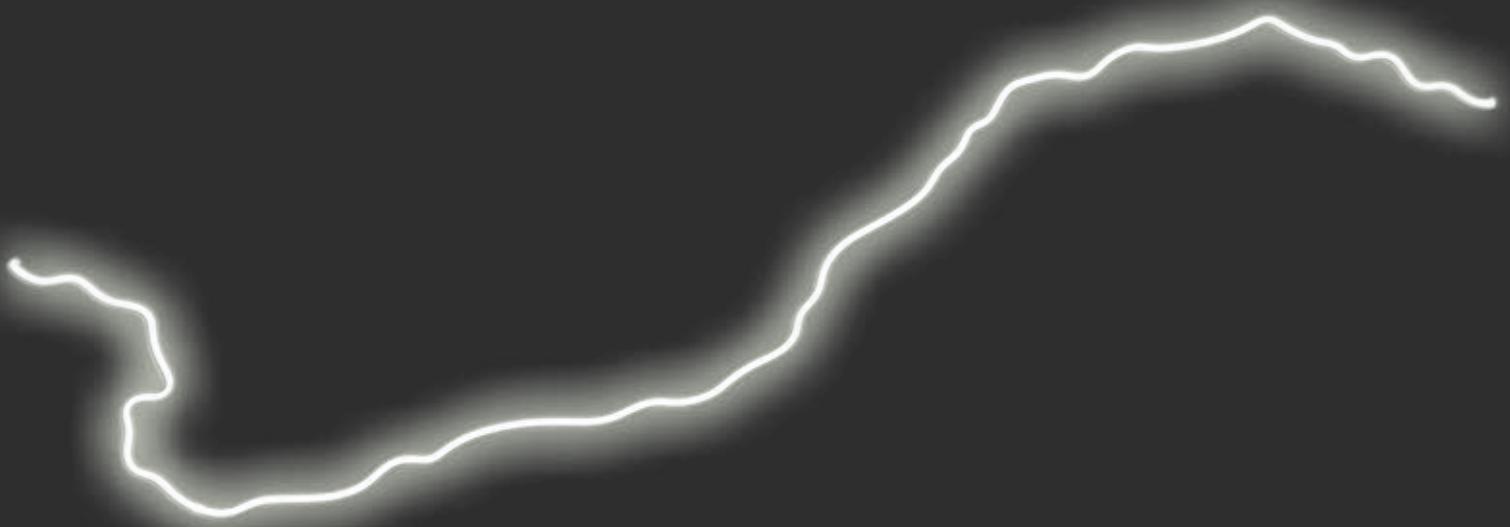


Within / Beyond Borders



Within / Beyond
Borders

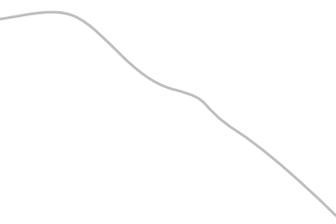
**The Collection of the European Investment Bank
at the Byzantine & Christian Museum, Athens**

19 September – 31 October 2011



"All men naturally desire knowledge. An indication of this is our esteem for the senses; for apart from their use we esteem them for their own sake, and most of all the sense of sight. Not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions".

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I. 980a.21, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989.



Art from the collection of the EIB, the EU's bank

Exploring frontiers through post-war EU art

2011 marks the 30th anniversary of Greece's accession to the European Union (EU). It is a time to celebrate and reflect on the remarkable achievements that Greece and the EU have jointly brought to fruition over the past three decades. As the EU's long-term financing institution, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has financed Greek investment projects that have played a significant role in promoting economic progress.

In keeping with the EU's role of fostering constructive debate and innovation, it is fitting that the EIB should offer an original contribution in the form of a cultural initiative: the first public showcasing of its art collection in a Member State outside its Luxembourg base.

Art offers a catalyst for thought and can encourage reflection that sheds light upon different layers of meaning. This is relevant for discovering the value of an artistic retrospective such as this. For example, it encourages a creative and broad historical perspective which can support subtle reflection on contemporary events. In Greece, at a time of substantial change, the process of exploring different perceptions and meanings is equally pertinent.

The EIB art collection naturally mirrors the increasing scope of the Bank's character and activities. It aims to reflect milestones in the artistic and geographic expansion of the EU. In so doing, it celebrates the evolving creative capacity of the EU, recognising this as an asset to both its artistic and business life.

The EIB's collection focuses on work by artists from EU Member States. This increasing support for emerging EU talent reflects the Bank's role of fostering development and innovation in line with EU policy.

This exhibition brings the EIB's collection closer to the ultimate beneficiaries of both EU and EIB projects – its citizens. It pays tribute to the extraordinary pool of creative talent in Europe. Furthermore, it illustrates how the EU's development has offered potential for constructive synergies and shared ideas across borders, while acknowledging the unique capabilities that reside in individual countries. This co-existence of local and cross-border characteristics typifies the EU, and the exhibition aims to illustrate this.

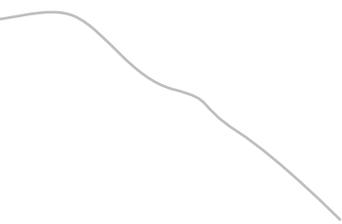
Athens is a historic cultural centre and therefore a natural starting point for the EIB's initiative to widen access to its art collection. The Byzantine and Christian Museum provides a powerful context, as it offers a window onto a rich artistic perspective, ranging from historical heritage to contemporary creation. It is a place that can embrace broad and fresh perspectives. Within these walls, secular contemporary art is at ease as a neighbour to Byzantine and Christian art. In short, the museum is the natural birthplace for an exhibition aiming to explore recent EU art history across a broad range of artistic styles and media.

On a more personal note, I am strongly convinced that art can add value to the lives of our stakeholders and partners: art can offer a useful catalyst, in particular for relational and intellectual development, which is important for economic progress. Art is a unique source of dialogue. It offers an extraordinary platform for learning, innovating, interpreting the past and the present, and building the future. This is in harmony with the EIB's mission.

The Byzantine and Christian Museum and the EIB invite you to share this opportunity to embark on a unique journey through a broad cross-section of European contemporary art. The EIB extends special thanks to the Museum for its instrumental role in bringing the exhibition to fruition.

Plutarchos Sakellaris
Vice-President
Chairman of the Arts Committee
EIB





The European Investment Bank

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the European Union's long-term financing institution. Its shareholders are the 27 EU Member States which have jointly subscribed its capital. The EIB's Board of Governors is composed of the Finance Ministers of these countries.

Within the European Union the EIB supports the EU's policy objectives in the following areas:

- *small and medium-sized enterprises*
stimulating investment by small businesses
- *cohesion and convergence*
addressing economic and social imbalances in disadvantaged regions
- *climate action*
mitigating and adapting to the effects of global warming
- *environmental protection and sustainable communities*
investing in a cleaner natural and urban environment
- *sustainable, competitive and secure energy*
producing alternative energy and reducing dependence on imports
- *the knowledge economy*
promoting an economy that stimulates knowledge and creativity through investment in information and communication technologies, and human and social capital
- *trans-European networks*
constructing cross-border networks in transport, energy and communications

In 2010, some 95% of the total EIB financing of EUR 72 billion went to projects in the EU.

Outside the EU, the EIB is active in over 150 countries (the pre-accession countries of South-East Europe, the Mediterranean partner countries, the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, Asia and Latin America, and Russia and other neighbours to the East), working to implement the financial pillar of EU external cooperation and development policies (private sector development, infrastructure development, security of the energy supply, and environmental sustainability).

The EIB is the largest international non-sovereign lender and borrower. It finances its activities by borrowing on the capital markets, mainly through public bond issues. Its AAA credit rating enables it to obtain the best terms on the market.

The EIB works closely with the other EU institutions, especially the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission. The European Investment Fund is a subsidiary of the EIB.

The Byzantine and Christian Museum, committed to broadening its horizons with the exhibitions it hosts, is delighted to present an exhibition of works from the European Investment Bank's collection, under the title "Within/Beyond Borders". The link between multinational, multicultural Byzantium and the European Union of 27 Member States is clear. We should also not forget the role of the Byzantine empire, bearer and perpetuator of the Graeco-Roman tradition, in shaping today's European identity, and its contribution to the unique character of European art. In 1964, a major exhibition was held in Athens under the title "Byzantine Art, A European Art", with outstanding works from all the museums of Europe, to highlight precisely this dimension of Byzantine art.

It is therefore no accident that the European Investment Bank, the key financial institution of the European Union, has chosen Athens and the Byzantine Museum to present an exhibition of works from its collection, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Greece's accession to the European Union. This remarkable collection, which was started in the 1980s, comprises more than 550 works by prominent artists from all the countries of the European Union, and serves as a record of the variety and diversity of artistic expression from the second half of the 20th century until the present.

The 37 art pieces to be shown in the Byzantine Museum, which are the work of 34 artists, belong to various contemporary trends of European art. The reason for showing them is not only to present the artistic identity of today's Europe; the aim is a dialogue between these modern works and the works of Byzantine art which form the museum's permanent collection. It is well known that many characteristic features of Byzantine art, which are most evident in painting, such as abstraction, transcendence, spirituality and the suprasensory, as commonly manifested in paintings, can be found at the heart of many contemporary artistic trends.

I warmly thank the European Investment Bank, and all those who, on behalf of the Byzantine Museum, have contributed to the impeccable presentation of this exhibition.

Eugenia Chalkia
Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum

Within / Beyond Borders

Curator's approach and guide to the exhibition

The collector

A truly European art collection offering a wide-ranging panorama of artistic creation since 1958

The EIB's art collection comprises some 550 works of art, encompassing paintings, photographs, works on paper, sculptures and installations.

The collection spans work created over more than half a century (from 1958 right up until today). The approach to collecting has been designed to very gradually create a singular and fairly long-term perspective on contemporary EU art, which reflects the long-term vision of the Bank.

Timely acquisitions mean that the Bank has been able to build up a substantial collection at relatively modest cost. The Bank has tended to acquire art at an early stage in an artist's career: some of the artists have since become widely recognised, or even iconic and internationally acclaimed such as Janis Kounellis, Anish Kapoor, Tony Cragg, Sean Scully or Olivier Debré. In recent years the focus has been on acquiring work from emerging or newly established artists. This artistic focus echoes the EIB's role as a pioneer in fostering economic development, particularly in the less developed regions of the EU.

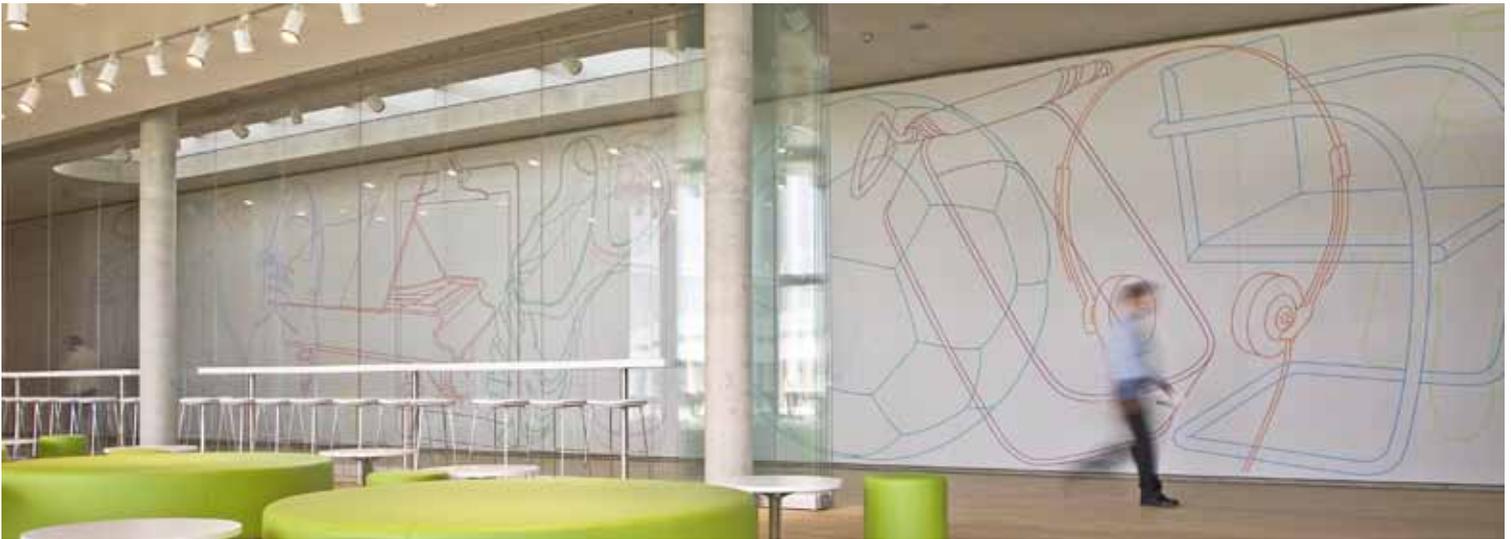
Art acquisitions are subject to a rigorous process: the Arts Committee – comprising several members of EIB's Management Committee (Vice-Presidents) and staff – with the assistance and guidance of well-established experts and museum directors, selects and buys art, either at art fairs, galleries or artists' studios.

Acquisitions have to meet strict criteria: the art needs to have been produced after 1958, the artist needs to still be living at the time of acquisition, and she/he has to come from one of the EU countries or a candidate country.

For its 50th anniversary, the EIB unveiled three works of art commissioned from two leading EU artists, Michael Craig-Martin and Tobias Rehberger. The new installations are a cultural centrepiece for the Bank's office in Luxembourg, an innovative and luminous eco-building that provides an ideal showcase for these works.



Within / Beyond
Borders



Within / Beyond Borders



A corporate art collection: a socially responsible investment for the future

The Bank believes that culture, when viewed as a strategic resource, can be a significant generator of value, notably by fostering new ideas. These new ideas are fundamental to innovation and socially responsible, sustainable economic development.

As a corporate collection, the EIB's art collection naturally interacts with the evolving scope of the Bank's character and activities, particularly its geographic expansion in line with that of the EU. This brings "Europe" to EIB staff from all the EU Member States. It also creates a need for art that resonates both within and beyond borders.

Overall, the aim of the collection is to encourage reflection in a manner consistent with the corporate vision; to offer creative energy, inspiration and even spiritual nourishment, on a day-to-day basis; to provide a bridge between different languages, styles and viewpoints and to act as a catalyst for relational and intellectual development, which underpins economic progress.

Art is a unique source of dialogue. It offers an extraordinary repertoire for learning, exploring, experimenting, interpreting the present and building the future.



Within / Beyond
Borders



Within / Beyond Borders

The theme

The show's theme and the ideas behind it: Exploring the concept of borders through post-war EU art

The EIB's mission, which takes it across and beyond European boundaries, means that it is only natural for its art collection to explore the theme of frontiers.

The thematic approach – Europe: Within/Beyond Borders – lends itself to a wide-ranging examination of the development of European art over the last half century. It reflects a Europe inherently characterised by both dynamism and constraints.

The idea of frontiers – real or imagined, physical or in the mind – is omnipresent in this exhibition. A frontier can be seen as delineating space, time and discourse. It lends itself to contrasting thoughts about discipline or confinement on the one hand, and innovative exploration or breakthroughs on the other. The selection of art in this show aims to explore both angles. It gives examples of the transcending of frontiers or crossing of borders – territorial, intellectual or artistic. It also investigates notions of spatial and visual limitations and confinement. In doing so, it tests ideas of the already explored versus the as yet largely unexplored.

Comprising some 40 works, the show offers both what are now mainstream historical examples, and what are still considered to be more experimental works. To indicate the diversity of European artistic output, the show offers a wide variety of EU artists working in various media – painting, sculpture, photography, light box/installation and work on paper.

The Exhibition – a virtual tour

The visitor can explore a progressive development from pure abstraction to tangible materiality and a more figurative language – frontiers in many forms.

The tour begins with minimalist colour and form in the entrance and **room 1**. It shifts to richer colour and more varied visual and artistic concepts in **room 2**. Finally, **room 3** offers photographic representations that, in some cases, offer a direct reflection of reality.

In today's world of media saturation, it provides a reminder of the potency of simplicity and age-old methods, as well as recognising the potential of discerning high-tech innovation in art and communication.

Entrance: Questioning the concept of borders: their territorial, historical and personal significance

The starting point for this exhibition is the work *Border By Memory* (2006), by the Bulgarian artist **Pravdoliub Ivanov**. An apparently anonymous suspended neon tube, it in fact retraces the course of the Danube River on the geographical border between Bulgaria and Romania. Through the intensity of a luminous line in stark contrast to the monochrome backdrop, the artist looks into the concept of a border from a highly charged personal perspective. The work inevitably raises questions about the value of a border, as a frontier to cross, or as a boundary to respect. It also signifies the relative interpretation of borders, and their politically loaded significance.

The character of this frontier changed when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007. When this artwork was created, EU accession was very much anticipated, but not yet complete. It can thus be seen as evoking the change in the meaning of a border or frontier over time. This work of art is guided by Ivanov's wider objective: he says he is critically exploring "the delicate balance between capitalism's promise of personal freedom and the realities of economic dependence". From today's perspective, the continuity of a physical boundary, coupled with the evocation of past memories, could be seen as making the border a symbol of political and economic change.

The second work featuring in the entrance corridor is a photograph by the Slovenian artists' collective, **IRWIN**. *Like to like/Mount Triglav* (2004) is a photograph that calls to mind the shifts in frontiers of artistic meaning over time. It depicts the re-enactment of a happening called "Mount Triglav", which occurred in 1970 and involved a group of local artists (OHO). The original performance took place when Slovenia was behind the Iron Curtain and sought to challenge the system by focusing on an iconic emblem of Slovenian identity, Mount Triglav (meaning "three-headed"). This icon still graces the Slovenian flag today. However, the photo from 2004 is apparently not intended to be a simple derivative and repetitive statement. While drawing resonance and strength from its antecedent, the more recent photo seems to be more a study of the value of recollection in interpreting the present. It emphasises the value of historical context and explores the complexity of the image, and its meaning over time. It recognises that even in a different and positive new era, one cannot abandon a critical eye.

Both these works set the context for the exhibition and invite the visitor to question the concept of frontiers.

Within / Beyond Borders



Room 1: *More than just a border*

This group of artworks visually questions the idea of borders and the fragmentation of space through an abstract language. The apparent formalism of straight lines or geometrical enclosed areas is dissimulated, especially by their juxtaposition with the play of light and shadows. The first impression conveys a rather rigid and basic form, which is emphasised by a harsh black and/or white palette. But a closer look reveals that these works actually conceal considerable visual and conceptual complexity. This is emblematic of the methods applied in minimalism and conceptual art.

Purist abstraction: Innes – Reis – Morellet

Callum Innes's *Exposed Painting Lamp Black* (2004) is a perfect example of a pure 'atmospheric abstraction', which has characterised his painting since the 1960s. Here, the artist has actually 'unpainted' the canvas, removing sections of paint from the surface with washes of turpentine to leave only the ghostly trace of a previous presence. It is creation through a process of subtraction. It can be seen as emphasising the fragility of physical boundaries, as well as the need to avoid preconceptions about their nature and origins. The de-layering also reminds us, subtly, to think of boundaries in three-dimensional terms.

A similar purist approach is epitomised by **Pedro Cabrita Reis's** oeuvre. *Polychrome No. 2* (2000) exemplifies the artist's interest in the reflection of light through basic shapes and colours. The picture surface is divided into two black and white opposing vertical sections on a suspended pane of glass. The simple structure reflects and refracts light differently, depending on the angle of perception, while potentially also reflecting the persona of the viewer. First impressions of a simple boundary give way to subtle nuances and competing sources of visual interest.

A historical precedent to this method of artistic discourse is represented by the series of **François Morellet's** *Trames*, which date back to the 1950s. In the example shown here, the technical title *2 trames inégales de 19 mm + 2 mm avec interférences* (1974) introduces the essence of Morellet's intention to create emotionally neutral work, free of any narrative. Rational rules and constraints guide his artistic creation, though variations prompted by 'chance' interrupt the logic of the composition. Thus we are confronted with frontiers as constraints, but also with the possibility of softening, transgression or redefinition.

Poetic geometric abstraction: Scully – Callery – Pijuan

From spaces very clearly delineated and borders sharply defined, we now encounter works whose impact is more conducive to ideas of transience and the blurring of boundaries.

Over the last few decades the Irish painter **Sean Scully** has reintroduced the credibility of poetry into geometric abstraction. In *Passenger White White* (1997) Scully seems to interrupt the discipline of the structure and – by consciously allowing some irregularity – introduces the trace of a living and lyrical presence. His tools are the thickness of the brushstroke, the ill-defined outlines, the less-than-perfect symmetries. He applies non-orderly occurrences. All signs of an order that only appears to be perfect. A reminder that frontiers can be poetic and inspiring, and also transient, permeable, and subject to imperfections.



A similar delicate sensory pleasure may be evoked by **Simon Callery's** monochromes. *Enniogram* (2000) calls for contemplation from the viewer: the apparently regular surface is composed of numerous detailed variations, realised by finely made vertical and horizontal lines of oil and pencil paint. This seemingly grid-like work suggests that physical boundaries can simultaneously cross or conflict as well as integrate into a harmonious whole. These are frontiers as a composite entity, revealing a surprising richness in their foundations.

The same white monochrome concept is represented in an opposite manner by **Joan Hernández Pijuan**: he vividly emphasises the craftsmanship of his approach and the physical work on the pictorial surface. The title itself, *Limits* (1998), is revealing: does it refer to a limitation of the space, to physical boundaries or to the creative process? What is at the margin, at the periphery? A frontier that does not hide its intentions.

Looking back on these three works, one is led to think that they look conventionally arranged only at first sight: the pictorial space is superficially arranged and organised, but the artist consciously counteracts this orderly approach and allows for a lyrical and personal touch.

Minimalism and the potency of 3-D: Plensa – Parmiggiani – Kounellis

An ostensibly abstract two-dimensional representation can become a sculptural or even an architectural structure with a strong sense of the third dimension. This is achieved by **Jaume Plensa's** *Untitled* (1996), a large drawing of a box or enclosed space. It is shaped as a simple block, but nonetheless gives the sense of a solid construction, being thickly painted with black lacquer and charcoal. The sense of heaviness derives not only from the thick glossy black material, it also comes from the contrast with the lightness and luminosity of the translucent rice paper that serves as a fragile support. The division between two contrasting media shows the two sides of a frontier mutually enhanced and working in synergy. The box shape also offers a confined space or perimeter, which one both enters and departs from, thus raising the concept of space delimitation and transgression.

With the Italian *Arte Povera* generation, the material presence integrates the conceptual research. **Claudio Parmiggiani's** *Delocazione* (1971) uses smoke to evoke a rectangular shadow on a white canvas. Through subtle interplay of the special visual architecture, he creates a sense of absence and uncertainty. The title is evocative: *Delocazione* explores on the one hand the metaphor of home, displacement, relocation; on the other it calls to mind the intentional delocalisation, the fact that something is taken out of its natural environment and territory. Such thoughts are not alien to those confined within a mental frontier or contemplating the passage across such a frontier. The visual evokes a sense of vagueness or permeability, but also a degree of hazard and immateriality. Also, the use of smoke brings to mind the natural and territorial environment and the borders that characterise it.

A powerful sense of determination is projected by **Jannis Kounellis's** *Untitled* (1996). The artist is a leading exponent of *Arte Povera*. This heavy sculptural piece is made up of five iron panels, polished and attached to one another, with a long bar bolted horizontally and holding tightly some felt cloths. Here humble and plain materials are creatively combined to convey a strong sense of artistic and intellectual direction. The metal components, once united, form a physical frontier that both constrains and guides. So, as the viewer engages with the work, there is a sense of being physically steered and channelled, but in a straightforward and transparent manner.

Within / Beyond Borders

Room 2: *Redefining borders*

Walking into this room, the visitor will notice a more dramatic expressive vocabulary. Here colour is the focus. It becomes, in the context of this exhibition, an instrument to "redefine frontiers". The sense of space takes on another dimension with the addition of colour and the explosion of media and techniques. It offers a new world of aesthetics, reconfiguring and diversifying, compared with the more austere sense of frontiers in the first room.

The starting point is **Anish Kapoor's** *Untitled* (1998), a pure, intense blue circle. Its almost indeterminate optical depth invites the viewer to enter another dimension. Blue powdered pigments cover the concave aluminium surface, in an almost spiritual rendition of a basic form. The viewer is confronted with somewhat indeterminate physical boundaries: the space around the work is an integral part of its appreciation and appropriation. Here the concept of the floating "void" takes on added meaning: a negated space – or not? This work may therefore be regarded as a frontier that invites reflection and exploration across its boundaries. Also the sense and representation of space defies traditional categorisation and both invites/repels the viewer, given the intensity of presentational form and colour.

Just as intense are the blue ballpoint lines that, guided by a ritual of nature, repeat the same motif in **Jan Fabre's** drawing *Untitled* (1987). For these are the imaginary tracks of the teeming life of insects in the universe. Fabre is well known for such innovative interpretations and applications of the natural world, which include iconic sculptures composed of thousands of shimmering insect shells. In this more austere choice of medium, the impact is no less thoughtful or powerful. We seem to be reminded that nature may define a course of action, where the visually confusing physical manifestation conceals a strong and coherent sense of purpose.

A further challenge to concepts of structure and creative frontiers is provided by **Clay Ketter's** *Bau* (2001). This artwork is a collage painting that looks like an original view of an architectural elevation plan. The curious mix of media and message almost instructs us to think outside the box. The edgy patchwork relief that characterises this collage not only highlights the third dimension but results in a relatively fluid impressionistic imagery. Interestingly, in this case it is not a barrier to creating a sense of structure, although at the same time it calls the structural boundaries into question.

The step into the third dimension is also manifest in **Imi Knoebel's** *Rotes Gitter* (1988-1999). This is a metallic grid composed of strips and segments, in which the fluorescent red, blue and yellow underline the feeling of artificiality evoked by painting. This is a totally abstract plastic construction. But it resonates with a contemporary world, where the frontier is ever thinner between apparently artificial design and realisation in a virtual or physical reality.

Moving along in the exhibition, one sees that there is more ambivalence in the perception of colours. This ranges from, on the one hand, the more conventional understanding linked to the emotional sphere. On the other hand, alternative perceptions, notably the usage of pure, rational, abstract models to define the space, now come to light.

Such questions of colour and structure are key to understanding the idea of painting large chromatic fields. **Günther Förg** investigates this idea in *Untitled* (1991), where he depicts with extraordinary simplicity the emergence of warm colours over cold ones, through the presence of an intense orange section appearing over the green reduced segment of space. Here the transgression of a border can be seen as carrying a benevolent purpose.

Stripes of colour are horizontally assembled in **Juan Uslé's** vinyl painting, *Soñé que revelabas X (Nemo)* (2002). A sophisticated tactile texture characterises the black parallel vertical strokes, leaving the impression of embroidery. Intelligent use of physical and visual borders makes the frontier a source of unity and coherence.

Regular borders are broken up by violent colour markings in **Fiona Rae's** *Endless Endless* (1999): the perfect rectangular shapes, created using stencils, are floating on a black background interrupted by mixed-pigment brushstrokes. One interpretation of this liberal crossing of structural borders may be to emphasise the positive energy to be derived from rejecting rigidity and being "square".

Similarly, irregularity and freedom of colourful expression dominate in **Bernard Frize's** *Dynamo* (2000), an intricate net of coloured tubes and patterns. This art piece marks a contrast between visible disorder and controlled patterns. Boundaries are subtly challenged and intentionally transgressed.

Tubular forms and coloured hybrid shapes also inhabit *The Song of the Blacks and the Blues* (1989-1996), by **Louise Bourgeois**. The viewer sees an imaginary dialogue between groups of mysterious figures. The title's allusion to musical harmony is translated into the visual sphere, where the simplicity of forms permits a harmonious utilisation of the challenging and potentially dissonant boundary between the figurative and the abstract. It shows that frontiers can be dissimulated with a strong, humanising, effect.

At the end of this process of emergence of colour as a mark of the artists's creative and emotional freedom, the next group of paintings finally brings us closer to a direct representation of reality, as it presents traces of recognisable figures. The colour shifts from the abstract to a more figurative language.

Per Kirkeby's *Untitled* (1996) is at the margins – it defies any categorisation as either abstract or representational. The idea of Nature, always present in the artist's work, is conveyed through layers of dark paint and marks of red and green pastels. We learn that frontiers can be places of uncertainty, physical and spiritual exploration, but nonetheless a valid experiment in progress.

A different darkness finds a body with the horrifying *Portrait No. 11.81* (1981) by Antonio Saura. The human being appears in a harsh but powerfully expressive style. Saura's work epitomises stories of excess and violence, lending itself to representations of fear evoked by sinister personalities. It may suggest there are some borders we should not cross. The same is true for *Rival* (1983) by Marlene Dumas. It represents an almost surreal vision (or nightmare?), depicting scenes loaded with ambiguity and uncertainty. Who is the rival? Who succumbs to the attraction/repulsion of whom? The ambivalent message disturbs the viewer's sense of certainty. It evokes the need for a personal decision about which borders we are ready to cross.

Within / Beyond Borders

Room 3: *Borders of reality*

A vision approaching reality is the key concept of this photographic section of the exhibition. The diversity that Europe offers gives the photographer an opportunity to study a wealth of realities, identities and idiosyncracies. This selection aims to offer work that is widely applicable, by evoking imaginary landscapes with unlimited borders, architecture of universal relevance, and portraits of figures crossing individual and collective frontiers. There is a conscious effort to place openness ahead of confinement. There are signs of the frontiers between the natural and man-made environment.

Ola Kolehmainen's *Institut du Monde Arabe No. 18* (2001) depicts the gleam of the metallic skin of the eponymous Parisian building. The combination of rays of light and open hexagonal shapes produces a generous abstract visual cocktail. The grid structure that might otherwise suggest rigidity and confinement is transformed into a supernatural rendition of light and form that defies frontiers.

Another abstraction from reality is provided by **Riitta Päiväläinen**. The picture inhabits apparently infinite landscapes, punctuated by shadows of human life: some frozen shirts are dancing in *Wind I, Kuopio, Finland* (2000), while others are just abandoned to the blowing of the wind in *Wind II, Seascale, England* (2000). A similar idea about the dialectic of human presence/absence is addressed by **Mimmo Jodice's** black and white photo prints of the Mediterranean landscape: an empty chair stares towards the sea horizon (*Sibari*, 2003), while the only perceived presence in a foggy atmosphere is a solitary rock rising from the sea (*Dormiente a Trentaremi*, 2003). These are frontiers of reality coloured by uncertainty and encouraging inquiry. The viewer is challenged by an experience of a kind of no-man's land.

A view of an island immersed in daylight at the confluence of the rivers *Loire et Cher, France* (2000) is studied in **Elger Esser's** photograph. This light and ethereal rendition of natural boundaries contrasts with the sombre nocturnal arctic landscape reflected in the water of *Icy Prospects No. 28* (2006), a 'photographic painting' by **Jorma Puranen**. These polar opposites of light and darkness offer parallels with the contrasts that may exist across borders. Moreover, the sense of the very "real" engages the viewer to reconsider his/her perception of the surrounding space.

Representation of frontiers also means showing diverging representations of social and gender conditions: female artists empowering an appreciation of shared humanity and the challenging of borders and conventions – be they gender-related, cultural or sociopolitical.

Zofia Kulik's *Splendour of Myself IV* (2007) is an enigmatic self-portrait of the artist as a queen. Like a gothic stained-glass icon, the artist's body is fragmented in ornamental photographic details and stands as a symbol of domination that challenges male-centred systems. This presents a stark contrast with **Maïmouna Patrizia Guerresi's** *Black Oracles* (2009), a constellation of floating photos of a veiled woman: enveloped in a black chador, she emerges from her veil to show her face to the viewer, urgently calling attention to herself as an emblem of hybrid cultures. The work presents a mix of personal experience and cultural contexts to engage with questions of universal myths, the sacred and the female condition.

In **Pierre Bismuth's** *Following the right hand of Marlene Dietrich in "The Song of Songs"* (2009), the features of the Hollywood star are obliterated by an aggressive thicket of marks on the covering plexiglas surface. What breaks through frontiers of visual convention is in fact rooted in reality – the drawing meticulously follows the movements of the actress's right hand in a film. His aim is to create an abstract representation that traces an original language of signs, transgressing the boundaries between photography and cinematography.

Like Bismuth, **Christian Boltanski** questions the viewer's perception of reality. *Véronique* (1996) belongs to a series created in the 1990s, known as the *Suisses Morts*, in which the artist used photographs taken from death notices in a Swiss newspaper. A large photograph of a shadowy dead woman is covered by a white shroud, hidden in a wooden cage, reminiscent of the holy figure of Veronica in the Christian tradition, who offered her veil to Christ on the way to the cross. The boundaries between life and the afterlife are being alluded to and challenged.

Last corridor: *Going back to our immediate territory*

The exhibition ends with two works from the renowned Luxembourg artist **Michel Majerus** *Untitled* (2001) and *Untitled (310)* (1998). The artist remains famous for developing a personal language combining painting (his preferred medium of expression) with other aspects of popular culture (computer games, digital imagery, film, pop music). Going beyond traditional boundaries, his works seek to celebrate the profusion of images to which the history of art has given rise. These works confront the experience of the virtual, emotional space with the real spectator's perception.

Delphine Munro, Head of Arts, EIB
Curator of the exhibition

Pravdoliub **Ivanov**

Pravdoliub Ivanov (born in Plovdiv, 1964) is a Bulgarian artist who graduated in Fine Arts in Sofia and represented his country at the Venice Biennale in 2007. In his art, he often focuses on the subtle relationship between art aesthetics and sociopolitical events.

Borders By Memory, purchased by the EIB in 2008, is not merely a neon tube attached to a wall. This luminous line retraces the profile of the course of the Danube River on the geographical frontier between Romania and Bulgaria. In January 2007, seventeen years after the fall of Communism, Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union. A few months before, the artist had conceived this piece, a personal memory of a past presence now poised for change, to become something else. The artist looks to the national river line as an individualised concept, investigating the value of a border as a geographical frontier or a metaphorical boundary.

The idea of a boundary between political entities, highlighted by Ivanov's artistic symbolism, was inevitably transformed when the countries in question joined the EU.

Border By Memory

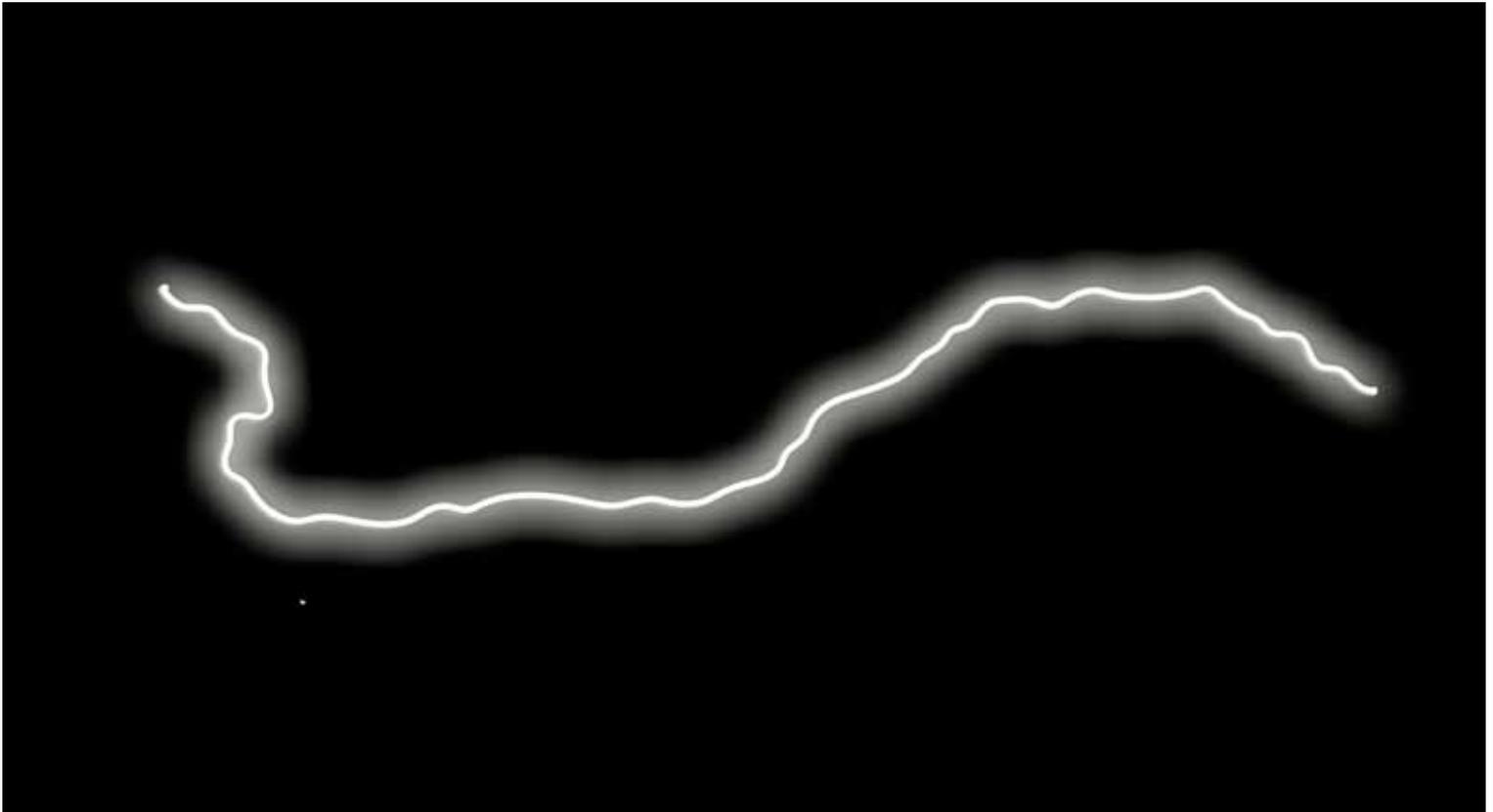
2006

Neon tube

25 x 115 cm

Edition 2/5

© Pravdoliub Ivanov



IRWIN

The name IRWIN designates a collective of Slovenian artists: since 1983 Dušan Mandič, Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Roman Uranjek, and Borut Vogelnik have worked together realising performances and art pieces with various media, such as paint, tar, books, silkscreen and even Lego bricks. IRWIN represents the fine art wing of a larger multidisciplinary group known as NSK (*Neue Slowenische Kunst*), the leading avant-garde movement on the Slovenian art scene today.

Like to Like / Mount Triglav, purchased by the EIB in 2004, depicts the reconstruction of a performance action titled "Mount Triglav". This event dates back to 1970, when three artists in the art group OHO staged a happening in Ljubljana's Zvezda Park: draped in black, with only their heads uncovered, they arranged their figures to imitate the outline of Mount Triglav, the highest mountain in Slovenia whose name means "three-headed" and which is the most powerful emblem of Slovenian identity. In 2004, when Slovenia joined the European Union, that historical performance was re-imagined by IRWIN group. Investigating the enduring power of a symbol in history, they now claim it for themselves, replacing the peaks of the mountain with their nude features, showing the face of the Slovenian counterculture at that time.

This piece is an outstanding example of how contemporary art can reflect on the notion of national and political identity through the meaning of an image. An image is never neutral, nor does it ever appear in a neutral space and time.

Like to Like/ Mount Triglav

2004

C-print

100 x 120 cm

Edition 2/5



Callum Innes

Callum Innes (born in Edinburgh, 1962) studied Fine Arts in Aberdeen and Edinburgh. This British painter is fascinated by the possibility of exploring the richness and the visual contradictions in painting through minimal variations.

Exposed Painting Lamp Black, purchased by the EIB in 2004, belongs to a series entitled "Exposed paintings" started in the early 1990s. The process of creation of these works consists in layering colours onto the canvas and then removing a section of paint with washes of turpentine: the artist likes to oppose the pure pigment and the ghostly trace of the latter.

The peculiarity of his technique is to work on monochrome through a process of addition and subtraction of material. In all his painting series he removes areas of paint, whilst in his watercolours he repeatedly adds layers of the same shades.

Innes works on a number of different series that he continuously revisits. In each of them the spectator can notice the fragile balance between the absence and presence of things, resurfacing after a process of transformation.

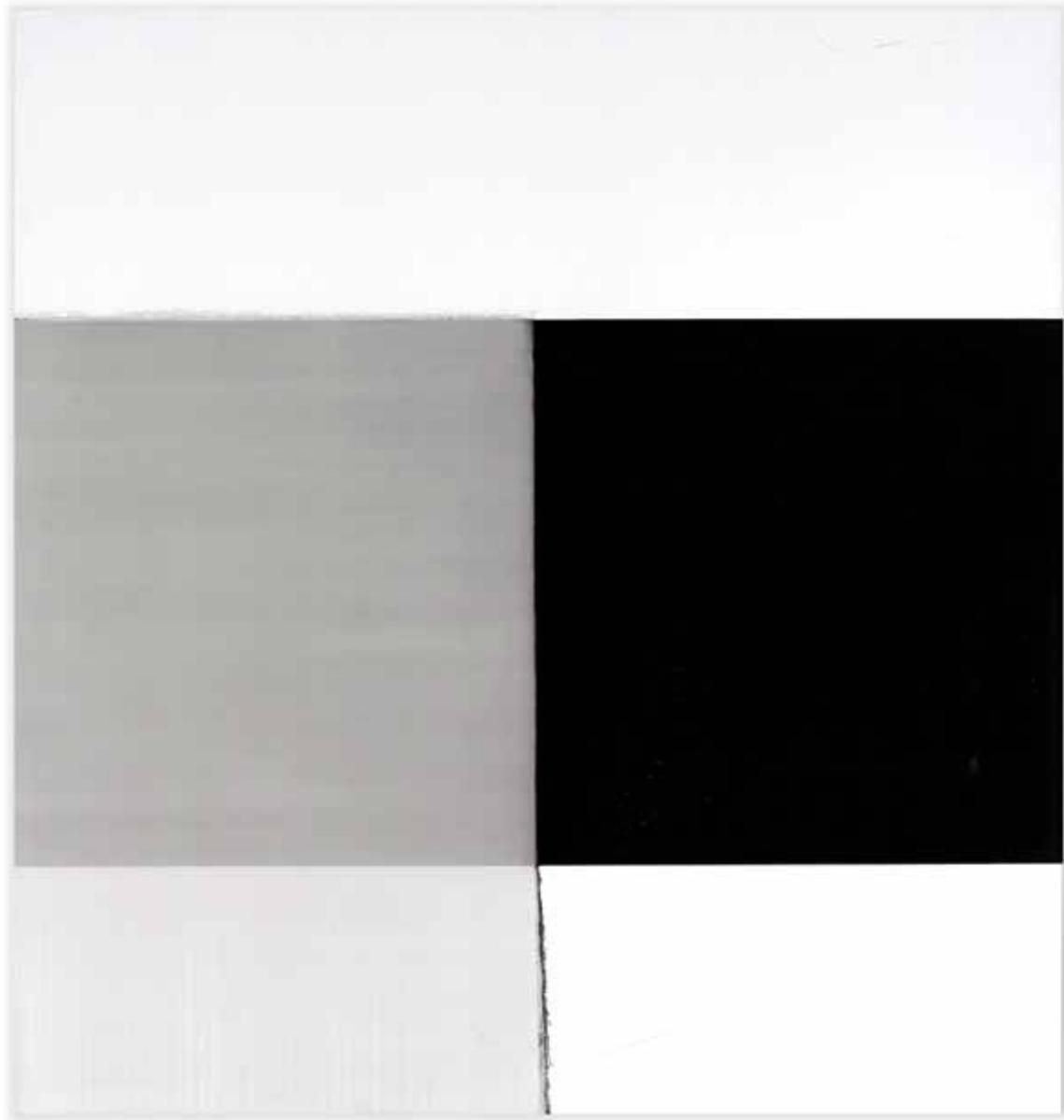
Exposed Painting Lamp Black

2004

122 x 117 cm

Oil on linen canvas

© Callum Innes / Frith Street Gallery, London



Pedro Cabrita Reis

Pedro Cabrita Reis (born in Lisbon, 1956) is a Portuguese artist who has received international recognition since the end of the 1980s. He combines sculpture and painting to reveal the underlying spiritual essence in construction materials and architectural language. Previously he used mainly reflective surfaces, like glass panels and mirrors, metallic structures and enamel paint, while in recent years he has chosen to work experimentally with fluorescent tubes and found objects.

The art piece in the EIB Art collection belongs to this first series of works.

Purchased in 2002, *Polychrome No. 2*, illustrates the effects of light through the juxtaposition of two black and white vertical rectangles painted over a suspended glass. The surface reflects light differently. While the enamel black paint removes any painterly-like quality and mirrors the viewer directly, the opposite white side is opaque and clearly shows its acrylic paint stroke; ultimately the overall structure is reduced to a visual game of a double abstract composition. A paradox still remains in the title "Polychrome", which refers to a variety of colourful nuances invisible in the painting itself but perhaps evoked by the idea of the light spectrum created both by the mirroring surface and by the optical composition of white light.

Cabrita Reis is questioning here the idea of the space/time border: he makes his surfaces permeable for their surroundings, like doors or windows opening onto a virtual reality.

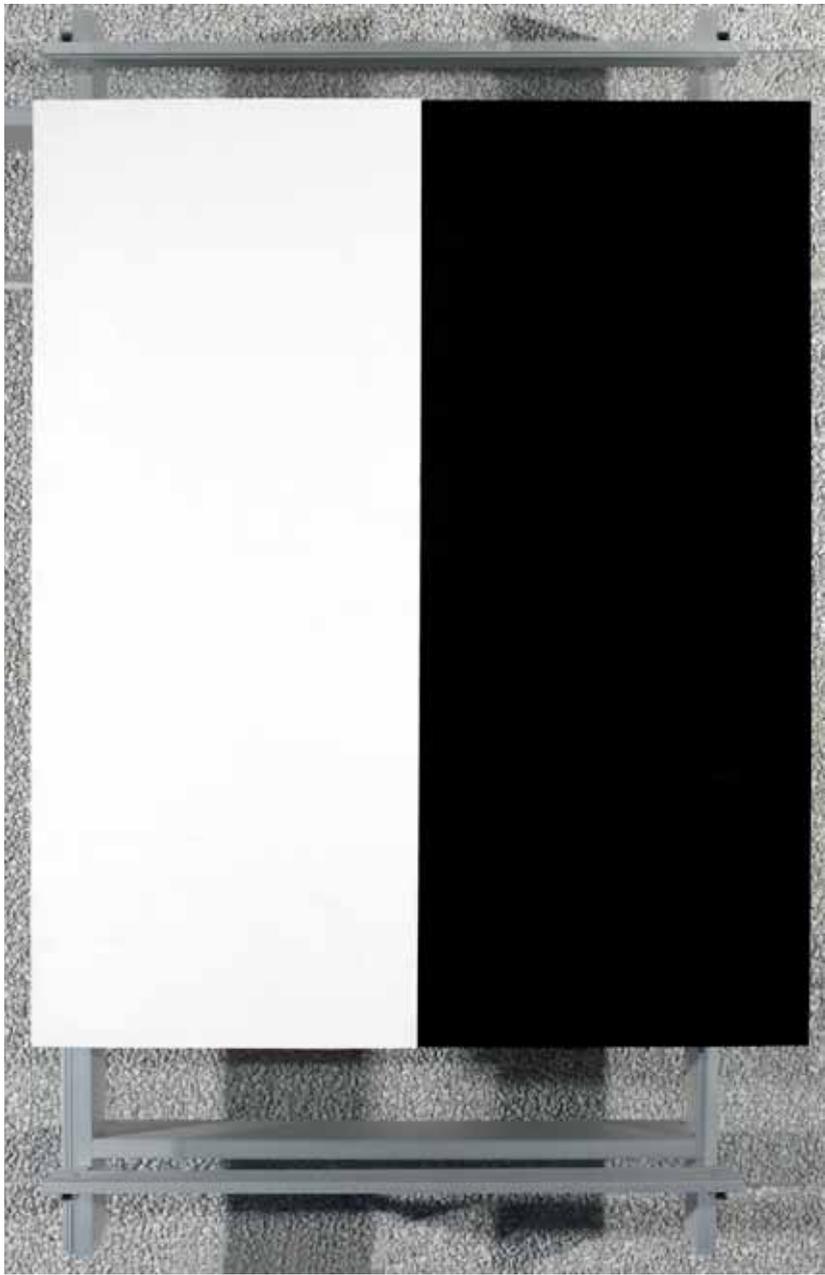
Polychrome No. 2

2000

Aluminium, acrylic, enamel on glass

255 x 170 x 30 cm

© Pedro Cabrita Reis



François Morellet

François Morellet (born in Cholet, 1926) is a self-taught French painter, sculptor and stage designer. In the 1960s he was a founder-member of GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel), a group of artists who experimented with the optical effects of kinetic compositions through lines and spaces in movement.

Since the beginning of his career he has created repetitions of hyphens, frames, grids of squares and irregular lines, and aluminium and neon rods, making optically vibrating patterns in paintings and installations. Morellet is an artist more interested in the method, in the system behind the creation process, than in the finished work itself.

Purchased by the EIB in 2000, *2 trames inégales de 19 mm + 2 mm avec interférences*, can already be defined by its emblematic title, indicating the measurement of lines and the whole system generating the work. A set of parallel black lines painted finely on a white canvas introduces the essence of Morellet's work: rational rules and constraints guide his artistic creation while the presence of "chance" interrupts the logic of the composition. It is the artist's intention that no artwork should express anything more than its invention and the development of its visual systems. Boundless structures are generated by the use of elementary forms, like the line, the square and the grid, showing the viewer their material presence and providing a possible key to exploring and interpreting the visual world.

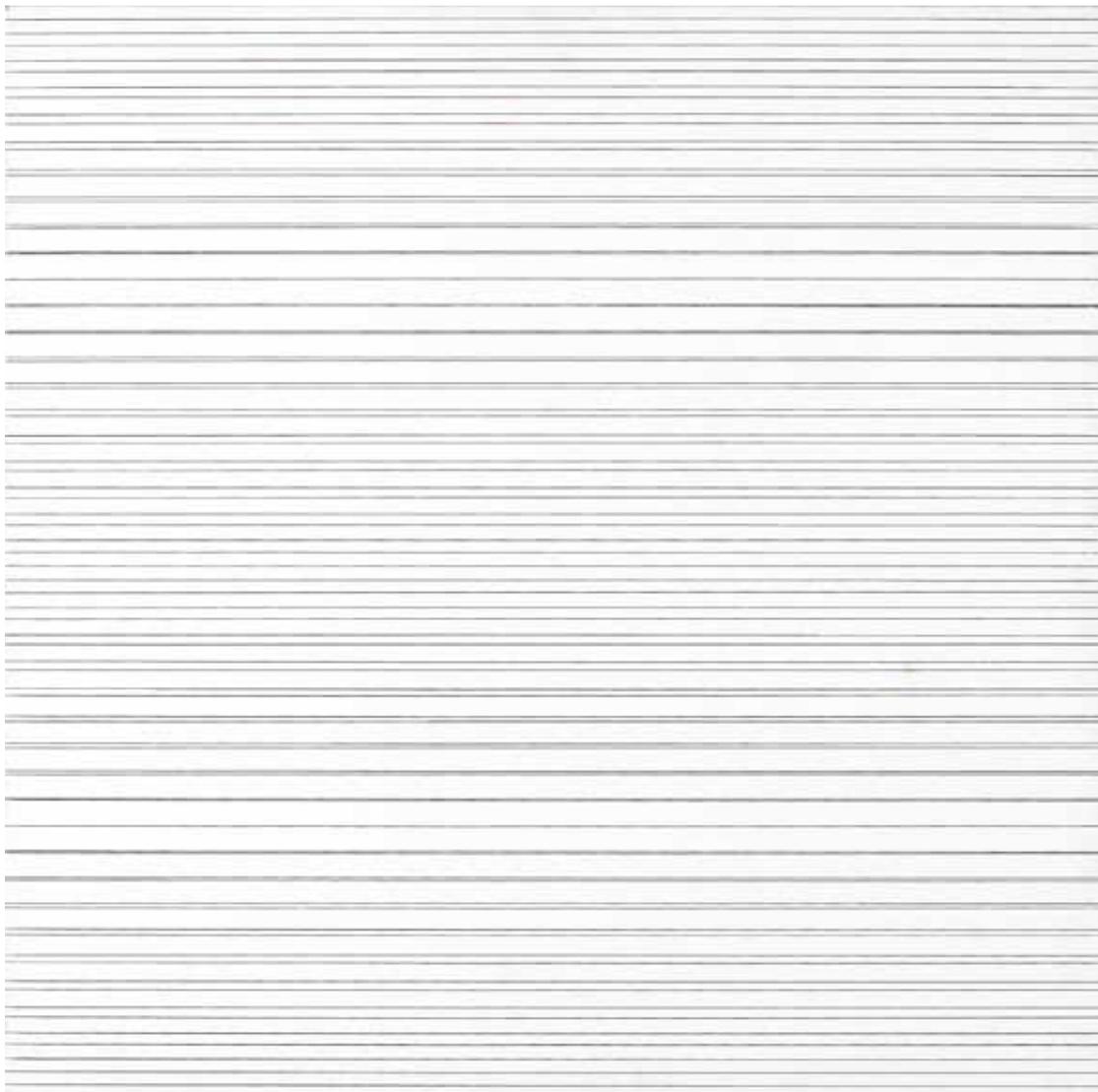
2 trames inégales de 19 mm + 2 mm avec interférences

1974

Oil on wooden panel

80 x 80 cm

© François Morellet



Sean Scully

Sean Scully (born in Dublin, 1945) is an Irish-American artist who studied typography and Fine Arts in the UK and then settled in the USA in 1975. Since the late 1960s, Scully's work has focused on geometric abstraction.

In *Passenger White White*, acquired by the EIB in 1997, a vertical rectangle with white stripes is physically inserted into a second painted surface, which is bigger and covered by alternating black and white squares. Through the physical contraposition of these two entities, the artist denotes the presence of depth, the perspective of a spiritual space inhabited by a living body. Scully seems to interrupt the discipline of the structure by means of subtle visual distractions and by the sensory pleasure of the consistency of the painting.

Scully works on breaking up the order in his paintings and photographs, applying a touch of irregularity, the trace of a living and lyrical presence. His poetics emerge from the attention to detail: the thickness of the brushstroke, the ill-defined outlines, the irregularity of the symmetries are the signs of an order that only appears to be perfect. The absence of an absolute abstract purity expresses a feeling of freedom, far from any authority of codified languages. Despite being regarded as abstract, Scully's art has recognisable shapes, linked to everyday life.

Passenger White White

1997

Oil on canvas
203 x 190.5 cm

© Sean Scully / Galerie Lelong, Paris



Simon Callery

Simon Callery (born in London, 1960) is a British artist, who exhibited during the 1990s with the Young British Artists (YBAs). Callery is an artist who aspires to be a painter in the full meaning of the term: he enjoys the tactile effect of the texture of the paint and the emotional luminosity of colours. He paints mainly monochromes.

Enniogram, which was purchased by the EIB in 2001, is a white monochrome. However, the pictorial surface looks regular in appearance only: composed of vertical and horizontal lines of oil paint and pencil, it challenges the viewer to be perceived, deeply sensed and cannot be absorbed in one glance. While the horizontal lines create a sense of depth, the vertical ones draw attention to the surface. The artist said that he wants to delay the speed at which painting is experienced today; the processes of making and of looking at a painting are closely related and the viewer should be engaged in a full sensory experience.

His white monochromes stand at the midpoint of a progressive creative path: at the beginning of his career his artwork was related to the cityscape of London's Docklands; later he studied the changes of atmospheric light in northern India; recently he participated in archaeological excavations in London. He adapted these fieldwork procedures to study the impact that the environment exerts on creativity and the process of painting.

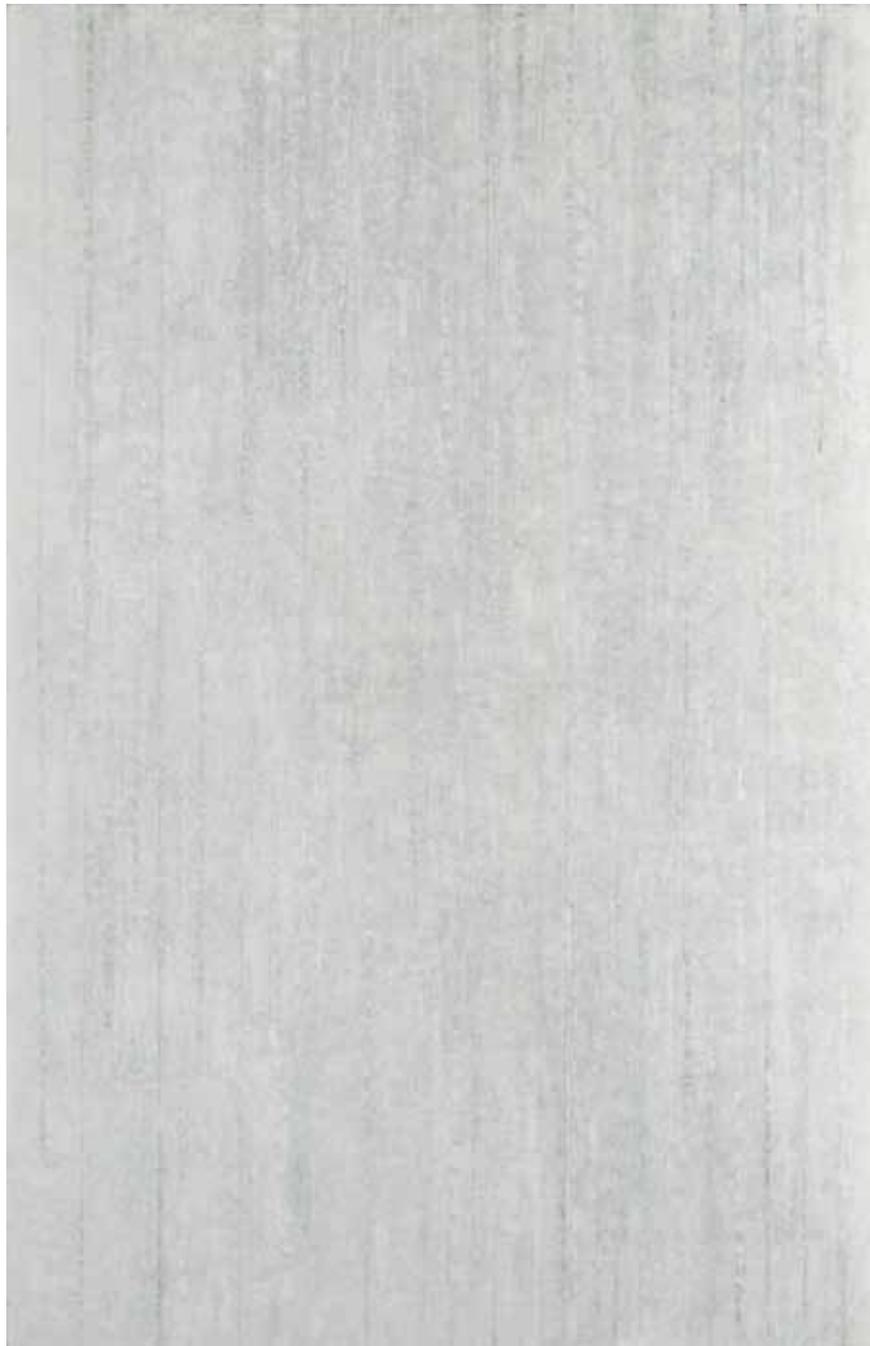
Enniogram

2000

Oil and pencil on canvas (with subframe)

305 x 197 cm

© Simon Callery



Joan H. Pijuan

Joan Hernández Pijuan (Barcelona, 1931-2005) was a Spanish artist who trained in Barcelona and Paris and founded the Catalan abstract "Grupo Silex" in the late 1950s. And as an art professor, he always defended the importance of the practice of art as a form of knowledge. Pijuan believed, however, that art is not about teaching theories, but about ways of looking at the painting itself. His artwork could be comprehended through the persistent thought of the viewed object.

Staring at the painting *Limits*, purchased by the EIB in 1998, the viewer should see the powerful and dynamic energy of the luminous canvas: the artist depicts all the shades, transparencies, densities and brilliancies that belong to the natural solar light framed in undulating black thin lines. Along the borders of the canvas the "limits" are waving in silent movements: they are mobile boundaries, giving the impression of drawing an unstable frontier.

During the 1990s Pijuan explored an almost monochromatic painting, attempting to imitate the apparent purity of colours. He used to pick one pigment but never used it a uniform way: applying and removing layers of the same colours he wished to emphasise the texture of the surface through the rhythm of the paint stroke.

Limits

1998

Oil on canvas

195 x 195 cm

© Joan Hernández Pijuan / VEGAP, Madrid 2011



Jaume Plensa

Jaume Plensa (born in Barcelona, 1955) is a Spanish artist who studied Fine Arts in Barcelona. Inspired by minimalism and conceptual art, he integrates in his practice a wide variety of materials, such as iron, glass, resin and digital screens. Internationally acclaimed for his sculptures and monumental installations, he has also produced a fascinating body of works on paper.

Untitled, purchased by the EIB in 1998, is a large drawing of a block depicted in perspective. Here the artist presents a dialectic opposition between the sense of stability and heaviness of the architectural block painted with a thick black lacquer, and the lightness and luminosity of the surface, a fragile translucent white rice paper.

In his sculptures and installations he wishes to take advantage of the more intangible qualities of light and sound, as well as the ideas that arise from spoken or written texts. Several of his pieces have words and phrases marked in relief, while others consist of composed structures using lettering. His work is mainly related to the idea of space limits. Boxes, rooms, walls often feature in his sculpture, suggesting an idea of enclosure or confinement. The artist's aim is to question the relationship between the human body and the perception of our living environment. No matter what shape it assumes, a primal interaction between "the perceiver" and "the perceived" underlies all of his work. In recent years he has focused on the production of large-scale statues, human figures and giant heads that are challenging boundaries in the landscape.

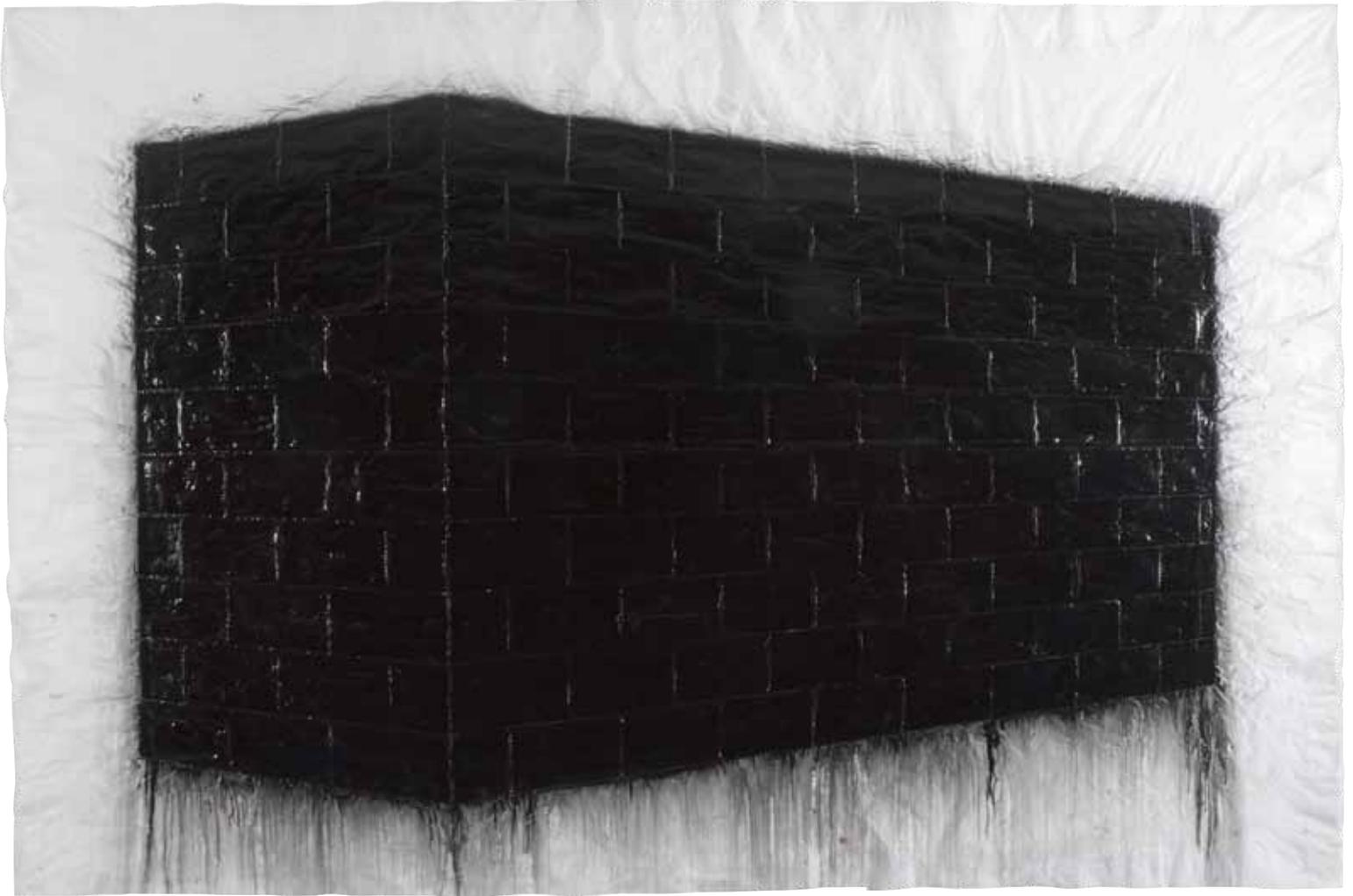
Untitled

1996

Black lacquer, charcoal on paper

196 x 295 cm

© Jaume Plensa / VEGAP, Madrid 2011



Claudio Parmiggiani

Claudio Parmiggiani (born in Luzzara, 1943) is an Italian artist who studied Fine Arts in Modena. Even though he has never claimed to belong to any specific art movement, his environmental and conceptual art is close to the art produced by some of *Arte Povera* artists.

Since the 1970s Parmiggiani has been working on a group of works – photographs, canvas, installations – entitled *Delocazioni*. This name literally means “delocation”, referring to a poetic shift of place and sense in artistic creation. *Delocazione*, purchased by the EIB in 2002, is one of the first works of this cycle. It is the result of placing a nude emulsioned canvas in a closed room saturated with smoke in order to represent the effects of the passing of time on the object; the artist also isolated the central section of the canvas to depict the “luminous trace of its soul”.

Parmiggiani's *œuvre* is a lyrical journey through an idea of “shadow”: sometimes he works on the *simulacrum*, reinterpreting ancient classic sculpture, sometimes on an object's trace in space, marking the imprint of its dust on the surface of the support. His creative method can be mysterious, even similar to an alchemic process. His artworks are contemporary *Vanitas*, often tinted with melancholy: behind any transformation, any creative process, there is an idea of affirming an existence through a memory of light, dust and ash.

He once said that his cycle *Delocazioni* aims to describe an environment of absence, giving presence to a spiritual vision “with closed eyes”.

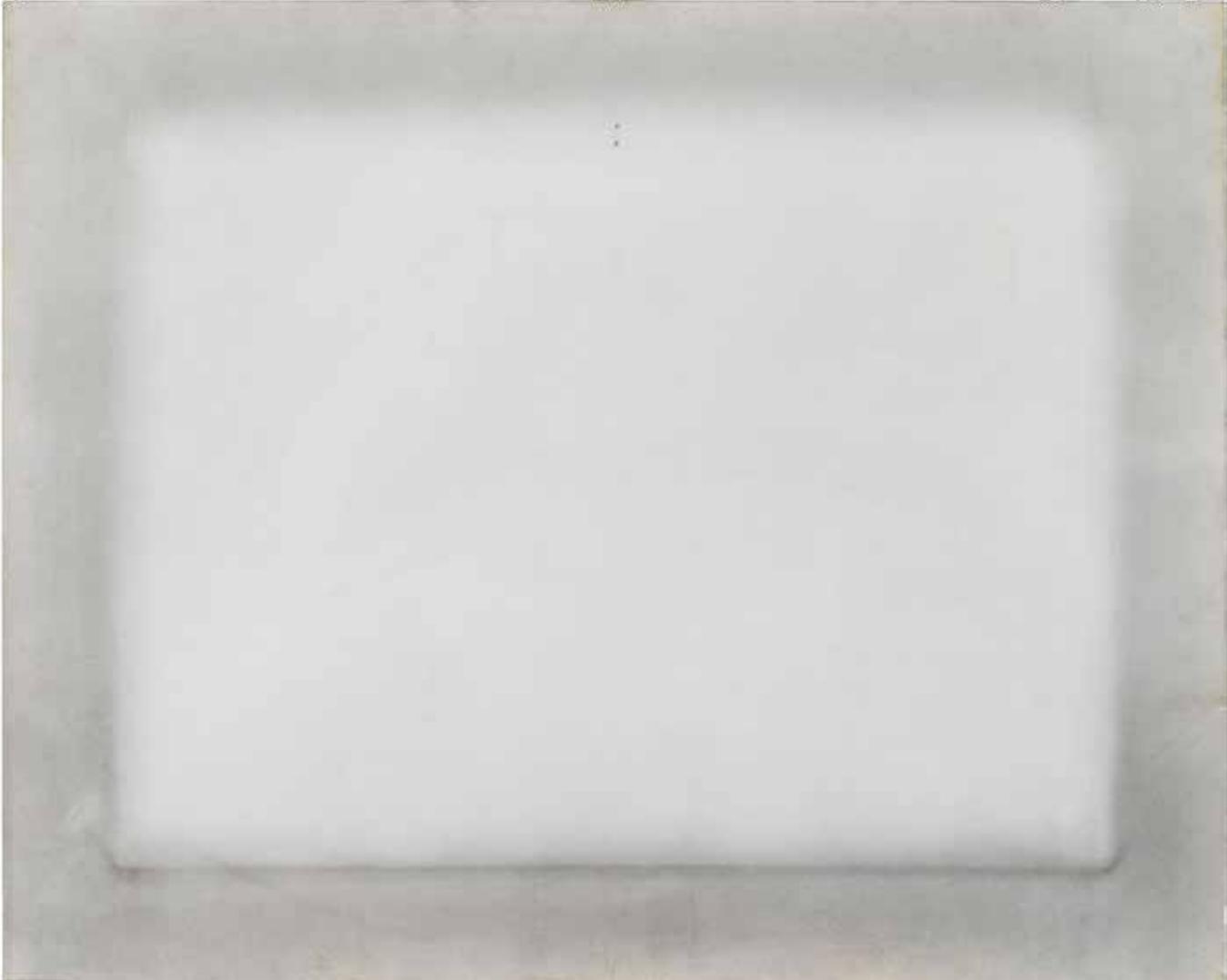
Delocazione

1971

Mixed media on emulsioned canvas

100 x 125 cm

© Claudio Parmiggiani



Jannis Kounellis

Jannis Kounellis (born in Piraeus, 1936) is a Greek artist who studied in Athens until 1956 and then moved to Italy: he settled in Rome to study Fine Arts. In the late 1960s Kounellis was part of the Italian art movement *Arte Povera*, founded by the art critic Germano Celant. Kounellis experimented intensively with the juxtaposition of objects and actions, physically and culturally antithetical to each other. These included raw materials such as stones, cotton, wool, coffee, plants, sacks and coal, and objects such as bed frames, doorways and shelves.

Untitled, acquired by the EIB in 1997, is a heavy sculptural piece made of five iron panels, polished and attached to each other, with a long bar bolted horizontally, holding tightly some felt cloths like a clamp. Standing before this artwork, the viewer relates these pieces to the material of a coal sack or any other functional fabric, now trapped in the iron structures, empty and reduced to a zero point of their past existence.

The aesthetics of the artists associated with *Arte Povera* were based on the idea of breaking down the dichotomy between art and life. Through the creation of happenings, installations and sculptures made from everyday materials they expressed their opposition to the traditional role of art as a mere reflection of reality.

Kounellis' work is rich in poetry. His first revolutionary installation, a live performance of animals, aimed at transforming the space into a theatre where tension emerges between real life and artistic fiction. He went on producing paintings using arrows, numbers, typographical symbols and road markings, often stencilled on the canvases, while experimenting with three-dimensional materials and installations creating a kind of stage set in which the viewers become integral and performing parts of the artwork. His experimentation with unorthodox combinations of materials has continued and evolved until today, with the staging of architectural "environments", performances and theatrical shows.

Untitled

1996

Iron, felt, cotton cloth on iron panel
200 x 430 x 8 cm

© Jannis Kounellis



Anish Kapoor

Anish Kapoor (born in Mumbai, 1954) is an internationally acclaimed Indian-born British sculptor. Although based in London since the 1970s, where he studied Fine Arts, some techniques and ideas from his homeland still permeate his art; Kapoor's work mirrors his rich and multifaceted cultural heritage.

Untitled, purchased by the EIB in 1998, looks like a perfect blue disk floating in space; it is actually a concave aluminium circle covered by an intense powdered blue pigment. With sustained viewing, the play of inside and outside generates an optical illusion of passing through the surface of the wall. The material of this piece takes its inspiration from the mounds of coloured pigments, powders and spices in the markets of India, while the blue colour is a metaphor of spirituality: blue refers to pure immaterial space. In Kapoor's sculpture, a single colour is often an instrument to overcome barriers of space and time and to enter into the "void" of darkness.

This sculpture belongs to a series composed of coloured pieces in which pure geometric shapes are introduced into floors and walls to generate a negative space. He has also created mirror-like pieces, reflecting or distorting the viewer and the surroundings, monumental spirals and giant trumpets that seem to physically lead to infinity. Each piece of Kapoor's art seems to optically reset any proof of physical substance, challenging the viewer with a disorienting visual effect.

Untitled

1998

Blue pigment on aluminium
86.5 cm x 86.5 cm x 6.5 cm

© Anish Kapoor



Jan Fabre

Jan Fabre (born in Antwerp, 1958), is a multifaceted Belgian artist. After studying Decorative Arts and Fine Arts in Antwerp in the late 1970s, he devoted himself to the plastic arts – drawing, sculpture, installations – and to the theatre, as a director and choreographer of the company *Troubleyn*.

Untitled, purchased by the EIB in 2002, is a large-scale work on paper entirely covered by blue ballpoint lines: like a photographic negative, the graphic marks trace the outline of a white sword, perhaps the ghost of the mythical Excalibur of Arthurian legend, floating in an indeterminate space.

Fabre has used this ballpoint motif since the beginning of his career. In 1981 he made an action-installation, *The Bic Art Room*: shut up in a room for seventy-two hours, the artist started drawing on every available surface – the walls, the bed, his clothes, the floor, his own body – until the entire space was covered with thousands of strokes of his blue ballpoint pen: he stated that he wanted to act as a “drawing machine” until reaching the ultimate goal of disappearance.

The choice of a ballpoint pen relates to the universe of insects: through the act of drawing he aims to follow their invisible tracks, scribbling lines on paper, objects and even the walls of buildings. He sees a world of swarming insects and incessantly teeming life. Influenced by the books of Jean-Henri Fabre, the famous 19th century French entomologist from whom he says he is descended, a large part of Fabre’s art is dominated by the world of insects; a recurring motif in the artist’s language is also beetles’ shells, used to create iridescent greenish-blue mosaic surfaces and installations.

Untitled

1987

Ballpoint pen on paper

208 x 148 cm

© Jan Fabre



Tony Cragg

Tony Cragg (born in Liverpool, 1949) trained as a laboratory technician in a foundry and a rubber factory before becoming an artist. This has enabled him to work and experiment with an infinite range of materials, including carved and machine-cut stones, bronze, steel, plastic, rubber, glass, wood and plaster. He also studied Fine Arts in London, before moving to Germany in 1977.

Wirbelsäule / Articulated Column, part of the EIB collection since 1998, is a giant bronze piece, the indefinable shape of which suggests a sense of dynamics: a column of inflated rings is created, modeled and deformed by the buffeting of some kind of supernatural wind. In the words of the artist an "articulated column" is defined in relation to its presence in space, a dynamic form that develops around a variable axis, as a volume "in the whirls of tornadoes or the eddies of the bath plug". As the artist moves, the material moves too, resulting in three-dimensional morphing. This idea is clearly influenced by Henry Moore, who first discovered the "hole" as a positive space in sculpture.

Cragg's work also features found objects, such as pieces of coloured recycled plastic picked up from the streets, sorted by colour and organised in various ways to create installations. His work has changed considerably over the years, but remains faithful to a central value: sculpture is essentially a matter of understanding and manipulating the material.

Wirbelsäule / Articulated Column

1997

Patinated bronze
190 x 90 x 90 cm

© Tony Cragg / ADAGP, Paris 2011



Clay Ketter

Clay Ketter (born in Brunswick, Maine, USA, 1961) trained in the USA before establishing himself as an artist in Sweden in the 1980s.

Bau, purchased by the EIB in 2001, is an orthogonal composition created by the juxtaposition of smaller squares and polygonal surfaces on the canvas. It can be interpreted either as an architectural plan or as an elevation view of a vertical section of a building. Though the artist chose to confer a tangible materiality to these shapes – through mixed media, cardboard cuts, enamel painted areas, plastic bolts on wood panels – each part has a different thickness and a neutral colour.

Ketter claims he was influenced by American Colour Field Painting at the beginning of his career, though in his practice he actually replaced the colour sections with material inserts; he is deeply fascinated by the idea that the surface of a painting is “constructed”, and not a projection, a merely visual translation of reality. Looking at his paintings, sculptures and recent installations, he can be defined as an art “carpenter”. The construction and deconstruction become the subject, the object and the process of his art.

Bau

2001

Mixed media on wooden panel

180 x 180 cm

© Clay Ketter / Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris



Imi Knoebel

Klaus Wolf Knoebel (born in Dessau, 1940) is a German artist who studied Fine Arts in Darmstadt and Düsseldorf. Since 1968, when he produced his first architectural installation, Knoebel has received international critical acclaim.

The painting/sculpture *Rotes Gitter* (red grid), purchased by the EIB in 2000, is a brilliant example of a series entitled *Mennigebilder*, created with acrylic anti-corrosion paint on large metal panels. The metal surface is composed of strips and segments: in a raised grid, the solid red, blue and fluorescent yellow planes underline the artificiality of the painting, which has become a totally abstract plastic construction.

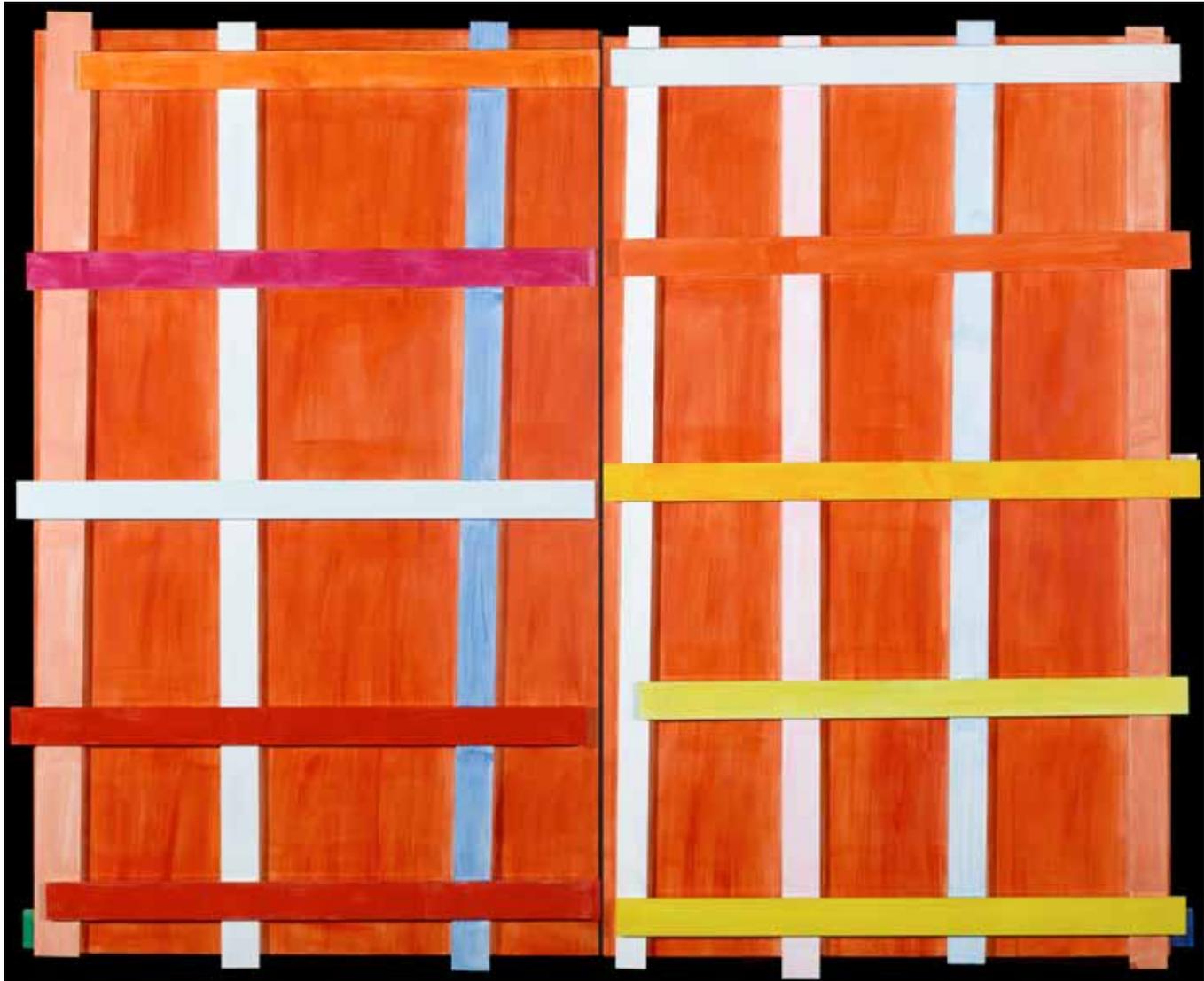
Colour and structure are keys to understanding Knoebel's universe, which is founded on the modernist teaching of Malevich and the Bauhaus school. He reduces his works to the key elements of the composition. In his sculpture and installations, Knoebel deals with the constitutive importance of space: a minimalist clearness develops into a superb colourism and the purist rationality opens up a dialogue with pictorial gestures.

Rotes Gitter

1988 - 1999

Acrylic on aluminium
254.5 x 313.5 x 9 cm

© Imi Knoebel / ADAGP, Paris 2011



Günther Förg

Günther Förg (born in Füssen, 1952) is a versatile German painter, printmaker, sculptor and photographer, who trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, where he today teaches as a professor.

Monochromatic colour field painting is a dominant aspect of his work; though he conceived it as a tribute to minimal art, he is also attempting to highlight the failures and weaknesses of heroic modernism.

Untitled, which was purchased by the EIB in 2000, deals with the illusionary idea of stability and rational order in bichrome painting. A sense of dynamic tension is produced by the contrast between the two sections: the orange, painted with horizontal harsh strokes, visually dominates the neighbouring celadon vertical section. Painted on a wooden panel, this piece of art looks carelessly executed: it seems that the artist specifically seeks to play ironically with the standard formal devices of geometrical painting.

Förg's *œuvre* is characterised by a variety of recurrent patterns and a colourful palette: stripes, weaves of lines, coloured spot compositions, all of which help to create his individual abstract language that defies categorisation.

Untitled

1991

Acrylic on wooden panel

185 x 155 cm

© Günther Förg / Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt



Juan Uslé

Juan Uslé (born in Santander, 1954) studied fine arts in Valencia and then moved to New York in the late 1980s. His artwork evokes the places and the atmospheres he inhabits: the colours and the light of the Mediterranean coast and the dynamic energy of New York city. Both inspire in Uslé a feeling of displacement, of permanent instability that has become a crucial theme in his work.

Soñé que revelabas X (Nemo), purchased by the EIB in 2002, is constructed as a play of spatial oppositions: translucent layers of a black-grey colour are painted along the vertical plan shaping a structure displayed in horizontal parallels. His brushstroke is always delicate and ethereal, though the overall painting acquires an optically solid consistency, further solidified by a horizontal blue bar in the centre of the composition.

This art piece belongs to a series entitled "I dreamt you revealed", made by the artist during the 2000s using his typical combination of intense mixed pigments and vinyl. Through this technique he wishes to express the duality intrinsic in paint, as an act and as a concept, the pleasure of the corporeities obtained through a pure, transparent pictorial surface.

Soñé que revelabas X (Nemo)

2002

Vinyl, dispersion, dry pigment on canvas
274 x 203 cm

© Juan Uslé / Galería Soledad Lorenzo, Madrid



Fiona Rae

Fiona Rae (born in Hong Kong, 1963) is a British painter who studied in London under Michael Craig-Martin, whose two monumental commissions adorn the EIB new building. She belongs to the generation of the YBAs (*Young British Artists*).

Endless Endless, acquired in 2000 by the EIB, is part of a series of “black” paintings created in the late 1990s. On a background painted with a first uniform coat of black acrylic, perfect coloured rectangular shapes float in space, accompanied by patches of oil paint impastoed in various shades. These rectangles were produced using stencils, enabling the creation of precise geometrical shapes that contrast with the irregularity and freedom of expression of the multi-coloured brushstrokes.

Fiona Rae creates bright and colourful abstract paintings: her pictures are characterised by a lively disorder, later developed into a more structured alphabet of pictorial motifs, linked to the visual sources of contemporary media: motifs from computer aided design, strip cartoons and manga. The common thread running through all her work is the juxtaposition – in stark contrast to one another and apparently at random – of areas of pure colour and gestural paint marks, a technique she uses to represent order and chaos in nature and the human unconscious.

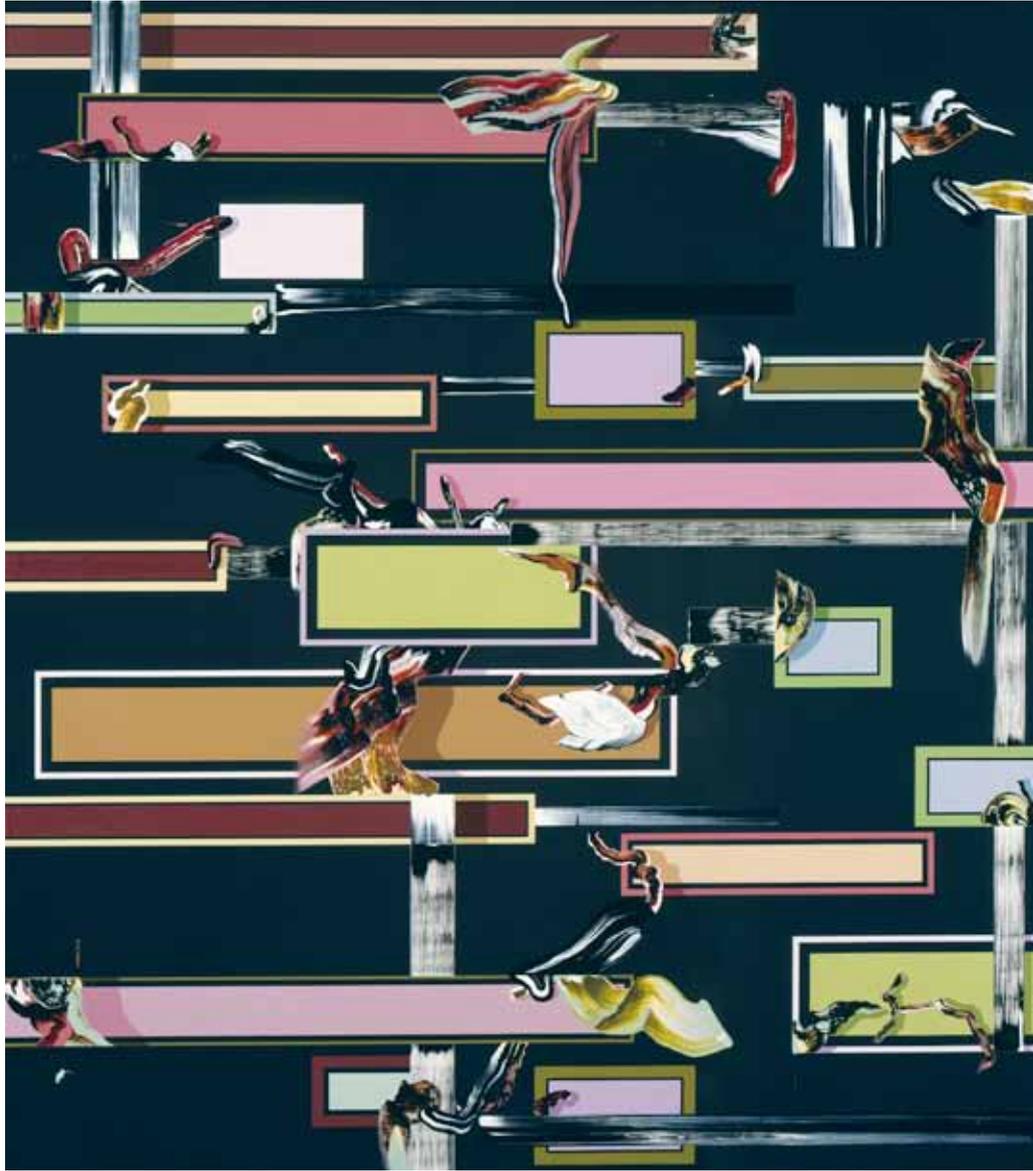
Endless Endless

1999

Oil and acrylic on canvas

243.8 x 213.4 cm

© Fiona Rae / Buchmann Galerie, Berlin



Bernard Frize

Bernard Frize (born in Saint-Mandé, 1954) is a French painter who is considered to be a conceptual artist for the way he allows his working process to be visible to the viewer. All his creative actions focus on the use of intense colours and thick paint strokes and his artworks constantly embody their own construction.

Dynamo, purchased by the EIB in 2000, is a weave of coloured curvilinear lines, twisting in space on a yellow canvas. The shiny surface and the visible imprints of brushstrokes are the results of using epoxy resin with acrylic. The glossy texture of each curve forms an articulated frieze. This fascinating lightness conveys a sort of unemotional distance from the viewer: while the artist avoids any form of expressiveness, the brush trace reveals the dynamism of the painting act.

Acrylic, resin, lacquer, mother of pearl... these are some of the media used by Frize in his art practice. Through his experimental approach to techniques and materials, Frize is actually looking to communicate and engage with his audience in each of his painterly decisions.

Dynamo

2000

Acrylic, resin on canvas

220 x 180 cm

© Bernard Frize



Louise Bourgeois

Louise Joséphine Bourgeois (born in Paris, 1911, died in New York, 2010) was a French artist who studied Fine Arts in Paris under Fernand Léger. Her first training goes back to her adolescence when she worked in her family's tapestry business, creating designs for the restoration workshop. Childhood memories – the figure of the beloved mother and the trauma of discovering her father's infidelity – contributed to Bourgeois's oeuvre and are the emotional filters for understanding the intimate nature of her work.

The Song of the Blacks and the Blues, purchased by the EIB in 2003, refers to Afro-American music, the tradition of "blues" for the "blacks" in American culture. Here the artist recounts an imaginary dialogue between groups of mysterious figures. This woodcut exemplifies the artist's obsession with showing the hidden and repulsive side of things – both the coarseness of human beings and their basic and sexual urges – using a vocabulary of hybrid shapes, consisting of telescopic phalluses, curves and breasts.

Bourgeois became a major figure of American art after her move to the USA in 1938. During the 1970s, when she gained critical recognition, she was a feminist icon and a model for the younger generation. Her work defies any attempt at historical classification and remains resolutely independent. A free expressiveness and a varied use of techniques reveal the psychoanalytical depth of her aesthetic research: based on memory and emotion, Bourgeois' work is governed solely by a subjective logic.

The Song of the Blacks and the Blues

1989-1996

Lithography and woodcut with handcoloring on paper

54.6 x 243.8 cm

Artist's Proof 12/17

© Louise Bourgeois Trust / VAGA, New York



Per Kirkeby

Per Kirkeby (born in Copenhagen, 1938) is a Danish painter, sculptor and writer. Besides his career as a painter, he studied geology and took part in expeditions to Greenland. His art is influenced by the combination of a scientific approach and a mystical vision of reality.

Untitled, purchased by the EIB in 2004, a red and green pastel drawing, depicts indecipherable forms in the black background of the painted masonite panel. The artist always enjoys experimenting with various media such as chalk on blackboard, black bronze sculptures or brick architectural structures, searching for an enduring vision: to depict the imaginary landscape.

While nature and landscape are his primary subjects, his paintings are often named after historical, mythological and biblical events. His erudition is also presented in a body of poetic writings that often accompany his art. Nature and culture are never in antagonism in Kirkeby's art.

Per Kirkeby was once an active member of the Fluxus group, but he was also influenced by Tachism and Abstract Expressionism; his art is marked by this duplicity of views, both conceptual and emotional. His paintings could be interpreted as free patterns of visual geology: they are often organised by vertical structures related to the idea of sedimentation and layers; however, through the artist's vigorous brushwork, they come to display a chaotic and chromatic beauty touched by a violent expressionism.

Untitled

1996

Oil and pastel on masonite

122 x 122 cm

© Per Kirkeby / Galerie Michael Werner Märkisch Wilmersdorf, Köln-New York



Antonio Saura

Antonio Saura (born in Huesca, 1930, died in Cuenca, 1998) was a self-taught Spanish painter and writer. He was a member of the El Paso group, active from 1957 to 1960, which played a crucial role in the emergence of modernism in reaction to traditionalist official Spanish art. During his early visits to Paris he was influenced by Surrealism, though he soon moved to a personal expressionist style exploring a tragically deformed vision of humanity.

Portrait No. 11.81, purchased by the EIB in 1985, is one of Saura's "imaginary portraits". In this series, the dark atmosphere, the contrasts of the chiaroscuro and the violent echoes of a nightmare are inspired by Francisco Goya's Black Paintings, though the dramatic distortion and caricature effects recall Picasso's late portraits.

Saura's survey of the history of ancient and modern Spanish art is reflected in his language and in the subjects he chose. He produced drawings, book illustrations, paintings and sculptures to express a unique theme: the complexity of the human figure. While his palette is limited to whites, blacks and browns, his portraits are deformed representations of heroes, masters of painting, archetypes of women's bodies and historical characters.

Portrait No. 11.81

1981

Oil on canvas

75 x 60 cm



Marlene Dumas

Marlene Dumas (born in Cape Town, 1953) is a Dutch/South-African artist who studied Fine Arts in her native country and continued her training in the Netherlands; she also attended psychology classes in Amsterdam, where she now lives and works.

The EIB's art collection is privileged to own an early work by Dumas; dating from 1983, *Rival* was purchased the same year by the EIB, when the artist was virtually unknown outside the Netherlands and before she dedicated herself solely to portraiture. *Rival* represents an unfolding story rich in ambiguity: in one canvas a chimpanzee full of anger is holding in his arms a young girl, protecting her from an unidentified danger. In the other, the animal glances with mysterious green eyes and a mask of pink paint over the face, perhaps the signs of an anthropomorphic mutation; close to him a female silhouette emerges from the darkness like a dream-like reminiscence.

The ape appears to play the part of the archetypal "animal/monster" who has kidnapped the girl, but who – recalling the tale of King Kong – may actually be in love with her. The title *Rival* is also disorientating, suggesting an idea of conflict between the human and the animal genre, whereas, on the contrary, the ape turns out to be a humanised figure full of compassion.

Dumas is an artist who depicts fear. Her portraits of women, children and crude bodies offered up for social violence are signs of a human drama unfolding during the most normal acts: birth, death and love. Paintings and works on paper are the preferred media for a bitter account of the essential themes of life. The artist works solely on the basis of photographs: either polaroids she has taken herself or illustrations cut out of magazines and postcards. She transforms photographic images into essential icons of isolated bodies, using the shades of dark inks and the effect of glaze colour wash to strengthen the expressive intensity.

Rival

1983

Oil on canvas
91 x 91 cm each



Ola Kolehmainen

Ola Kolehmainen (born in Helsinki, 1964) is a Finnish photographer and a leading figure in the Helsinki School of Photography.

He can be defined as an artist who is searching for the essence of things. His camera lens describes the perfect encounter of architecture, colour, reflection and perspective. The structures of a building become objects in an infinite quest, revived by a sensory, emotional feeling added to his minimalistic views. He loves visual repetitions but he never aims to reach perfect purity: architecture is not an empty surface but a place of human interaction.

Purchased by the EIB in 2003, *Institut du monde arabe No. 18* belongs to a series of photographs focused on light fragmentation and its reflection in the building. Inspired by an Islamic decorative pattern, the architect has created a metallic grid made up of diaphragms set in pierced metal borders; each of these pieces works like a camera lens to control the sun's diffusion. Here the artist transforms a structural surface into a metaphysical concept of light.

Kolehmainen is now moving eastward looking for architecture that defines our way of seeing through its visual dimensions. He tries to capture visually an attitude coupled with a new understanding: the renewed perception of the boundaries that we develop in Europe in present time. Kolehmainen understands that the future of Europe is in realising that its perimeters are unlimited.

Institut du monde arabe No. 18

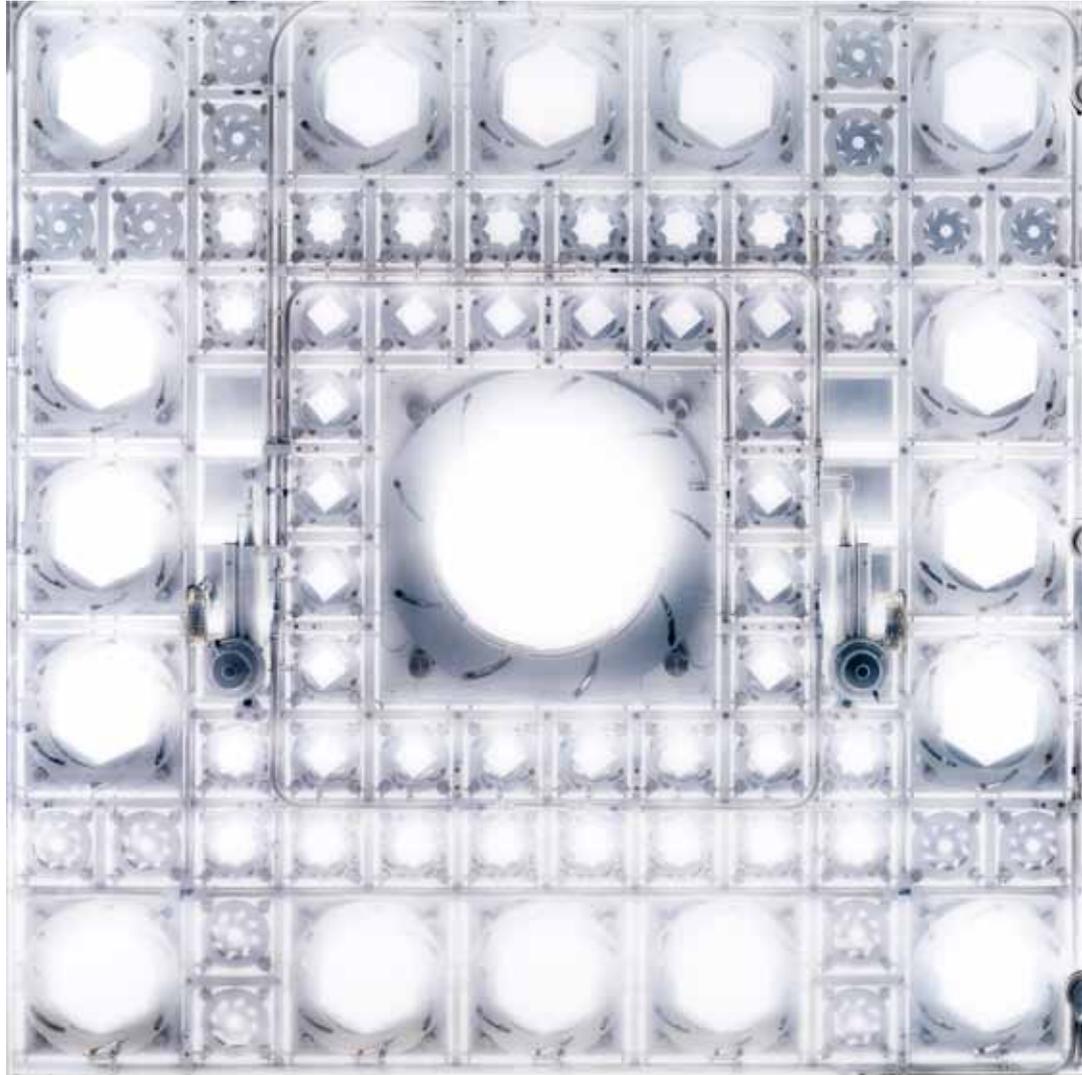
2001

C-print on Diasec

170 x 170 cm

Edition 2/5

© Ola Kolehmainen



Riitta Päiväläinen

Riitta Päiväläinen (born in Maaninka, 1969) is a Finnish artist and member of the renowned Helsinki School of Photography. Since the beginning of her career she has been working on *Vestige*, a thematic cycle about an imaginary dialogue between old garments and Nature.

Wind I, Kuopio, Finland and Wind II, Seascale, England, part of the *Wind* series, were purchased by the EIB in 2003. On the horizon of a desert landscape, the viewer can see a standing line of frozen shirts dancing in a snowy Finnish land and moving with the blowing of the wind on the British coast.

These photographs record site installations using second-hand clothing and then re-arranged in natural settings; here the clothes are soaked in water and exposed to the winter ice to be frozen. The further freezing of the photo shot makes them appear animated and alive, as if they are being worn by someone. Standing like abandoned ruins, like silent shadows, they bear witness to the “unwritten history” of an unknown previous owner.

Wind I, Kuopio, Finland

2000

C-print on plexiglass

98 x 123 cm

Edition 3/7

Wind II, Seascale, England

2000

C-print on plexiglass

98 x 123 cm

Edition 3/7

© Riitta Päiväläinen



Mimmo Jodice

Mimmo Jodice (born in Naples, 1934) is an Italian photographer who has been active on the artistic scene since the 1970s. Considered an aristocrat of photography, he remains faithful to the intense dramatisation offered by black and white gelatin silver print. He has never “surrendered” to the attraction of colour, which he judges trivial and over-picturesque. However, he manipulates techniques with extraordinary malleability, playing with the fragmentation and distortion of images.

Jodice clearly does not believe in photography as a medium of representation of immediate reality. In these luminous Mediterranean landscapes purchased by the EIB in 2004, he avoids any descriptive illustration in order to transmit a sense of mysticism through the isolated spectral forms. The view of *Sibari*, a town on the coast of Calabria, is reduced to an empty chair staring toward the sea, while the solitary rock rising from the sea in the Gulf of Naples in *Dormiente a Trentaremi*, seems remote and inaccessible in an illuminated foggy shadow. Silence and emptiness inhabit the sea, where inner and outer landscapes meet in a total absence of human presence.

These pieces belong to a series shot on the Mediterranean coast, after many years of photographing cities from Naples to Paris, from Boston to São Paulo, from Arles to Moscow. Jodice’s lens never depicts the rhythm of a contemporary metropolis or the people inhabiting it; the city becomes a spiritual image itself and, as he says: “everything we encounter is, ultimately, an inner landscape.”

Sibari

2003

Gelatin silver print on paper

80 x 80 cm

Edition 2/6

Dormiente a Trentaremi

2003

Gelatin silver print on paper

80 x 80 cm

Edition 2/6

© Mimmo Jodice



Elger Esser

Elger Esser (born in Stuttgart, 1967) is a German photographer who trained in Fine Arts in Düsseldorf. Unlike some of his peers, he does not manipulate photographs. This is a differentiating factor in his work: he refuses to retouch the details of his pictures, although nature appears to be unreal and remote.

Purchased by the EIB in 2001, *Loire et Cher, France* depicts an island immersed in sunlight at the confluence of the two French rivers. The reflection of the green bushes is crystal clear on the surface of the water: nothing seems to move or to breathe, but the light appears to generate an internal movement of colours and infinitely varied and rich reflections. Most of his ephemeral landscapes usually record shores or riverscapes: attracted by the encounter of water and land, he often focuses on the horizon – straight and rather low, as in Dutch “Golden Age” landscape paintings of the 17th century.

He travels all over Europe, from France to the Netherlands, from Italy to Spain, searching for romantic locations to photograph. The result is striking for the energy of absorbing light, enhanced by the lucid Diasec support and the large-scale format isolated in a frame of wide white borders.

Loire et Cher, France

2000

C-print on Diasec

180 x 240 cm (framed)

Edition 7/7



Jorma Puranen

Jorma Puranen (born in Helsinki, 1961) is a Finnish photographer who has been referred to as “the grand and-not-so-old man” of the School of Helsinki. He has the unique talent of translating simple images into “temporal concepts”.

Icy Prospects No. 28, acquired by the EIB in 2009, is a very unconventional landscape picture. The technique adopted is intriguing: the artist covered a wooden board with black, glossy reflective paint and placed it outdoors in the winter while photographing the reflection of nature across its surface. Consequently, the result is extremely painting-like, a photographic painting, immersed in a luminous atmosphere, frozen in a time capsule.

Puranen’s poetics could be read as a contemporary translation of Turner’s landscapes; the feeling of the Sublime is captured by a sophisticated picture, suggesting the idea of an overwhelming force of nature.

His work has often been characterised by an original approach: his silent arctic landscapes record the traces of local history and individual memory, using literary and visual historical references to create a network of clashes and encounters.

Icy Prospects No. 28

2006

C-print on Diasac

160 x 198 cm (framed)

Edition 6/6

© Jorma Puranen



Zofia Kulik

Zofia Kulik (born in Wrocław, 1947) is a Polish artist who studied sculpture in Warsaw. At the beginning of her career she worked together with Przemysław Kwiek as the artistic duo KwiekKulik. In 1987 she went solo and started to create self-portraits, a manifestation of the awakening of her own identity.

In the series *Splendour of Myself*, produced in 2007, Zofia Kulik presents herself as a queen. Purchased in 2009, the EIB's edition shows the artist's body fragmented in pictures like a gothic stained glass icon, crowned by an anamorphic rose. Her dress fabric is a rich and ornamental drapery, composed of small photographic details repeated obsessively in symmetry: the recurring motifs include flowers, cog wheels, wisps of grass, dried leaves and the articulated poses of a naked model.

The power of her photographic works derives from the contrast between the decorative patterns, formed by sets of particular elements, and the drastic character of motifs appearing in them, visible only close up, when the viewer relinquishes the view of the whole in favour of particular iconographic motifs.

Zofia Kulik's individual art practice is mainly photographic – black and white, large format, collages – usually shown in series. Her pictures are collected in a personal visual archive, together with press cuttings and TV recordings. They reflect, through the eyes of her personal life experience, her country's collective imagery during the years of the decline of the Soviet regime. Archiving is for her the richest creative instrument in art.

Splendour of Myself IV

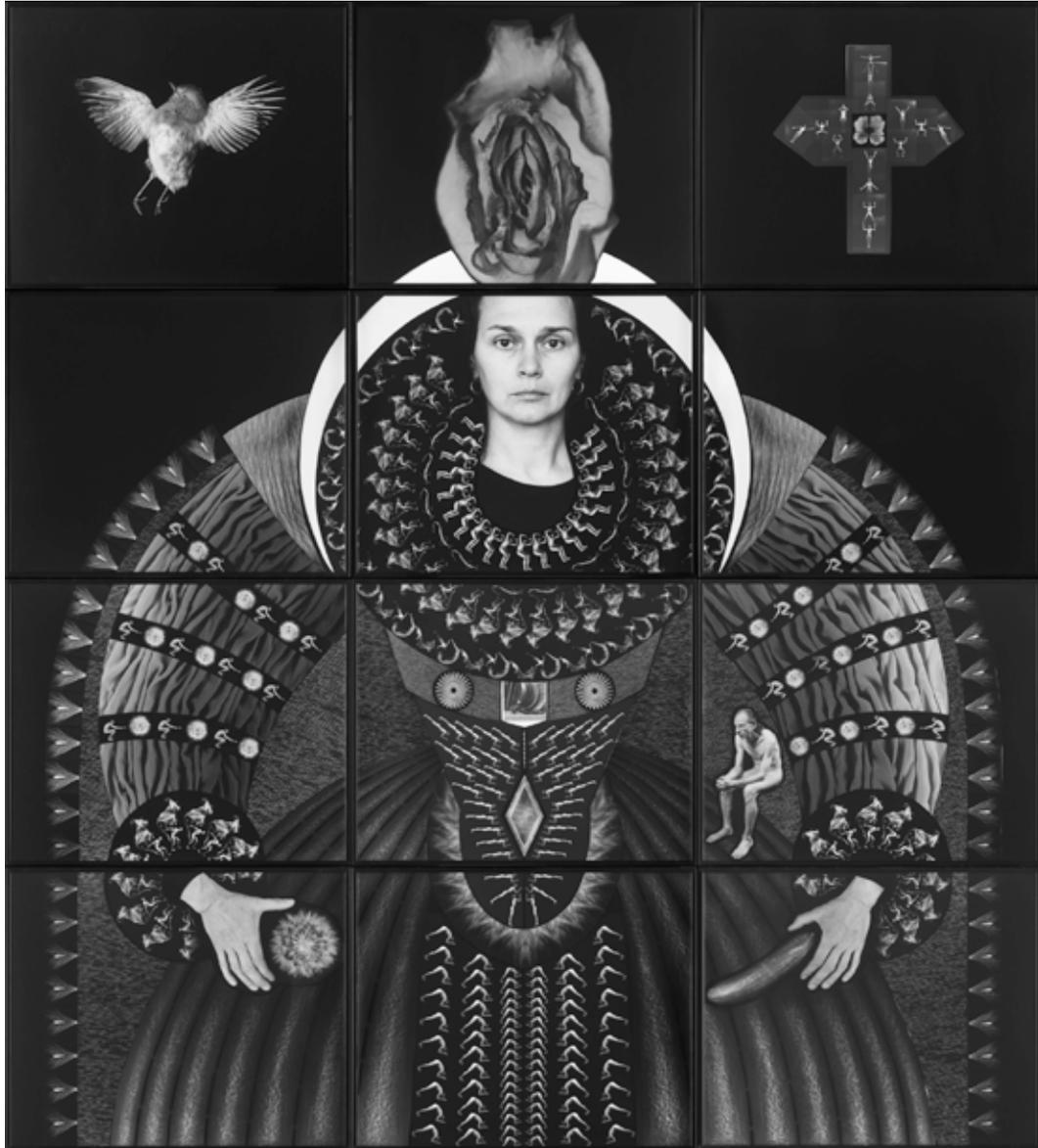
2007

Silver gelatin print

200 x 180 cm

Edition 1/3

© Zofia Kulik



Maïmouna P. Guerresi

Maïmouna Patrizia Guerresi (born in Pove del Grappa, Vicenza, in 1950) is an Italian photographer, sculptor and video maker. Inspired by body art, she shifted her focus to female spirituality and religious Islamic symbolism. Her familiarity with Africa and her conversion to Islam have become an integral part of her work.

Black Oracles, purchased by the EIB in 2009, is a polyptych, a constellation of rounded pictures of the same woman in various poses and sizes: enveloped in a black chador, she stands as a monumental sculpture emerging from her imprisoning veil to show her bare face toward the viewer. In this installation and in her body of works, the artist wishes to offer a personal view of the female condition, often using the motif of the veiled woman as a symbolic image of either a sacred entity – a Mother Earth or a Renaissance Madonna – or a clear provocation about contemporary society – an Islamic woman fixed within her own tradition and isolated from and by it.

Guerresi's fascinating "human sculptures" present an intimate perspective on the relationship between woman and society; her interest is in making symbolic use of the spiritual and "mystic body" of these female figures, while expressing her own concept of "foreign" in western society.

Black Oracles

2009

8 Lambda prints on Diasec

Variable sizes

Edition 3/5



Pierre Bismuth

Pierre Bismuth (born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1963) is a French artist who studied Decorative Arts in Paris and now lives and works in New York and Brussels. His art questions the viewer's perception of reality: describing the effects of the proliferation of images in contemporary society, he wants to show the influence of advertising and commercial codes on imagination.

Following the right hand of Marlene Dietrich in "The Song of Songs", purchased by the EIB in 2009, depicts a motion picture of the German diva Marlene Dietrich performing in the movie "The Song of Songs" (1933). This piece belongs to a recent series entitled *Following the Right Hand of...* in which the artist projects a feature film onto a panel of plexiglas and meticulously follows the movements of the lead actress's right hand with a black marker. He aims to almost obliterate the filmic image, occluded by a casual pattern, an imaginary signature made by the actress. In this way he creates an abstract representation that tracks the traces of a renewed and original language of signs.

Apart from Marlene Dietrich, images of Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo and Marilyn Monroe have also been interpreted in this strangely romantic style, becoming idols and icons reinvented by Bismuth's conceptual interventions into film history. Among several themes and forms of culture, from newspaper titles to magazine articles, Disney characters and museum architecture, the motion picture plays a major role in Bismuth's art, particularly from the period of classic Hollywood cinema.

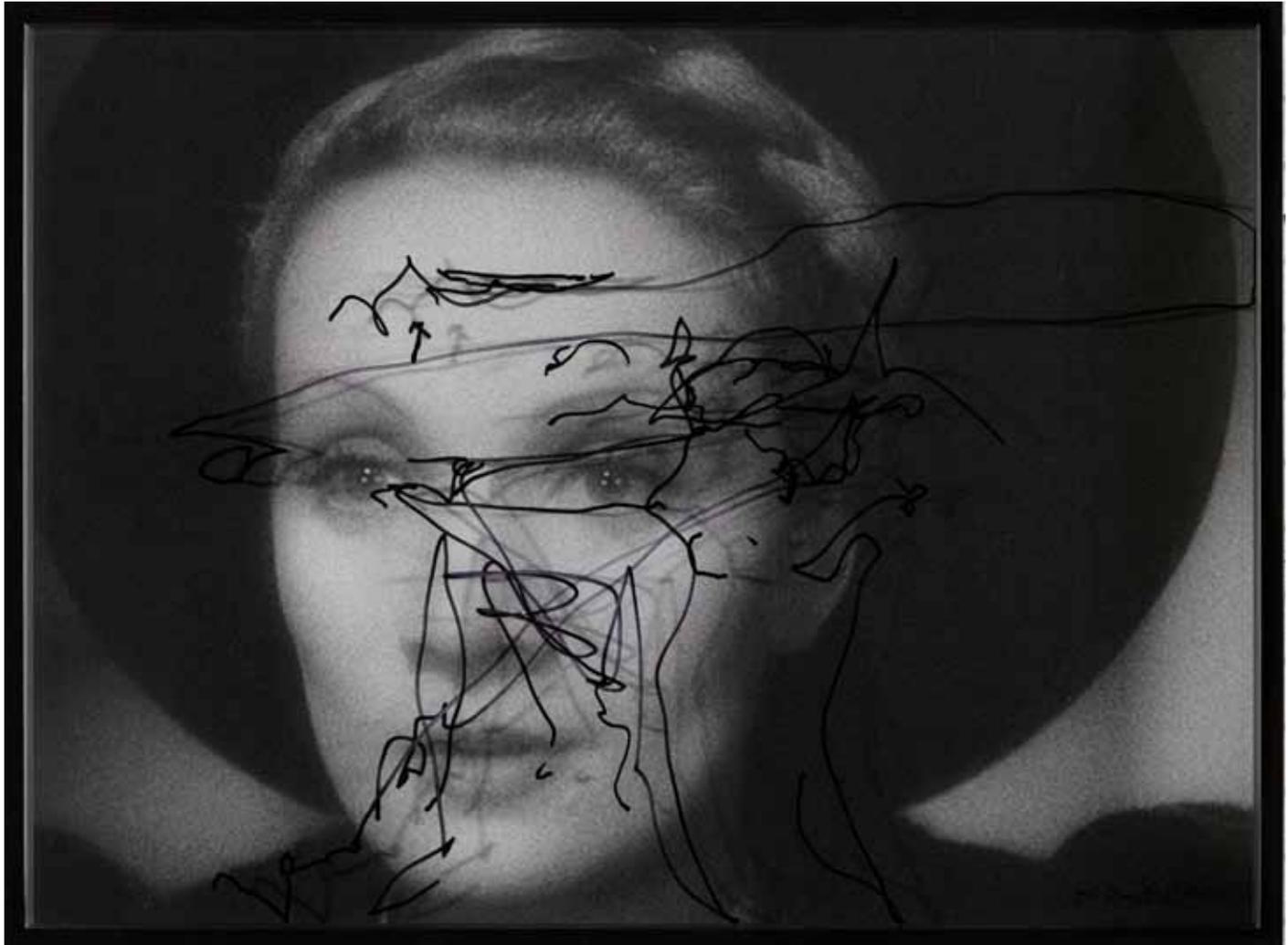
Following the right hand of Marlene Dietrich in "The Song of Songs"

2009

Marker on plexiglas over C-print

73.5 x 99 cm

© Pierre Bismuth / Team Gallery, New York



Christian Boltanski

Christian Boltanski (born in Paris, 1944) is a self-taught French visual artist, sculptor, painter and film director. Through photographs, memories and supposedly rediscovered objects, the idea of archiving dominates his work. The artist's aim is to retrace the memory of the daily life of anonymous human beings faced with a grand history of unreal heroes.

Véronique, purchased by the EIB in 1998, forms part of a series of works created in the 1990s, known as the *Suisses Morts*, in which the artist used photographs taken from death notices in Swiss newspapers and hung them on walls under the light of small bulbs, creating altars and clusters of pictures. This piece represents the shadowy figure of a dead woman by means of a large photograph covered with a white shroud, hidden in a wooden cage. The details and title of this work also recall the figure of Saint Veronica in the Christian tradition, the pious woman who offered her veil to Christ on the way of the cross to wipe his forehead, and who is iconographically depicted as holding a piece of cloth bearing the imprint of the face of Jesus Christ.

Boltanski's art focuses on the inner contradictions relating to life and death in the human condition, exploring the role of visual memory through the power of the image. His work is mainly based on a vein of fictitious autobiography: often permeated with nostalgia and irony, it explores the theme of childhood and life, both real and imagined, through challenging associations of pictures and objects.

Véronique

1996

Black and white photograph on tracing paper, fabric and neon in a latticed wooden box

151 x 81.5 x 10.5 cm



Michel Majerus

Michel Majerus (born in Esch-sur-Alzette, 1967, died in Luxembourg, 2002) was a key figure in the Luxembourgish and German contemporary art scene. Strongly influenced by American culture, Majerus developed a personal language connecting popular culture to historical references. His fascination for the consumerist society at large and advertising in particular is translated in his imaginative use of pop icons, logos and video games.

Untitled re-interprets a photograph of an old motorcycle store in California. When he moved to the United States in 2000, Majerus began working on a series of paintings incorporating digital media and videos, attracted by the city towers and commercial billboards dominating the American urban landscape. *Untitled (310)* is a more traditional type of painting. Here the artist seems to insist on the energy of the paint stroke, exploring the power of a paint mark associated with an imaginary logo. Both these artworks were purchased by the EIB in 2004.

These artworks are not very representative of the rich variety of Majerus' *œuvre*. With a subtle irony, he used to combine historical references to iconic motifs: fascinated by pop art iconography, his artwork ranged from lyrical abstraction to cartoon imagery.

Untitled

2001

Silkscreen on canvas
60 x 60 cm

Untitled (310)

1998

Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 cm



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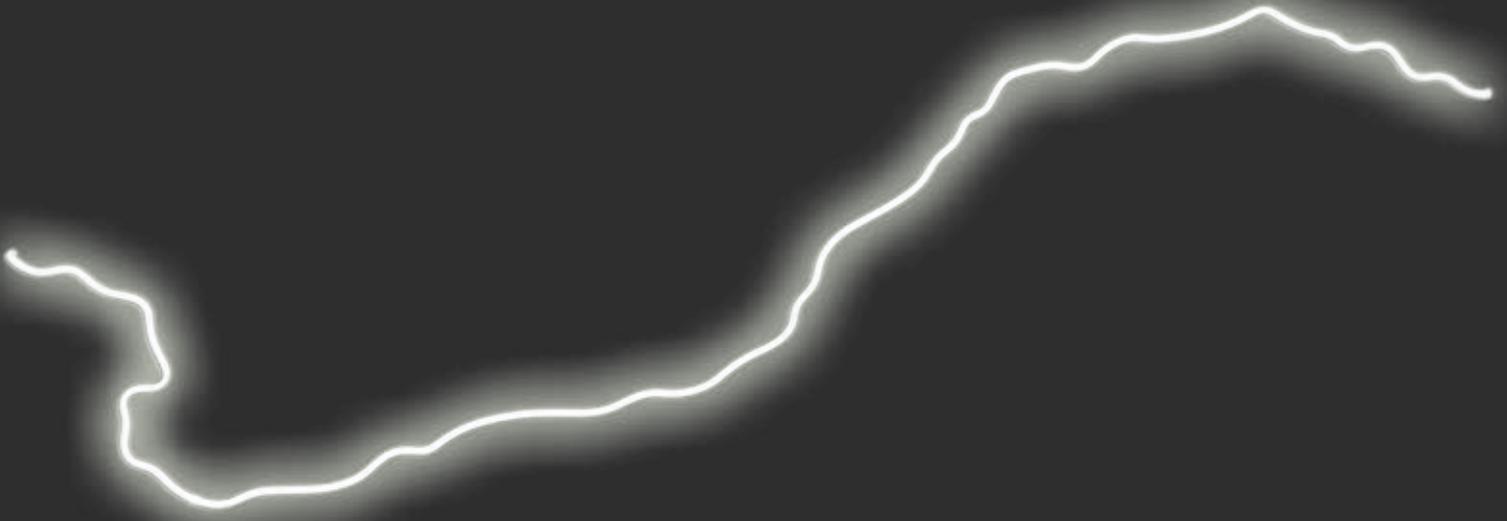
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