on the

Place du Trocadéro). The poet, more compliant than desirous, had agreed to pose for her. The repetition of sittings and the increasingly ardent looks from the artist however composed in him a “psychic opera”, in which N.R. gradually became a “black body” absorbing and reflecting a light as unexpected and as blinding to the gaze and soul of he who believed himself to be utterly impassive. The artist, merely focused on her creation, triggered the passion of a “psychic tragedy” in the mind of the poet. A state that had transformed him from the object he was into a subject, a prisoner of mad love.

Many writers and poets made use of their love lives to create their work. Paul Valéry relied on his own inexhaustible sources of inspiration in his domain, admitting without reservations or qualms to “love doing the work.”

From writing to painting

Henri Michaux and the evolution of his work offers another instructive case on the theme of painting and literature, and more precisely poetry. When a publisher called on him for his “Les Sentiers de la création” Collection (Pathways of Creation), he refused to contribute and wondered why he was motivated to abandon writing in favour of painting. Indeed, what motivated him? A feeling of revolt, of intolerance acquired while writing (“lack of *rusticity*”). Words, he asserted, build an “immense prefabricated structure,” transmitted from generation to generation. “Down with words (...) there is no conceivable alliance with them”⁴. And to those who congratulated him for the quality of this or that page, he would answer that he would have preferred “to have experienced an anaphylactic shock.” He invokes this very serious biological phenomenon with such dire consequences for its victims to make his rejection perfectly clear. He turns it into a metaphor for a metaphysical shock, that is to say a violent emotion he hopes to cause in his readers. The one he was unsuccessfully seeking through writing. He again referred to immunology when he noticed that written works “lack antibodies.” Thus, he switched to painting.

Painters and writers

There are few artists who have not commented on their creations or written art criticism. Fewer still are those whose writings have, in terms of their volume and relevance, in addition to their analyses, achieved a literary dimension.

As Baudelaire clearly demonstrated, Delacroix was so passionate about critical analysis that he went as far as to undertake a *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts*⁵. In 1857, around the age of 60, he incorporated into his *Journal* the elements of this dictionary, developed after his election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which was itself engaged in developing its collective dictionary. Several of his analyses are highly relevant, even if his project of enumerating the key principles for the appreciation and criticism of works of art was so ambitious that he could not pretend to succeed in completing it.

We can only follow up this observation by mentioning the many artists of the 19th and 20th centuries – Klee, Kandinsky (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*), Matisse, etc. – whose judgements on the evolution of painting are also of great interest, lending relevance to their analyses. Moreover, contemporary art does not contradict their instruction. The writings of Van Gogh, for example, are more than a complement to his painted works. His analytical commentary, far more instructive than indicated by its banal title, *Correspondence*, with his brother Théo, is fully a



Henri Michaux in his studio
by Brassai in 1946.
© Archives Michaux

second body of work. Antonin Artaud himself revisited one of its particularly illuminating critiques.

Overlapping spheres

The painting-literature theme obviously requires a wide-angle approach as well. Innumerable biblical, historic, romantic and poetic texts have inspired painters. Conversely, countless themes of painted works, characters, dramatizations and decors inspired novelists. This vein is all the more prolific given it is facilitated by the great freedom of expression of writers and the filmmakers. Each keeping clearly in mind that this or that scene of a film is referred to on the cover page of this or that novel.

An example of this is the famous painting in the Louvre, exhibited in the Bord de l'Eau gallery (water's edge gallery), which, hanging behind a thick protective plate, escapes the notice of many visitors. They might be quite disappointed to have missed it if someone were to inform them that this work, by the painter François-Élie Corentin, represents *Le Grand Comité de Salut public de l'An II* and that Jules Michelet dedicated twelve pages of his *Histoire de France* to it.

On this canvas the painter united the key leaders who in 1794 established the revolutionary government of the Terror. All eleven of them, from Carnot to Collot and Robespierre, are perfectly identifiable by their portraits from the period, with for example Cohon seated on his lemon yellow chair.

Those who might be ashamed of their ignorance of this should rest assured. No one has ever seen this great painting because it does not exist! Everything about it, the artist, the commission and

its composition came straight out of the imagination of a talented novelist⁶.

Must one infer from this novelist's approach that art is only a *cosa mentale*? Does it mean that painters and writers can substitute for each other to arouse in viewers and readers similar visual and affective emotions? Obviously not. It is the erudition and the talent of Pierre Michon that enabled him to develop this fictitious painting. His approach, as interesting and successful as it may be, demonstrates the complementary nature of painting and literature.

Within its limits, lies the gigantic in-between of the creator's mysterious questioning.

And this assertion by Roland Barthes who asks: "*what one calls 'the history of painting', is only a cultural sequence. A single painter's body of work often contains the entire history of painting. One merely needs to change the levels of perception: Nicolas de Staël is in 3 cm² by Cézanne.*" But does he mean of an enlarged Cézanne, or rather of de Staël the 20th-century successor to his 19th-century predecessor? ■

1- Correspondence edited by Françoise Alexandre, Éd. L'Amateur

2- Lettre 123 of 4/9/1851

3- Pièces sur l'art, NRF,

4- Émergences-Résurgences

5- Hermann publisher, Paris, 1996

6- Pierre Michon, *Les onze*, Éditions Verdier and Folio, Gallimard, 2009



THE OPERA COMPOSER AND HIS LIBRETTO

By **Laurent Petitgirard**, Permanent Secretary, Member of the Musical Composition section

“Writing an opera is an adventure, sometimes even an odyssey”

The composer embarks on a voyage lasting several years. The choice of the subject he will carry, and may even transcend, is essential but it is only a starting point. The composer from the outset envisages the dramatic progression and quickly develops a very precise construction with the librettist, a sort of skeleton, which the latter will be tasked with developing and “putting into words.”

This architecture of the story, which will condition the progression of the libretto, often already roughly sketched out by the composer, is the first step in the collaboration with the librettist.

It determines the driving force in the work, its ambition. It illuminates the thinking about the structure of a subject and is a key moment for an opera composer and the reason it is difficult for him to adapt to an already written libretto.

Too many opera directors, wishing to develop projects in accordance with their tastes, first determine a subject and then look for a composer to whom they will propose if not impose it. The creation of a first opera is an important moment in the composer's life and it will be problematic if it begins with a subject that is imposed. This is because the need for a driving force, a breath of life, which can only emerge from the composer's desire to treat the story he wants to tell, will be lacking. Of course there are some very beautiful exceptions organized by opera directors that have proved to be quite successful. However, it is far more judicious to choose a composer for his musical language and then consult him about what kind of story he wants to tell. During the development of the libretto for *Don Giovanni*, Da Ponte apparently organized a meeting of the brilliant Wolfgang with Casanova. Who wouldn't dream of listening in on the conversation of this trio? Once the subject has been decided, the choice of the librettist is essential. One inescapable requirement for a libretto is that it must be succinct because singing time is one thing and written dialog something else altogether. First attempts are almost always much too dense. A sung text can lose some intelligibility but then gain meaning through musical emotion. The composer's key task is to find a librettist with the sense of rhythm in his written dialog. The linear energy of sentences is a determining element in the process of composing an opera. Another key question is the choice of language. The ideal is to

write in one's mother tongue, but some commissions require composers to write in a language they only partially master. The problem will vary depending on the composer's writing technique. A composer whose prosody leads him for purposes of intelligibility to replace a syllable with a note, will have far less room to manoeuvre than one who loves to develop a single word over a musical phrase.

Clearly, a librettist's status is not an easy one. Unless he is a famous author, he is insufficiently acknowledged, both in the traditional opera repertoire and often in the contemporary opera. To obtain billing of the librettist's name on posters is very difficult. Commissions from state institutions in France are only attributed to the composer, who must then engage and pay directly his librettist, which is not normal and quite complicated.

On the other hand, it is hard for some librettists to understand that the work of the composer is considerably longer and more complicated than theirs. The librettist must remain humble and expect the composer to request cuts and numerous modifications to his text.

While unfolding within a framework of profound mutual respect, the collaboration between a composer and a librettist must develop with a great deal of flexibility.

Several stages follow in succession as the libretto is developed. The general outline of the work is the first stage and one in which the composer will interfere a great deal. This is when the work's dramatic progression is developed, the characters defined and for the composer the scale of the various voices. The first time the words are put to music can be very revealing, for both creators, of the necessity for certain changes. The gradual development of the musical score, in a way, is going to side-line the librettist, who will henceforth only occasionally be called upon to intervene.

But a key aspect of their working together must be the "pleasure they derive from words." A sentence written well for singing is a gift for a composer. It is especially not, as some might imagine, a dialog composed of regular sentences, or even alexandrines! A symmetrical writing style in the libretto could be quite a nuisance for the composer as it creates a sort of straightjacket he may have trouble getting out of.

And that is the fundamental difference between opera and musical comedy, between a scene of an opera and a song. The conception and development of the musical progression of a scene from a contemporary opera cannot unfold within a "verses-chorus" framework for song. It is not enough to define the context of the story to be put to music, or even to write succinct dialog. There must also be the beauty of the language, the poetic gesture, the alchemy of the words.

That is why the skill of a genuine writer is essential and why librettos written directly by composers are often unsatisfactory. A composer who writes a libretto by himself is deprived of the constant feedback and enrichment of another point of view, which will in turn enrich his opera.

The opera composer and his librettist share with the architect the necessity of building their work to stand the test of time.



There is an amazing contrast between the flourishing of ideas and exchange as a libretto is being developed and the long and patient elaboration of the orchestral score. When a composer writes a symphony, a concerto or a piece of chamber music, he starts with a blank page.

When a symphonic poem is being created, he relies on the story, on the atmosphere of the poem in question, his first page is already less blank. But when composing an opera, his mind is invaded by the libretto, by the internal rhythm of the sentences and the power of the words. The basic action of the libretto propels the work forward. Its impact on the composer's writing is as rhythmic as it is emotional or intellectual.

This is the process that makes composing an opera such an extraordinary experience, one which will influence all the composer's future works and enrich his thinking. ■

Photos: *Guru*, opera in three acts by Laurent Petitgirard, libretto by Xavier Maurel based on an original idea of the composer's, staged by Damian Cruden. World premiere at the Castle Opera of Szczecin, Poland, 28 September 2018.

Left page: Sonia Petrovna (Marie)

Above: Hubert Claessens (*Guru*) and the choirs

Photos © M. Grotowski



The written word has always been the foundation of my painting and I have been greatly nurtured by it, in my approach as an artist and in the development of my thinking. To get closer to the truth, I prefer to deploy illusion. If myths are what interests me most in the domain of literature, it is because I place more trust in what is from the outset clearly stated to be fictive. History understood as objective cannot be thus as it is written by people in the context of a given period and environment and from a particular perspective. Myth is indeed misleading but as it is enriched by interpretation it achieves accuracy, confronting the reader with the unveiling of truth. I have studied Greek mythology and dived deeply into the

great texts of world literature, from Dante to Goethe by way of Rabelais and Cervantes. Reading Dante, I discovered the Christian cabala, which in turn led me to study the tradition of Jewish exegesis. The Tanakh – the Old Testament – is the ideal material for anyone who loves to rummage through language and play with polysemy.

For several years now this link connecting me to the written text has evolved, as we shall see in the way of a tighter focus on the words in themselves and the letters composing them. But before reaching this stage I had to go complete a first level of reading, simply the one of the stories themselves and the figures that spring forth from them. In the *Balaam*, painting, a reference to Numbers, chapter 22, I entertained myself by placing myself in the gaze of an animal who alone sees the angel and speaks to him. But the painting is silent... This angel enjoins the she-ass to not obey its master Balaam who is preparing, in compliance with the orders of Balak, to curse the troops of Israel. The story ends with a strange reversal of the

WORDS, LITERATURE AND PAINTING

By **G rard Garouste**, Member of the Painting section

situation because Balaam makes a prophecy in favour of Israel, which is all the more beautiful as this character is not even a Jew. The situation is noteworthy for its incoherence but it is hardly surrealistic. Beyond the very figurative imagery, the story is embedded in a more precise political and ethical project. Myths are universals. They belong to all cultures, and that is what attracts me to them. They form a link across the centuries with the people of the past. It is the main axis organizing my exhibition on Goethe's *Faust*. I was aiming to stage the blending of this myth with the one of the Golem, associated with the Maharal of Prague, and with other texts, notably the *Book of Job*, which shows similarities with the prologue of Goethe's play. My paintings echoed the same questioning on the themes of guilt and innocence, of wrongdoing and punishment. With the as a consequence, the emergence of another issue:

What enables the passage from one myth to another? This question reveals the question the existence of an in-between, of an intertextuality: in-between two words, myths and cultures, in-between two paintings; one must imagine the possibility of a missing piece joining the two paintings. It is out of this lack, out of what is not shown or written, that reflexion is born. It is the same theme as my last exhibition, titled "Zeugma", which means bridge. A pivotal theme attesting to a new orientation in my painting.

In fact, for a number of years now I have been working with Marc-Alain Ouaknin on a study of the Talmud. Every week we follow a dialogue between master and student: Marc-Alain, the master who teaches, and I, in the role of the student who listens and wofho questions what I am taught. The Talmud consists in part of tales and legends whose initial purpose is to enable the possibility of the interpretation of the law. Over the course of these weekly sessions we study the stories by the master Rabba Bar Bar Hana, notably relying on

the light shown on them by Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, one of the most eminent commentators of the Talmud. The Talmud, it is a bit like a psychoanalysis of the Pentateuch! Its masters and commentators used metaphor, puns and mind games to facilitate comprehension. In themselves, the anecdotes contained in these tales are of little importance. However, their function is to reveal the complexity of biblical texts by opening one to the multiple meanings and ways of reading. I love the folly and irrationality of these tall tales, behind the impenetrable form treasures of reflexion are hidden, provided one genuinely works at it with discipline and precision. I love this paradox, which seeks to detach us from our rational mind but by following a true discipline. One can say that the Pentateuch is built like a mathematical statement whose unknown is x , represented by the four letters of a tetragram. We work it out with this x to get closer to what there is to be discovered, in the same way as we solve an equation. Here, the reading is more like a sort of algebra to interpret and to contemplate with precise rules. The approach is purely philosophical: one is discussing humanity's place in the universe and the relationships between people. In the study, the reader makes the text his own and gives it meaning. To do this, one must make one's own way in this adventure, and words are the keys. Roland Barthes wrote a beautiful essay on this theme titled *The Death of the Author* in which the author vanishes into the writing itself and in the infinite field of readers' interpretations.

Today, therefore, I am working more on myth in its anecdotal dimension but on the root of words and on word games and letters. I propose to open the meanings of words and to translate them into painting, to play with richness of the language. It is the fruit of all the work I am doing with Marc-Alain Ouaknin and which nurtures my painting. Through the ambiguity of a silent form, I seek a greater bond with the text. There are Hebrew letters lost in my paintings. Life's accidents introduced me to this language I have become so passionate about and that I have been studying for over twenty years, but I would also have loved to learn Japanese, if the opportunity had arisen. One should have several lives to live. ■

INTERSECTING FORMS OF WRITING

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

Writers and artists have always maintained privileged ties. Creativity is enriched on all sides by a dialogue in which the words used to describe images reinvent language, as new as it is unexpected for the author seeking to define the relation between the image and being, and who consequently begins to think differently about his writing so that it functions as a reflexion of the image.

However, the frontier is fragile and a barrier continues to exist between the art criticism always practised by writers, and texts by authors attuned to a work of art for purposes of an in-depth mimetic project.

Since Mallarmé and Apollinaire, both witnesses and pioneers of modernity, visible reality and the grasping of forms have disturbed the search for the mirror-work, provoking experimentation with the respective language of the world of letters and of the arts. The 20th century offers numerous examples of the bonds between a painter and a poet or a writer, and friendship is not the only element contributing to the shared adventure of reconstructing and recomposing an original unity. Thus, the canvas and the book are the media, the receptacles for what the protagonists respectively, constantly reach toward what is being woven in the interior of being. Sometimes, the encounter between a poet and a painter fills the relentless pain of the lack felt by every creative person, and finds in the improbable interlocutor someone who reveals his creation. This unexpected way is a storehouse of possibilities of rare intensity in which life wells up through different but concomitant means.

The language of each is metamorphosed. A sense of communion arises, from which painting and poetry are regenerated through their liberation from the technical conventions of the past. The following are a few examples of this amazing adherence.

Samuel Beckett, in the immediate post-war period, was questioning visible reality. Through his regular contacts with numerous artists he became immersed in a universe parallel to the one of writing in which he was questioning the nature of the image, pushing this as far as dreaming of the absence of

its enigma. The first consequence of this was his renunciation of the codes and ethical exigencies and an asceticism so restrictive that it verged on iconoclasm. Beckett met Bram Van Velde through his brother Geer in Paris in 1937. The two men shared this questioning about the future of their commitment, one to painting, the other to literature, their reason for creating. Bram van Velde declared: "Painting does not interest me. What I am thinking is outside of painting". For his part, Beckett was searching in vain for "this coloured surface that was not there before. I don't know, not having seen anything similar. This seems to be unrelated to art, in any case, if my memories of art are exacts". For the writer who destined humanity to an eternal, perpetually recommencing wait, the image no longer has anything to do with what seems familiar to us, just as every utterance is false. By their refusal to place themselves in their respective agreed upon disciplines of painting and writing, the only truth either one had at his disposal was the contradiction of saying and the impossibility of stating illusory things.

Thus, eschewing explanations, being right was no longer an issue, and each experimented with primordial and unformulated immersion in nothingness. But then the situation reversed. Bram Van Velde gained awareness that painting is also a means of reconstructing oneself, whereas for Samuel Beckett, nothing was more impossible than knowing if things meant same thing or not since they were tied to his desire. For the writer, painting provided a foundational practice for training his vision, which had become the engine for his writing, but which could not be its object. From their confrontation emerged the necessity for Beckett to speak clearly about the Bram's painting. This was a fundamental experience for his writing.

Geneviève Asse is another of the emblematic artists in Beckett's universe. The exploration of space and its representation through colour, or by line in engraving, is not part of any sort of theorising on the part of the artist. It is rather through the echo of this gradual transfer of Beckett's linguistic substrate that he adapts to the poetic works of >>



Bram van Velde (1895-1981), *Untitled (Paris: boulevard de la Gare)*, circa 1956, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm.
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva, Switzerland, photo Sandra Pointet

>> Geneviève Asse. A book, *Abandonné* (1971), resulted from their shared perspective, for which the artist made engravings. Their silence is like a second writing and the lines incised with the burin answers to a rhythm and to the starkness of the spoken word.

Correspondences on the question of meaning and the possibility of the act of creation are woven through prose and poetry.

These affinities bringing actors together foreshadows the bond by which writing sheds light on painting and vice versa. Thus, the Argentinian writer and poet Silvia Baron Supervielle acknowledges having the revelation about the French language that taught her to write in the language of Racine and Chateaubriand while gazing upon a painting by Geneviève Asse. In her *Notes sur Thème* (2014, Éditions Galilée) she confides: "There is no official language or country. One could say that it is the result of an unconscious movement". This *Pays de l'écriture* (2002), the eponymous title of one of her books, is the one in which "the strange language sets sail again on the sea. I draw the contours of another space and move around within it to give a meaning to what is still inaudible and inexpressible. (...) The lights of the wind blend together to infinity. Whether it concerns writing or painting, the language germinates within this distance." Geneviève Asse is attracted by the poets in what she says is an incomprehensible but peremptory way. Yves Bonnefoy, André du Bouchet, André Frénaud, Jorge Luis Borges (translated into French by Silvia Baron Supervielle) are among her elective affinities. The dialogue summons light and the transparency of crystal, and colour, this personal blue mixed with grey and other blues, ultramarine and cobalt, handled with fervent and indescribable joy, like words and their mystery.

Space, the passages that diffuse light, the sign of a pictorial language's identity, the line that divides, have equivalences in the dialectic ordering of vision and presentation.

Bernard Noël and Olivier Debré have dialogued in this way, reinventing language, its substance of flesh and materiality, with the awareness of the phenomenon of entropy that has always traversed art. Debré illustre d'eaux-fortes *Le livre de l'oubli* (1985, published by André Dimanche, Editions Ryoân-ji, Marseille, engravings printed by Lacourrière et Frélaud). Lexical and formal Prosody answering in space where our memory is lost, which inspired Bernard Noël to write: "And if writing were an attempt to read oblivion? In this way, writing would touch on the organic." The organic of anchoring the plate to call up what is vanishing. And that day is the substance of our own oblivion, which gazes at us with gaze without limit."

These examples are a statement on the ontological regulation of research, expectations, questioning and doubts assailing every creator, rooted in the indefatigable attempt to express resemblances in their permanence. The encounter of writer and artist always takes place through the wonderment of an original language. ■

In the summer of 1972, Jean-Clarence Lambert's exhibition, *Travelling companions, the poetic works*, illustrated by contemporary artist, was held at the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne.

Bernard Ceysson, the museum's director at the time wrote:

"A rather unusual exhibition, this one, which gathers painters and sculptors around the works of a poet. His friends first and foremost (he has written about their works) but also travelling companions because together they blend image and writing, the poem and the visual work of art in splendid, refined or comical books. Thus, it is a show about friendship. But it is not only that: it is also to about now some twenty years of modern art, that is to say, of a combat led by artists and a poet."

In a group work dedicated to the poet, Françoise Py reminds us:

"The exhibition presented a dialogue with books – and artist's-books – the works of Alechinsky, Baj, Bellegarde, Berlewi, Bertini, Cieslewicz, Corneille, Debré, Esmeraldo, Filhos, Krasno, Lapoujade, Morano, Mortensen, Naves, Osa Scherdin, Rancillac, Saura, Silva, Sonderborg, Soulages, Sugai, Ubac and Vasarely: a few of the century's major artists, surrealism, Cobra and non-figuration."

In the preamble, Jean-Clarence Lambert explained: "After the vertiginous opening of Mallarmé's "A throw of the dice", poetry was able to gradually deliver habits, constraints and conventions (...) which printed writing imposed. Poetry is increasingly inserted with difficulty into libraries. Its true life is elsewhere (...) escaping the specifically literary domain, it has found a new place in harmony with the visual arts. Because a book paring a poet and an artist is not a simple illustrated book. It is a dual work, a joint ambition and attempt. Valéry had said of Symbolism that "it was the shared ambition of several poets to take back their property from music". To privilege the ear and the auditory values of language?



Above: Pierre Alechinsky (born in 1927), poster for the exhibition of illustrated books for Jean-Clarence Lambert, at the Arenthon gallery (Paris), 1998.



IN SYMBIOSIS WITH ARTISTS

By **Jean-Clarence Lambert**, poet, essayist, art critic and translator

A lyricism the poet developed in the series *Elle c'est-à-dire l'aube* (*She, that is to say the dawn*), integrated with *Dépaysage* (*Unlandscape*) and illustrated with four lithographs by Corneille, a Cobra painter with whom Lambert collaborated his whole life long. Both tireless travellers circling the globe, through words, they were seeking respectively, forms and colours, the terrestrial paradise of Woman.

Lambert wrote this commentary for his exhibition: "Les peintres du dépaysage" (The painters of the unlandscape) (Paris, La Roue gallery, March 1959):

Colours and forms, no need, to bestow life upon them, to appeal to resemblance, to situate them in a landscape. They are direct, directly, as directly as possible, life itself, manifested in the pure state. Painting no longer represents the landscape, it represents the unlandscape, the living and lived interior image."

The penetration of the arts of each other, poetry, visual arts and music, is an irreplaceable means of knowledge attested to by his book *Le Voir-dit* (*The See-say*), réunissant texts of criticism and poems with illustrations, commented drawings by artists: Corneille, Alechinsky, Sugaï, Duncan, Vielfaure, Lapoujade, Viseux, Sondenborg, enhanced by two graphic series with their poetic texts: *La fin de la ressemblance* (*The end of resemblance*) (Gianni Bertini) an *Éléments pour la reconstitution d'un acte d'amour* (*Elements for the recreation of an act of love*) (Achille Perilli). ■

Jean-Clarence Lambert en poésie, Daniel Leuwers - Françoise Py - Hervé Pierre Lambert - Jean-Yves Bosseur, 2016, Éd. Bookelis Copernic
Excerpts chosen by Lydia Harambourg with the friendly permission of Jean-Clarence Lambert

It may well be that since the Futurists and Apollinaire, because of Éluard and the Surrealists, that vision has become the guiding light in poetic research. This has resulted in remarkable extensions that have engaged both the poet and artists. To achieve, among other things, the poem-object, the book-object and the object-poem."

Several Lambert exhibitions in France and abroad, "Les mots et le visible" (Artcurial 1994), "50 years of shared poetry, Jean-Clarence Lambert and companions of his work" (Arenthon gallery 1998), "Encounters with Cobra" (Amstelveen Museum 1997) inspired the following comment from Françoise Py: "While thinking about what Lionello Venturi wrote about Baudelaire in his classic *Histoire de la critique d'art*: "the artistic sensitivity, that is to say a community of experience with the artists, is the necessary source of critical intuition", one will notice in the title of these exhibitions the passage from "travelling companions" to "companions in works" Lambert published his first collection of poems in 1959. Illustrated by Soulages, he was linked to lyric abstraction.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE STORY

By Coline Serreau, member of the Cinema and Audio-visual Artistic Creations section

These two arts nurtured my childhood and my culture, without my ever having wondered about a rivalry or any sort of hierarchy between them.

The controversies launched by the critics and the cineastes of the New Wave (Nouvelle Vague) were a sort of infantile illness of cineastes who needed, legitimately, to overcome their inferiority complex toward their elder sister, literature, and who wanted to assert that a cineaste was a creator as much as an author, a painter or a musician.

This personal work of self-affirmation, of a refusal of the relationship of dependence with regard to the romantic story, joined forces with the sever critique of the "tradition of French quality", which had governed pre-war cinema, often drawing its subjects from classical literature.

The Nouvelle Vague was also in sync with the artistic history of the post-war years when the nouveau roman, abstract painting and concrete music were at work deconstructing forms and thereby expressing their rejection of a generation that had enabled the war and its cortege of atrocities. Beckett, with *Waiting for Godot*, asserted more powerfully than all of them and in perfectly in tune with the angst of his contemporaries, this negation of the belief in God and in humanity, this radical and caustic questioning of outdated values. "We are alone and we are going to die", this assertion underlying his entire body of work encountered the questioning of a generation overwhelmed with despair after the discovery of the Nazi camps, of the genocide perpetrated by a "civilised" nation which had however given the humanity the greatest geniuses of philosophy, music and science. And the revelation of the crimes of the Gulag managed to complete the deepest disgust and mistrust of western societies with regard to ideologies. In the words of the remarkable philosopher Jean-Claude Michéa, at that time we entered the era of axiological neutrality, backbone of liberalism: each individual, according to his personal choices, defines, according to him and only for himself, what is best suited to his personnel fulfilment, for which he has been convinced that he is henceforth the unique goal to reach for, since any idea of the good of a collective ethics was only an illusion. This fear of ideologies had already

begun at the end of the wars of religion in a France traumatised by civil war.

This is how, by believing they were deconstructing forms and acting as revolutionaries, many artists of this period, without even realising it, were obeying the *diktats* of the industrialists of the "trentes glorieuses" who were going to make a concrete aboveground world, cut off at the roots, programmed for making little ideology-free consumer soldiers, cultivating individualistic hedonism.

May 68 upset somewhat the cult of unbridled consumerism, but the failure of Stalinist socialism strengthened the planetary victory of liberal society, of unembarrassed profits disconnected especially from ethics, a victory in which the destruction of the world and the ecosystem was already baked into the cake.

The quarrels between partisans and adversaries of the New Wave today arouse as little interest as the evocation for example of the famous "*Querelle des Bouffons*" (quarrel of the buffoons) of 1752, about which very few remember whether or not it was still and always about the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns.

Now that there is no longer anyone who doubts cineastes are authors and creators, the bridges between literature and audio-visual creation are once again key to industry vitality. One out of every four films is an adaptation of a novel and the big publishing houses all have an active marketing department promoting their authors to producers.

Yet another phenomenon came along and upset the public's relationship with fiction, television series and series produced by the giants of the internet.

Series have re-established ties with the tradition of the 19th-century feuilleton and the sagas in instalments by Balzac, Zola, Sand, Maupassant, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Selma Lagerlöf and so many others, and even with the great myths that are being revisited, the tribulations of the world are also being retold in longer instalments.





Literature is what make this stretching of time possible. That is its strength, contrary to the limited time of feature films in cinemas. Indeed, what filmmaker can rival the thirteen pages of the highly detailed description of a mansion offered by a banker to one “Lorette” in *Splendeur et misère des courtisanes?* (*The Harlot High and Low*, 1847). Here, Balzac was relishing his mastery of savant and precise words to enable us to envisage the magnificence of a place, the sensuality of a face, the luxuriant charm of an overgrown garden, when the virtuosity of words still made people dream, just a few years before the advent of photography.

But the series can take the time to describe the entire trajectory of one, two or even three generations, over a long period and even to dally in calculated slowness to keep us hooked. The frustration one felt in seeing a novel summarised and atrophied in film adaptation limited by the number of times allotted for filling up the theatres has begun to fade with the distended time of the series. And now the great mythical stories are being brought back to life, replacing drab navel-gazing subjects. Here again art is revisiting history: in a world become a planetary village where we are informed about everything, we are constantly in contact with the Other, and must weave everyone’s stories together.

And lo and behold we see from being restructured, the figurative in painting side by side with its abstract cousin, music coming back to tonality (which was never abandoned in popular music), and the story, whether its is romantic, biblical or mythical, in literature like cinematographic fiction, triumphing everywhere.

The avant-gardists have become old hat, the cinema is no longer very attractive to young people, except for *blockbusters* with special effects, Series, whether sagas myths or critical of society are totally engrossing to the young public.

Thus we see the moderns becoming the ancients and the new moderns, the waves that follow and then chase the preceding ones.

Only time, wearing away human memory like the torrents of water wear stones into pebbles, long and impassive time, will tell what remains important out of the hodgepodge of creators. ■

Above: image extracted from film *La Crise*, 1992, written and directed by Coline Serreau, starring Vincent Lindon and Patrick Timsit. César 1993 for Best Original Scenario.



Life is a dream...

By **Régis Campo**, member of the Musical Composition section

My first encounter with René de Obaldia in 2017 was stupendous and wonderful. Since then a youthful and solid friendship has grown. I am deeply moved every day. The topics of our dreamlike conversations are highly diverse: Olivier Messiaen, port, Michel Simon, beautiful women, the strangeness of the world (which is a dream!), Alexandre Vialatte, flea races in a stalag, the ability to entertain oneself... There are declarations of friendship as well as declarations of love. So I composed for choir and cello based on a few poems excerpted from the *Innocentines*. The work is created by the cellist Henri Demarquette and the Sequenza 9.3 ensemble, under the direction of Catherine Simonpietri. It is a testimony of friendship suspended in musical notes for my elder fellow academician. His art is so filled with grace, humour, incongruities and deep feelings. One of the poems set to music is particularly touching for me: *Moi, j'irai dans la lune* (I'll go to the moon)" adding this quote of Chesterton's which René de Obaldia likes to repeat: "Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly".

And I learn a lot as the youngest academician, the youthfulness and light-hearted wisdom of my fellows of the five academies – magnificent creators and faithful companions. ■



“FIVE OR SIX, LET’S SAY SEVEN

Encounter with **René de Obaldia**, dramaturge, novelist and poet and **Régis Campo**, member of the Musical Composition section
Interviewed by **Nadine Eghels**

Doyen of the Académie Française, René de Obaldia recently celebrated his 100th birthday. On this occasion, the composer Régis Campo wrote a piece based on one of his poems, the *Innocentines*. This musical composition for mixed choir and cello solo, which is a reference to nursery rhymes, was created for the annual public Séance of the five academies, last 23 October. It was interpreted by the Sequenza 9.3 ensemble, directed by Catherine Simonpietri and the cellist Henri Demarquette.

Nadine Eghels: What sort of relationship with the fine arts have you maintained in your writing? What has nurtured it and, how has it been a source of inspiration for the arts?

René de Obaldia: I am especially sensitive to music in particular. Painting was harder for me to get into. When I came back from the war, I didn't have any money... I wrote poetry, which isn't very profitable. I would have liked to play music or paint but I would have had to buy an instrument, or paints, and that just wasn't possible. Writing only required pencil and paper. That is why I became a writer and not a musician or painting. But I had great musician friends like Olivier Messiaen, Henri Sauguet and Daniel Lesur with the La jeune France group.

N.E.: In sum, you became a writer by default

R.D.O.: Yes, but I don't regret it. There are blessings for which we are not responsible and we just thank heaven and there's still a lot of work to do. And the encounters, they shape you too.



TEN

t, member of the Académie française

N.E.: What would you say have been your main artistic encounters in life?

R.D.O.: I have known a lot of people who were very important for me but who no one would recognise nowadays. For me, who will soon be 100 years old, it's the loss of these others that is hard. I was lucky enough to have great actors for my theatre. Destiny, encounters, they are the mystery of life

*N.E.: How do you react when your work inspires someone's creativity, as the piece by Régis Campo based on the *Innocentines*?*

R.D.O.: It is always nice when another artist is interested in your work. My work has for the most part been very well translated into many languages. In the theatre there have been a number of plays staged and I have sometimes been surprised!

N.E.: How did this collaboration between you and Régis Campo come about?

R.D.O.: That too was the result of chance encounters. I knew Régis through my daughter-in-law and elective affinities immediately developed.

*N.E.: Régis, where did the idea come from to compose a musical piece based on the *Innocentines* by René de Obaldia?*

Régis Campo: Through serendipitous encounters. I was talking with the cellist Henri Demarquette about how René's work enchanted me, and he introduced us. I felt straightaway that we were going to get along well, and I asked René to choose a few poems from the *Innocentines*.

R.D.O.: In fact, we selected them together, in part because some of them had already been set to music, and I didn't want repetitions. I also simplified a few poems, made a few cuts.

N.E.: How many poems comprise the selection?

R.D.O.: Five or six, let's say seven.

N.E.: Have there been film adaptations of your work?

R.D.O.: No, that was not my generation. I didn't know any cineastes and I was especially drawn to the theatre. I also knew some painters, like Atlan, with whom I was very close and Héliou.

N.E.: Does the form itself of your writing predestine it for the theatre?

R.D.O.: No, writing for the stage is very different from writing novels! But I had this opportunity. I met Jean Vilar at a cocktail party. He said to me, in his beautiful voice: "Obaldia, you ought to write for the theatre". I found a script I had written for myself stuffed in an old fryer, from the days when I rented a servant's room, and I sent it to the TNP. A reading was held at the Palais de Chaillot, and I had been lucky to have extraordinary actors – Maria Casarès, Georges Wilson, Jean Topar, I've forgotten some of them. There was a small but very appreciative audience. So Vilar decided to stage this play at the Théâtre Récamier, which was the one where he tried out new works. It was very successful, and I was consecrated a playwright, I was caught in my own game and I still write for the theatre.

N.E.: What is the title of this play?

R.D.O.: *Genousie*. I had invented an imaginary country, with an imaginary language, Genousien. It was hilarious. There was a simultaneous dreamlike love story. It was about fifty years ago.

N.E.: For the other musical compositions based on your work, did you also participate in choosing the texts?

R.D.O.: I asked to be able to listen and I refused many things. I was delighted to have my work put to music by Sauguet, and it was Madeleine Renaud who read the *Innocentines* on the radio. There was Gérard Calvi too. I was spoiled by these wonderful interpreters...

N.E.: Many thanks for this interview.

R.D.O.: You have exhausted the subject but not the author! ■

Above: Catherine Simonpietri directing the Sequenza 9.3 ensemble and cellist Henri Demarquette. Photo Ben Dauchez

Left page: René de Obaldia and Régis Campo. The poet honoured us by receiving the team of the *Lettre de l'Académie* with simplicity and humour in his Paris flat. Photo CM Pezon

Nadine Eghels: You are a writer, screenwriter, dramatist, lyricist... How did these different artistic practises develop, and have the cohabitated throughout your long life rich in experiments and creations?

Jean-Claude Carrière: It is always hard to talk about one's own path... I worked with Louis Malle who came from a large French bourgeois family, and I came from a little house of farmers where there was not a single image. Louis Malle used to say to me: "When I was born I had already heard all of Beethoven". And me, nothing. There wasn't even a radio in the house. There is the origin, the social background one comes from, childhood and then what one learns and discovers. My father read on book in his life, George Sand's *Valentine*, which I don't know where he found it, and when we suggested he read, he would reread this book. He would say: "I love this book, why would I read any others?" That had a big effect on me.

N.E.: Like children who always ask to hear the same story...

J-C. C. : Yes, in fact. My first books were low-cost books, received at school, in general belonging to the Bibliothèque Verte: *Croc-blanc*, books by Jack London or Jules Verne in condensed versions. Those were my first experiences reading. But I must have been really been charmed, and assiduous, because I came across a catalogue When I wanted someone to offer me books, I would ask my aunts and my school teacher uncle. There was one "beautiful book" in my library, *L'Aiglon*, bound and illustrated by Jean-Paul Laurens, who was a late 19th-century academic painter, I and I always took very precious care of this book. It is through books that I discovered the world.



N.E.: More than film?

J-C.C.: I was reading before going to the cinema. There was no cinema of television or radio... my first films, I saw them around age 10 and in a neighbouring spa town, Lamalou-les-Bains. During the war, I was in a school run by priests where I had been placed supposedly because one ate well there, which by the way was false. And just after, in '45, I arrived in Paris and was parachuted into the Lycée Voltaire...without knowing who Voltaire was!

N.E.: The break must have been brutal...

J-C.C.: Yes, and after that, it was endless discovery. I read André Breton at 14. I was literally starving. All the more because during this period, for five years, we had been totally deprived of everything that was American: no books, movies, we were only watching German films. So we jumped on Faulkner, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, on all the American writers some of whom by the way were living in Paris. It was a complete change, and then came jazz – a revelation! – to which I was initiated by Django Reinhardt. My parents had given up the vineyard and



THE MAXIMUM EXTENSION OF LIFE

Encounter with Jean-Claude Carrière, writer, screenwriter and stage director
Interviewed by Nadine Eghels

were running a bistrot in the suburbs, in Montreuil-sous-Bois, with a clientele of gypsies, and Django would come and play there from time to time. He enrolled me in the Hot Club de France and that is how I moved from Colombières-sur-Orb, in Hérault, to the cellars of Saint-Germain.

N.E.: And the cinema?

J-C.C.: During this period I dove into both literature and the cinema. I was discovering everything, passionate about everything, the world was my oyster.

N.E.: And painting?

J-C.C.: Painting, I came to that at almost the same time, in '46, I saw my first painting exhibition. Before that I didn't know what it was. I had never seen a painting. There was, there still is, despite television, where big efforts are being made in that direction, a generation of people totally deprived of any contact with what we call art. It was an exhibition, at l'Orangerie, of contemporary painters. Imagine a fourteen year old boy arriving from nowhere who finds himself standing in front of Max

Ernst, Miro, Tanguy etc., very surrealistic painters... So for me, painting is that. You stay hooked on the first shock you receive. I was totally ignorant of what painting had come before... I had never seen a museum! And it was five years later, when I went to Germany, at the Munich Pinakothek, that I discovered the old masters (I had in fact made one or two very brief visits to the Louvre). And there, I had to sit down when I saw a Leonardo de Vinci. In every life, wherever one may come from, whatever our background may be, each of us has a different pathway in relation to art. Depending on one's discoveries, we form a sort of bouquet in which we try to make the different things fit together. >>

Above: Jean-Claude Carrière and Luis Buñuel, in 1972, during the preparation of the film *The Phantom of Liberty*. Screenwriter for the Mexican cineaste for nineteen years, their collaboration began in 1964 with *Diary of a chambermaid*. Photo DR



>> N.E.: *What was the next decisive step on your pathway?*

J-C.C.: I was born in the first century in history that invented new art forms. If we were still in the late 19th century, we could only speak about painting, music, theatre and literature... Think about everything that has been invented since! To begin with the cinema, radio, television, photography, voice and sound recordings. We have no sound from the 19th century! We can imagine that the sound of brooks and birdsong were the same, but we are not totally sure about that.

I realised that each new technology, that I practiced and taught,

was invented during then century in which I was born and each one required a new language. One doesn't write the same way for the theatre as for film... And if one wants to – and that was my case – to be a screenwriter, one has to learn the techniques of cinema.

I wanted to try all these new languages... which required that I never be a stage director. When you make a film, you are stuck with the label “director” and you can no longer write – if you publish books, no one will read them. I wanted to stay at the level of writing, which allowed me to go in different directions, among which one was that attracted me a great deal, the theatre. That opened immense vistas.

I began to write for the stage in '68, and my first play *Laide-mémoire* (*The Reminder*), with Delphine Seyrig was a big success. After which I began working with Peter Brook,

collaboration with lasted 37 years. If I had directed a film, that adventure would never have been possible. And the *Mahabharata* still sustains me today, to the point that Indian specialists use my stage version as starting point.

N.E.: What does your screenwriting bring to all the big directors with whom you have worked, with regard to your literary technique?

J-C.C.: It has the particularity of being incomplete, or rather transitory. Its place is somewhere between nothing and film, and at the end of shooting, the screenplay can be found in the dustbin, its function, and its existence, is over. That's also what interests me in writing songs, how one shifts from one world to another, the one of writing to the one of music. In sum, what I am passionate about in writing is the way it allows me to move from one world to another. That is why I try to place writing a little bit everywhere...

N.E.: And with regard to painting?

J-C.C.: I have been asked on several occasions, the latest request being from my painter friend Julian Schnabel, to write on painting, but it is a domain where I feel much less at ease. Nevertheless, I just agreed to write a text for an exhibition he is preparing for the Musée d'Orsay, where several of his paintings will be placed next to some fifteen paintings he has selected from the museum's collections, a text titled *Un œil d'avance* (*An eye ahead*). As if painting had an eye ahead of us. But it is the most difficult thing: to establish communication between different forms of expression through words. Finding a language that circulates between the different muses, mine being Clio because I am a historian by training.

N.E.: Do you have the feeling that those are distinct parts of yourself that come into play depending upon whom you are working with for cinema, the theatre, the opera or literature? Or is it just a different mode of expression for the same questioning, the same research?

J-C.C.: I don't like self-analysis...

N.E.: Can you undertake several creative projects at once, or do you have successive periods?

J-C.C.: Let's take drawing for example. I have been drawing since childhood. I have had exhibitions, and that, yes, I continue to draw and that helps me unwind. But when I'm writing a screenplay, I cannot be working on something else. The book I just published with Odile Jacob, *La vallée du néant* (*The valley of nothingness*), took all my attention, I was plunged into it and I don't see how I could have done something else. But in this book there are two chapters where I talk about painting, more

specifically, about two paintings, one by Delacroix, the other by Goya. These paintings are related to the theme of the book... my writing like my thinking are nurtured by painting.

N.E.: You have also spoken about painting...

J-C.C.: Yes, I have had the occasion to talk at the Louvre before one or two paintings that hold my attention, and it was an amazing experience, to tell the story of paintings, in front of two hundred people, in the evening. I talked about the *Saint Paul Preaching in Ephesus*, by Eustache Le Sueur (1649). Speaking about while showing at the same time, and not writing. At the time the revolution had already occurred in Iran. And in Le Sueur's painting, Saint Paul is standing on a stone staircase, dressed as an ayatollah, in rouge, wearing a beard. Most of the painters hide secrets in their works. Thus, the yellow robe, the colour of chuckholes, attributed to Saint Joseph in most classical paintings, even with Titian. In this painting, in the foreground from behind, there is a kneeling black slave, busy setting fire to something. And if you look closer, you can see that they are the papers with the Greek theorems written on them. What Le Sueur is telling us in this painting is extraordinary! If we know how to look at things that are not only magnificent but also totally relevant, that a certain person noticed at the time. A black slave, kneeling, in the process of burning Greek science. Faith destroying science. Not bad. And this painting was in the church. Yes, definitely, painting has an eye ahead of us.

N.E.: What is the function of art in today's society? Does it have an emancipatory value?

J-C.C.: Yes, of course. Art is there to shed light, to say things that perhaps we do not see. For example, the Impressionists started to divide light in the 1870s-80s, when light is no longer perceived as a uniform surface or a gradation but to the contrary as a series of little points. That corresponds exactly to the early scientific work of the atomists, who divided material into atoms. The young Einstein was an impressionist. It was the same approach applied to different domains... Always an eye ahead!

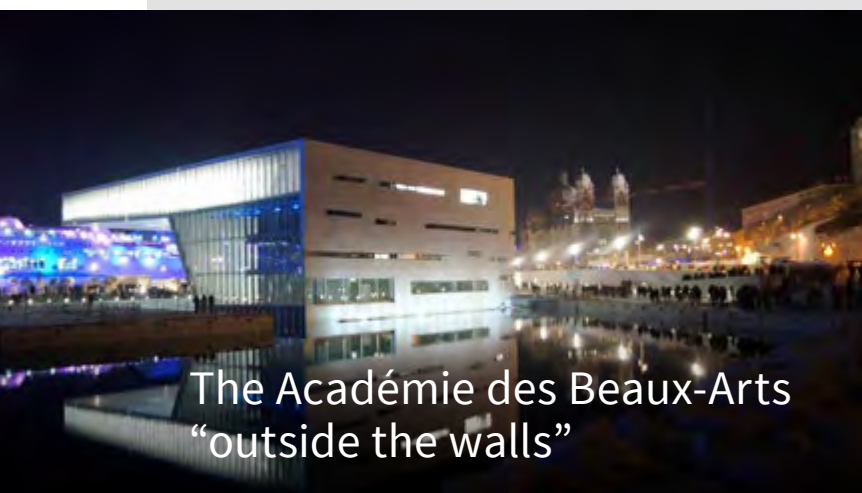
N.E.: And in our era?

J-C.C.: Of our era like all the others, history will account for 5%, all the rest will disappear. Art is a glorification of life, and in some cases the maximum prolongation of life. When we look at all of Goya's work, it is not possible to go further. His life is of no great importance. What he bequeathed to us is a vision of daily life, of monarchs... and of the rest of the world. But we can also say that of Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare... We will never really know who they were. We only know their work. Which is immense.

Franck Riester, Minister of culture



The Académie des Beaux-Arts hails the nomination of Franck Riester to the position of Minister of Culture, recalling that his action in defence of intellectual property has been essential for all creators. Member of the collège de l'HADOPI (Chief authority for the distribution of works and the protection of rights on Internet), rapporteur on two bills (2009-2015), Franck Riester was notably the co-author in 2011 of a report on the "creation musical and diversity in the digital era" which advocated, among other things, the creation of the Centre National de la Musique. ■ Photo DR

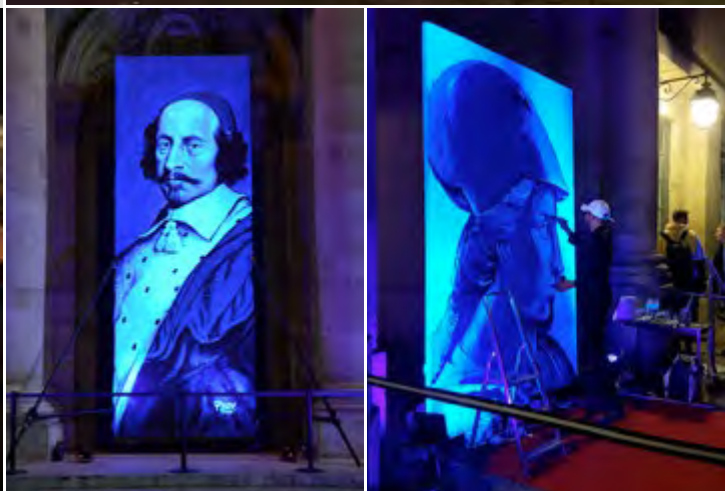


The Académie des Beaux-Arts "outside the walls"

Partner in the festival "¡Viva Villa!", the festival of artists' residencies abroad, the Académie des Beaux-Arts organised in this context, and for the first time since its creation in 1816, a "decentralised" plenary session at the Villa Méditerranée in Marseille. The Bureau of Académie decided to dedicate part of the "debate" of this session to the role of municipal and regional authorities in cultural policy. A consultative body for public authorities, the Académie des Beaux-Arts in fact leads, in addition to its missions of supporting artistic creation and of the defence of the artistic heritage of France, an activity of analysis of questions of an artistic order during its weekly sessions, during which it regularly invites leading lights of the cultural and political world to speak.

This statutory session of last Thursday 4 October was followed by a discussion with the members of the Photography section of the Académie on the theme chosen for the 2018 edition of the festival, "Frontières", followed by the screening of the film *Chaos* by Coline Serreau, last member elected to the Compagnie in the section of Creations artistic in Cinema and Audiovisual. ■

Above: the Villa Méditerranée, in Marseille. Photo DR



"Nuit blanche" at the Institut de France

To kindle and encourage creativity in all its forms, that is the will of the Institut de France, which, for the first time, from Saturday 6 to Sunday 7 October, participated in the Nuit Blanche (all-nighter festival with some institutions open till dawn) and invited the urban artist Pascal Boyart, alias "PBoy", to give it a totally innovative lighting. From the Pont des arts, one could perceive, at the foot of the majestic Cupola, un portrait (2,20 x 6 mètres) revisité de Mazarin, bâtisseur des lieux, éclairé par de la lumière noire qui lui donnait cette couleur bleu profond. À partir de ce tableau, les visiteurs étaient guidés jusqu'à la Cour d'honneur pour y découvrir une performance artistique tout au long de la nuit. ■ Photos Frantz et Pascal Boyart



GÉRARD LANVIN

The sculptor Gérard Lanvin passed away last 29 June. He had been elected 21 February 1990, to fill Jean Carton's chair. His friend Pierre-Édouard, member of the Sculpture section, pays tribute to him here.

“29 June I lost my friend, Gérard Lanvin. We had met at the École des Arts Décoratifs where he was my professor. We never lost contact for 37 ans. Today, we must part, and I would like to say adieu to him because he was one of that race of lords, of the most beautiful families.

Lord he was in his humility, which was not false modesty, calculation of complex, but simply the fruit of a beautiful soul. Never showing off a vertiginous dimension of his. But who knows what will remain of any of our works in a century. Works of art are born, disappear and then are reborn and in that is their mystery.

Lord too, owing to a rare absence of bad-mouthing and jealousy. Gérard had a pure kindness, without ulterior notions. We liked talking with each other very much. Sculpture of course, our life, but very often poetry.

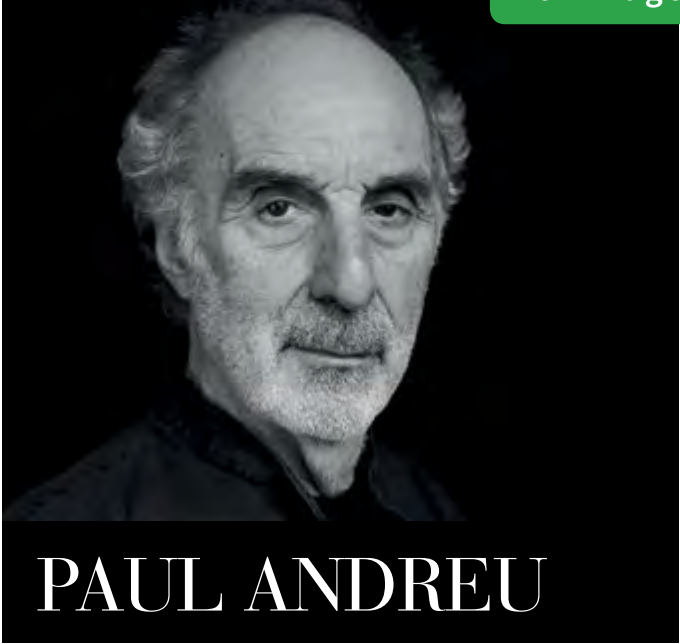
We share a passion for Victor Hugo, whose work he knew perfectly.

In his bedroom, in the hospice centre where he spent his last days, Hugo's portrait hung facing his bed. Undoubtedly because Gérard had a profound aspiration for “grandeur”. A word that seems to signify nothing but whose meaning intends a great deal if one knows that grandeur is the effacement of the “personal” before that which surpasses, the abandonment of petty gains to the advantage of the gift that submerges. He loved the grandiose and never petty Hugo, the way he loved the late Chateaubriand or the Malraux of the speech on Jean Moulin. All Lords, naturally.

He recounted with amused shame having followed Paul Valéry without his knowledge in the streets of Paris when he was a young man. And I answered that I had done the same thing with Samuel Beckett.

I salute you for one last time, dear Gérard, and all my recognition for having manifested that one can be a great lyrical poet without brandishing one's little person and especially that true greatness needs nothing more than itself. It enables one to live? It is life itself.”

■ Photo Juliette Agnel



PAUL ANDREU

Elected to the Architecture section in 1996, to the chair of Henry Bernard, the architect Paul Andreu left us suddenly last 11 October. His fellow architect and friend, Aymeric Zublena, evokes the man and the artist.

“An artist is someone who has the folly to believe that he can, after so many others, with so many others, bring something new to the world – a creation – and it will be to share”. This magnificent sentence, Paul Andreu wrote it on the eve of his death, in his speech for welcoming, under the Cupola of the Institut de France, the photographer Jean Gaumy.

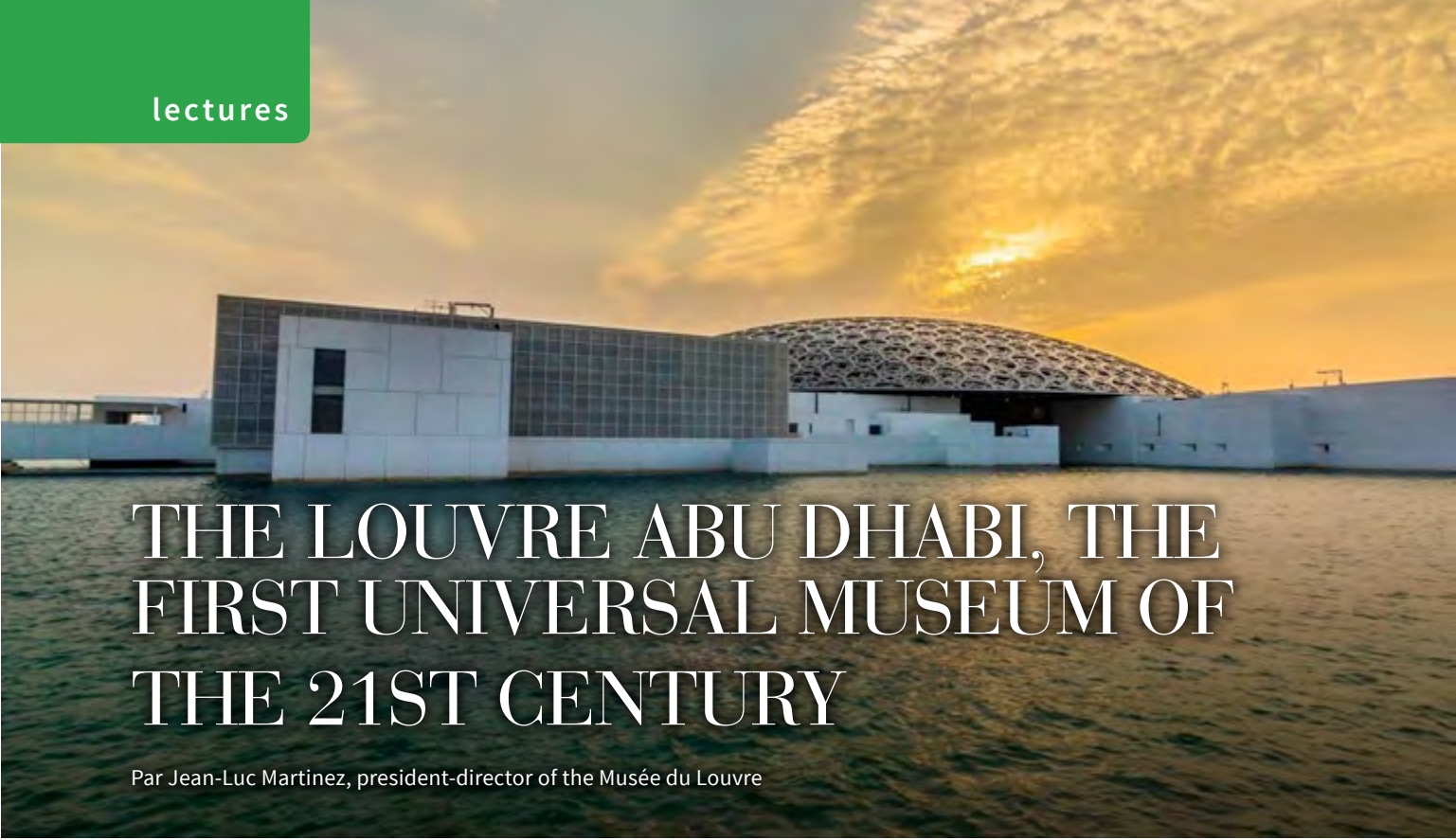
We know and admire the grand projects he built around the world, from the Terminal 1 at Roissy to one of his last, the Grand National Theatre of China. Two monuments, two islands of a radical geometry, precise and thorough, out of the same thinking. Two islands circled by plains and water [...]

Paul was a Gentleman (*Honnête Homme*), his works as architect, and engineer, painter and writer were an embodiment of his person. He would say he wanted to ally science and art, he who very early on manifested his aptitude to englobe the entire field of human thinking and activity by being received simultaneously at the École normale supérieure and the École polytechnique.

Each time I was struck, when he intervened in a séance, at the Académie, by the quality of silence which quickly settled in among us as we gave him our immediate and sustained attention we paid to what he had to say, to what said to us with the precision of the architect and the engineer and with the calm and depth of someone who wanted to raise the level of thinking about the question we were debating.

Even today, certain sentences he spoke over the course of these interviews come back to mind: on airports, “for my generation, the very fact of flying in the air was something like a deliciously sinful thing”, Paul was a poet; on architectural creation, « ... as musicians say who have a comprehensive conception of their music, independent from, nous architects would like to have a total vision of space, free ourselves of its too easy representation on paper and be able to directly access in the brain the representations that are undoubtedly not in the habitual geometry, Paul was a visionary... [...] »

■ Photo Hannah Assouline



THE LOUVRE ABU DHABI, THE FIRST UNIVERSAL MUSEUM OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Par Jean-Luc Martinez, president-director of the Musée du Louvre

The Louvre Abu Dhabi opened to the public 11 November 2017. The event was covered by all the international media who hailed it as “the most beautiful museum of the 21st century”.
Photo DR

The Louvre Abu Dhabi was born out of the desire on the part of the United Arab Emirates and France to build the first universal museum of the 21st century, which has been materialised thanks to an exceptional intergovernmental agreement, signed 6 March 2007. Abu Dhabi, the capital of the Emirates, has experienced, in the space of generation, an unparalleled economic expansion. Its leaders, with whom at the first rank of the Emirates founders is Sheikh Zayed, chose French expertise to develop a rich cultural institution destined to educate future generations and develop a new sector of their economy and society.

This agreement illustrates, on the French side, the continuity and the competence of the public service. From the signature of the agreement to the opening of the museum, no fewer than four Presidents of France have supported this project. Our cooperation is for the long term, as part of a relationship of trust based on the following calendar: 10 years of French loans for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, 15 years of joint exhibitions, 30 years and 6 months the use of the name of the Louvre.

To successfully achieve this project, the French government created the Agence France-Muséums (AFM), which gathers 17 French cultural institutions, and worked hand in hand with the DCT (Department de Culture et de Tourisme). The missions of the AFM are to define the scientific and cultural project of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, to assist the project management of the Emirati teams, to coordinate French loans and the organisation of temporary exhibitions, and to provide guidance in the constitution of a permanent collection. The acquisition policy undertaken by the AFM is in particular a major success despite some doubts on the part of some of the possibility of building a universal collection in the 21st century. From 2009 until today, approximately 630 works have been purchased, including those by Bellini, Gauguin and Klein in paintings and masterpieces of archaeological works such as the image of a princess of Bactrian and a magnificent Chinese

dragon from the Stoclet collection.

The building is without a doubt Jean Nouvel's masterpiece. It is in fact a museum city, in the form of a medina, protected by a dome, which evokes the Al-Ain palm grove and filters the sunlight. This immense dome, which with its diameter of 180 meters could cover the Cour Carrée of the Louvre, gives the impression of hovering above. The museum, built on an island, faces the water, like a sort of Venice of the Emirates.

There is a synergy between the architecture and the collection, whose presentation marks a turn in the history of museums. It rises to the challenge of creating a new museum that tells the story of the visual arts of all the cultures of the world from prehistory to our eras. The visit emphasises the tension between the local and the global. Punctuated with major works from French museums, it highlights the Arab Peninsula and the Middle East while revealing the history of the world that focuses on “technological revolutions” (money, paper, printing, engraving, etchings, photography, cinema) that have contributed to the spread and development of a visual culture now shared by a major part of humanity. Following a chronological path, the museum shows what is shared by all human cultures without negating their specific characteristics. In addition, a museum dedicated to children shows works that will become part of the collection. It is a place where one can learn how to contemplate works of art.

Thus, for the first time outside France, one can see gathered in one place the best of French collections, and the museums of France encounter in Abu Dhabi a new public that has little knowledge of French collections. There are Emiratis, from the Gulf, but also more broadly from the continent of Asia, with Indians, Pakistanis, Sri-Lankans, etc.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi is a unique opportunity for France. Through it, the country places its cultural expertise on an international pedestal while also allowing us to promote our values. ■

**Extract from the lecture of 6 June 2018,
Great Hall of Sessions**

FRANCISCO PACHECO, TO BE AN HONNEST MAN IN SEVILLE, DURING THE GOLDEN CENTURY

By **Jean-Louis Augé**, chive curator of the Goya and Jaurès de Castres musuems

Francisco Pacheco (1564 – 1644) was a Spanish mannerist painter, famous in part for having been the master and father-in-law of Velázquez. Artist savant, he was the author of one of the three treatises on painting of the Spanish Golden Age (*Siglo de Oro*): *The Art of Painting*, written between 1619 and 1638, a key source of references in the domain of the arts as well as the history of mentalities.

Francisco Pacheco (1564, Sanlúcar de Barrameda - 1644, Séville) is known for having been the master and the father-in-law of Diego Velázquez de Silva, who entered his studio in 1611 at the age of 11. His real name of Francisco Pérez del Río, he adopted the one of his uncle, the canon Francisco Pacheco († 1599) and began his training in as painter in Seville with Luís Fernández. A painter on easel and retablos, his pictorial style was still influenced by



the Hispano-Flemish and Mannerist styles, of which he is the last example in the great city of Andalusia in the early 17th century. A painter of quality works he was also excellent at drawing, he was thus a collector, poet, essayist but especially as a theoretician of painting.

In addition to *Livre de Portraits Véritables* (*Book of Genuine Portraits*) dated 1599 but not published until the 19th century, he authored the famous *Arte de la Pintura*, one of the three treatises on Art en Spain during the Golden Century (*Siglo de Oro*), the most important and the only one to provide details on pictorial techniques. The structure of this book, written from between 1619-1620 to 1638, is divided into three main sections dedicated to the justification of the nobility of painting and its supremacy over the

other arts (except for poetry), his theory and parts, his practise and way of of carrying it out. The book concludes with the additions (chap. XI to XVI of book III), most precious for because they deal with the representation of sacred images as well as the religious controversies that were agitating intellectuals of living in Seville at that time. The latter, far from being boring, prove to be unequalled testimony on the history of mentalities.

Erudite painter, endowed with a sense of humour and subtlety, he played a major role in the training of his illustrious son-in-law, about whom he provides a biographical note à la Vasari, in particular on the subject of the first sojourn of Velázquez in Italy. He was unjustly criticised for the supposed dryness of his panting, by both his compatriots (Antonio Palomino) and by historians of French Art (Paul Lefort), who never forgave him for being appointed in 1618 as controller pf sacred images by the Inquisition, an honorific position which consecrated his reputation in Seville. Pacheco also worked in the area of polychromy in sculpture with the greatest artists of his time, and notably Juann Martínez Montañes, whose portrait was painted by Velázquez.

Beyond the fact that is two great masterpieces in painting hang in the Goya de Castres musuem (*The Last Judgement*, 1611-1614; *Christ served by the Angels*, 1615-1616) as well as drawings, in 2010 it was possible to acquire a copy of the Princeps edition. The translation of this work in its totality was deemed a necessity, as it also takes into account the works of his Spanish friends, and notably Sánchez Cantón and Bonaventura Bassegoda. Pacheco, who died in 1644 at the age of 80, did not have the pleasure of enjoying the publication of his book in 1649, the year of the great pest in Seville.

His labour, after three and a half centuries, remains a genuine *pensum* of knowledge of the era, the one of the gentleman (*honnête homme*) who recognised the genius of his student as being “the crown of his final years”. ■

Excerpt from the lecture of 17 October 2018,
Great Hall of Session

Above: Portrait of Francisco Pacheco, by Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), c. 1620, oil on canvas, 41 cm x 36 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Spain.

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Leonard Gianadda • 2001
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SA Karim Aga Khan IV • 2007
SA Sheikha Mozah • 2007
Sir Norman Foster • 2007
Antonio López García • 2012
Philippe de Montebello • 2012
Jiří Kylián • 2018



Creation of a Choreography section

The Choreography section, with its 4 members, was created during the plenary session of the Académie des Beaux-Arts of 25 April 2018. The decree changing the bylaws of the Académie, signed by the President of the Republic, its protector, and by the Prime Minister, was published in the Journal officiel de la République française of last 9 October. The election of new members will occur in forthcoming months. The Permanent Secretary, Laurent Petitgirard, is delighted with the opening of this ninth section, which hereby signals, by the Académie, the recognition of a major and immemorial art, and has also contributed to the election of the Czech dancer and choreographer Jiří Kylián, last 25 April dernier, as a new associate foreign member to the chair previously held by Léonardo Cremonini. The Académie of Beaux-Arts henceforth numbers 63 members divided into 9 sections.

The Letter of Académie will cover this in more detail on the new section in the next issue.

Photo: Ballet of the 20th Century, Maurice Béjart, and premier of the *Messe pour le temps présent*, Festival d'Avignon 1967. © JLgB



Page 1 and opposite:
Portrait of Arthur Rimbaud made
by the photographer Étienne Carjat
(1828-1906), c. 1872.

Detail of an old reprint – Étienne
Carjat had destroyed the originals –
that had belonged to Paul Claudel,
now in the Manuscripts Department of
the Bibliothèque nationale de France.



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