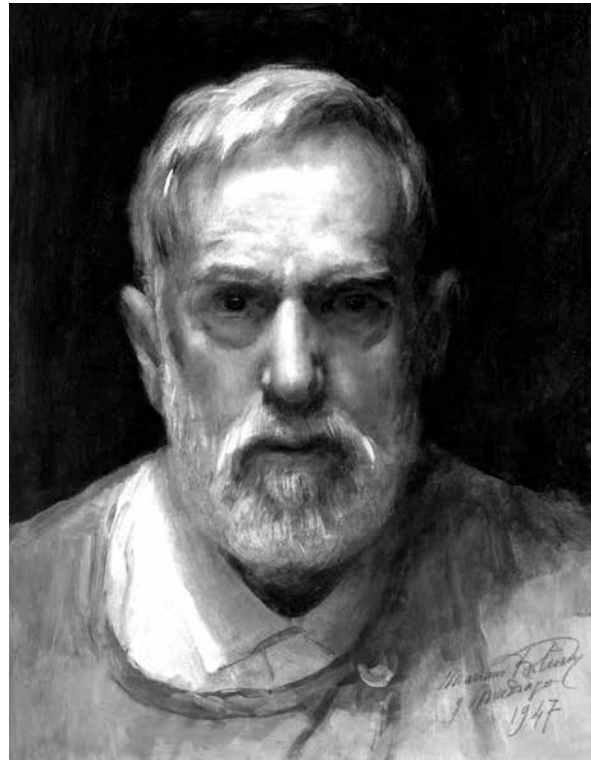




INTUITION

Marina

Abramović, Hilma Af Klint,
Vincenzo Agnetti, Pierre Alechinsky, Alis/Filliol,
William Anastasi, El Anatsui, Karel Appel, Jean Arp, Giacomo
Balla, Ida Barbarigo, Afro Basaldella, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Julian Beck,
Joseph Beuys, Umberto Boccioni, Alighiero Boetti, Michaël Borremans, Georges
Braque, Victor Brauner, André Breton, Marcel Broodthaers, Lucia Bru, Alberto Burri,
Pedro Cabrita Reis, Guido Cadorin, Alexander Calder, Francesco Candeloro, Antonio Canova,
Mireille Capelle, Vincenzo Castella, Chung Chang-Sup, Eduardo Chillida, Gustave Courbet, Giulio
d'Alessio, Berlinde De Bruyckere, Giorgio de Chirico, Thierry De Cordier, Willem de Kooning, Jean
Degottex, Marco Del Re, Marta Dell'Angelo, Gilles Delmas, Mario Deluigi, André Derain, Óscar Dominguez,
Maurizio Donzelli, Claudine Draï, Marcel Duchamp, James Ensor, Max Ernst, Bruna Esposito, Cleo Fariselli,
François Fiedler, Lucio Fontana, Mariano Fortuny, Henri Foucault, Galileo Galilei, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio,
Alberto Garutti, Isa Genzken, Alberto Giacometti, Giovanni Giaretta, Gioberto Noro, Raimund Girke, Arshile
Gorky, Antony Gormley, Gotthard Graubner, Aldo Grazzi, Ezio Gribaudo, Franco Guerzoni, Barbara Hammer, Hans
Hartung, Sadaharu Horio, Yasmine Hugonnet, Norio Imai, Yu-ichi Inoue, Damien Jalet, Ann Veronica Janssens, Paul
Jenkins, Asger Jorn, Wassily Kandinsky, Anish Kapoor, Ellsworth Kelly, Jan Kersschot, Kimsooja, Paul Klee, Yves Klein,
Susan Kleinberg, Ivan Kliun, Mikhail Larionov, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Fernand Léger, Leoncillo Leonardi, Renato Leotta,
Stephen Lichty, Osvaldo Licini, Marcos Lutyens, Heinz Mack, Natalia Goncharova, Tsuyoshi Maekawa, Man Ray,
Piero Manzoni, Étienne-Jules Marey, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Alberto Martini, Nicola Martini, Arturo Martini,
Masatoshi Masanobu, André Masson, Mikhail Matyushin, Roberto Matta, Elena Mazzi, Ana Mendieta, Duane Michals,
Henri Michaux, Joan Miró, François Morellet, Robert Morris, Gaspare Diziani, Susan Morris, Sadamasa Motonaga,
Michel Mouffe, Sofie Muller, Matt Mullican, Edvard Munch, Zoran Mušič, Kinuku Naito, Yuko Nasaka, Senkichiro
Nasaka, Matteo Nasini, Max Neumann, Jaromír Novotný, Kimiko Ohara, Giancarlo Pancaldi, Francis Picabia,
Pablo Picasso, Otto Piene, Gaetano Previati, Raku Kichizaemon XV, Masaomi Raku, Kurt Ralske, Santiago
Ramón y Cajal, Odilon Redon, Gerhard Richter, Bernardí Roig, Medardo Rosso, Piero Ruggeri, Tomás
Saraceno, Mariano Sardon, Angelo Savelli, Markus Schinwald, Park Seo-Bo, Shozo Shimamoto, Kazuo
Shiraga, Elisa Sighicelli, Pierre Soulages, Léon Spilliaert, Saul Steinberg, Jana Sterbak, Dominique
Stroobant, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Takis, Ryuji Tanaka, Tancredi (Parmeggiani), Antoni Tàpies,
Livia Tivoli, Mark Tobey, Cy Twombly, Raoul Ubac, Günther Uecker, Koen Van den
Broek, Emilio Vedova, Angel Vergara, Jef Verheyen, Giorgio Vigna, Emilio
Villa, Gil Joseph Wolman, Umbo (Umbehr Otto), Rik Wouters,
Michio Yoshihara, Jiro Yoshihara, Yun Hyong-Keun
and many unknown anonymous
artists...



The Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia is once again offering a season of exhibitions that look toward the future. The MUVE Contemporaneo project, now in its third edition, offers a full calendar of high-level cultural events running at the same time as the 57th Venice Biennale 2017.

Intuition – hosted in the magical spaces of the museum/workshop of Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei – represents a key step in the process of investigation into contemporary arts launched by the Fondazione.

The multidisciplinary and extremely unique exhibitions realised with the invaluable collaboration of the Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation, which I would like to take this opportunity to thank, have raised Palazzo Fortuny to new heights in the international art world.

This year, exactly one decade later, the long exhibition project draws to a close. It began with

Artempo in 2007, continued with *In-finitum* in 2009, *TRA* in 2011, *Tàpies: The Eye of the Artist* in 2013 and *Proportio* in 2015. The latter was awarded the prize, *Best Exhibition of the Year 2015*, in the Leading Culture Destinations Awards.

With *Intuition*, visitors will discover an original investigation into that peculiar form of knowledge that cannot be explained in words, which reveals itself in sudden flashes, images, sounds, and experiences, and which plays with inevitably interweaving levels embracing every branch of human knowledge, from art to history, and from science to philosophy.

Finally, I would like here to express a special thank you to the two curators, Daniela Ferretti and Axel Vervoordt, for leading us once again on a journey of skillfully varied and fascinating aspects.

MARIACRISTINA GRIBAUDI
President Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

A FLASH DARTED ATHWART MY MIND

“The artist acts like a mediumistic being who, from the labyrinth beyond time and space, seeks his way out to a clearing. [...] All his decisions in the artistic execution of the work rest with pure intuition and cannot be translated into a self-analysis, spoken or written, or even thought out.”

– Marcel Duchamp

A highly delicate and complex theme, and one which could be lost in multiple representations, intuition is a revelation of consciousness and a condition that reveals the unknown. The moment of grace of intuition has no other significance except that of preserving the link with the invisible; a cosmic bond in which the harmony of the world is presaged, and sought in an inaccessible space, beyond oneself.

The perceptive space is self-knowledge, even where it remains incomplete. Intuition, conversely, is similar to mystery, to that inaccessible place of being in which the spirit broadens its gaze, and in which the immediate and dazzling awareness of the creative act manifests itself. The time of this gaze is essential. The work is alive; it is its time, and its inner space.

We are immersed in what we call “intuition”, but are unable to recognise it rationally except in rare and exceptional cases, in which case it reveals itself in the most evident way. In a recent conversation with Ida Barbarigo, I was struck by a reflection she made on the profound significance of being a painter: “I live for that magical moment when, in solitude, I can finally ‘see’ and ‘feel’ with all my senses what I have always looked at... I take its essence and immediately have to draw.”

Similarly, Paul Klee wrote in his diary on April 16, 1914 in Tunisia: “A sense of comfort penetrates deep inside me, I feel safe, I do not feel tired. Colour possesses me. I don’t have to pursue it. It will possess me always. I know it. That is the

meaning of this happy hour: colour and I are one. I am a painter.”

Mankind has been tracing out signs since the dawn of history, questioning their presence in the universe, and seeking to give form to that which eludes it: in touching the material world, it seems to seek its inner reality. It is intuitive knowledge that enables communication between the two worlds. For Augustine and Plotinus, this is the only way man has to touch God, as intuition is the attribute of the divine, its unique way of “doing”.

The artist lives this indescribable feeling that is inaccessible to words as a reflection of all that has been present, of what will be present, from the beginning and forever. Freed from the need to depict the visible world, the artist becomes the receptor through whom the echoes and reflections of an irrational elsewhere flow freely and take form, and in whom everything blends into the unity of the Origin. It is the luminous vision that pierces the darkness, and that for an indefinite and indefinable instant makes it possible to grasp those fragments of knowledge required to give meaning to existence itself. To paraphrase Mark Rothko, art is the only place in which the spirit finds material form.

An exhibition intending to explore the forms of intuition can only start from the first attempts made by man to create an immediate link between earth and heaven: from the erection of totems to shamanism, from mystical ecstasy to the examples

of illuminations in religious iconography, and on to the capacity for divine revelation in dreams.

In Old Master paintings, one can read intuition on several levels, from the iconographic one to what we might define as the technical and expressive levels, where the artist's skill has a peculiar twist that makes the work particularly significant in terms of novelty and effectiveness. Another important level concerns the recipient: this might be defined as an evocative power, able to draw in the observer not only with the power of argument, but above all with the ability to strike deeply at the emotional sphere. The power of images is such that the origins of iconoclasm and the prohibition of using certain images in given historical and geographic contexts might be traced to this aspect.

In the exhibition, the desire to decline this universal theme in contemporary art, alongside examples of works and artefacts from different eras, aims to offer a sideways glance at the possibilities of the visual arts, understood as a constantly evolving collective process feeding on individual intuitions. It is a process often irreducible to the sphere of reason and rationality, and which therefore, thanks in part to this form of resilience, appears to our eyes as inevitable.

Art is neither luxury nor ornament. It's a form of communication and knowledge that is unique to our species. It lies deep in the mind and accompanies our evolution, illuminating it as we develop.

The *Intuition* project represents the synthesis of the long path travelled with Axel Vervoordt in the field of artistic disciplines, which since 2007, has explored issues relating to time, space, transformation, vision, and proportions.

A large number of scholars and friends have generously and passionately contributed to the realisation of each exhibition. Together, we've shared a wonderful adventure, expanded our knowledge, and interwoven relationships that have deeply enriched our spirit.

With *Intuition*, we've concluded a cycle, but at the same time, we've opened our eyes and minds to other territories that we will continue to explore until we find answers to the question that Emilio Vedova often liked to ask himself and others: "What is hidden under Tintoretto's beard?"

I wish to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to my "brother" Axel, and to the artists, friends, collectors, and all those who have worked on these projects.

DANIELA FERRETTI
Director, Palazzo Fortuny

TITLE

is borrowed from the work, *Divine Comedy*, written by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), published in the series, *The Harvard Classics* (New York City, NY: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909-14)

EPIGRAPH

is from a speech Marcel Duchamp delivered to the Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas and published as a full transcript in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, (New York City, NY: Grove Press, 1959)

FINDING A NEW SOURCE

The opening of *Intuition* marks the ten-year anniversary of the collaboration between the Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation and Palazzo Fortuny in Venice. Beginning in 2007 with *Artempo*, followed by *Academia* in 2008 in Paris, and then coinciding with every biennale in Venice thereafter, *In-finitum* in 2009, *TRA* in 2011, *Tapiès: The Eye of the Artist* in 2013, *Proportio* in 2015, the series concludes in 2017 with *Intuition*.

Each theme is a milestone and a symbol of a next step I've taken in my life. The process of organising the exhibitions included many meetings, think tanks, and creative salons to seek the knowledge required to understand the title we'd selected. In our work, a name is not just a name. It's representative of themes, concepts, and philosophies, which synthesise the exhibition's expansive ideas. Usually the process of naming the exhibition and supporting this title with a foundation of research and conceptual knowledge, took at least one year. We collaborated with scientists, musicians, architects, writers, and scholars to study and share information. Following that, the artists had one year to create new works or propose one of their older works. The curatorial process of every exhibition has given me a broader view on life.

Each theme is universal and timeless, and that's why I mixed old art with contemporary art together in the magnificent former home and workshop of Mariano Fortuny, which was also a centre for living writers, painters, musicians, and designers. Art is all about making connections – between the artist and their work, and between the work and its audience. To find these connections in art that spans centuries is to search for a universal key. It's the desire to build the foundation for a new civilisation, and one that's based on tradition and experience. Curating an exhibition is a way to share knowledge

with others. This spirit of sharing has always been central to my work. It's a great experience to get closer to a concept, which brings you closer to an understanding of the universe.

Symbolically, intuition is both an end and a beginning, a way of finding a new source. For artists, scientists, and many others, I think every great discovery emerges out of intuition. Intuition is a feeling that comes out of total freedom, being one with cosmic energy. It's knowledge before knowledge. It's understanding before understanding. Intuition is the result of processing a lot of messages in our brain and body – similar to the work that computers do – and with intelligence, at once one sees light. Intuition gives us new ideas and doesn't always tell us where those ideas come from.

Intuition is the logical successor of our most recent exhibition, *Proportio*. The concept of studying proportions is something that humans invented to give body to their intuition. Because of this, *Intuition* is a duo together with *Proportio*, and marks a symbolic and literal way to close this series at Palazzo Fortuny.

This year also marks another significant change and evolution. For the past several years, we've been working on building the Kanaal site in Belgium, which is known as "*A City in the Country*". The industrial architecture, in dialogue with the timeless, contemporary architecture based on sacred proportions, will be complete at the end of 2017. I want to concentrate on this new home for our foundation and gallery, as well as for our music organisation, Inspiratum. It's my intention to curate very personalised exhibitions, also with strong concepts, in these new spaces.

During the past decade, the exhibitions created with my close friend Daniela Ferretti – who became like a soul mate and a sister – have given us a deep

connection and love for Palazzo Fortuny and the city of Venice, which will never change.

Intuition is a theme that's open to many different possible interpretations. It's an exciting challenge to save a difficult theme for the last exhibition. Intuition is something that's always there, but not always easy to describe. That's why it's studied in so many intellectual fields, from philosophy to neuroscience, and this research is a tremendous legacy to human history.

Art is born when the energy of creation is stronger than the voluntary act of the artist. The artist follows intuitive feelings in a free way that one might describe as liberating. They are seeking connections to express cosmic energy. The feeling of intuition is one that's stronger than your ego. It's at once being connected to a source of global knowledge. Artists have the unique ability to share this knowledge with us, while not always revealing the source. The ways they materialise their intuitive visions is what gives art its magic.

My wish for visitors of *Intuition* is that people are invited to experience art, open their minds, and liberate their intuition. You must work to free your knowledge. This can only happen with a feeling of trust. When viewing the works of art, I hope that visitors experience an atmosphere that stimulates meditation, new ideas, and a feeling of peace. Walking through the floors of Palazzo Fortuny is like taking a pilgrimage, which allows us to see the world in a different way. Intuition is something that comes very suddenly and gives clear vision. Intuition is pure light.

It was an exciting challenge to choose an art work that would most represent the spirit of *Intuition*. In the end, we chose a sculpture titled, *White Dark VIII* (2000), by Anish Kapoor. To stand in front of the sculpture is to feel the fullness of emptiness. It's a long, endless white tunnel of light. There's no time, no beginning, and no end.

AXEL VERVOORDT



Eddi De Wolf and Ludovica Lumer
INTUITION: A CONVERSATION
12

Michel Vande Vyvere
INTUITION INSIGHTS
24

Erik Lumer
FROM SUBLIMINAL TO SUBLIME
28

Francesco Poli
WANDERING IN THE LAND OF INTUITION
32

Margaret Iversen
PROFANE ILLUMINATION
42

Davide Daninos
THE NECESSARY
62

Giulio d'Alessio
**LOOKING INSIDE ONESELF THROUGH
THE EYE OF THE MIND**
82

Paul Vandebroek
**THE LEAP AND PARADOXICAL SPACE OF
INTUITIVE CREATION AND IMAGINATION IN
RELIGIOUS AND MYSTICAL TRADITIONS**
86

Michael Gardner
INTUITION 101
106

ILLUSTRATIONS
125

ANNOTATED ILLUSTRATIONS
367



INTUITION

A Conversation, January 2017

I. Defining Intuition

Eddi De Wolf (EDW): Our starting point for discussion, of course, should be about the definition of intuition. We could first make a distinction between two aspects: What do people commonly understand by the word intuition, and what does science – neuroscience in particular – have to say?

I always find it interesting to start with etymology. The word intuition is derived from the Latin verb “tueri”, which means, “to look at”. Combined with “in”, it means to look inside, to contemplate. It has the meaning of an inward oriented feeling arising spontaneously, without logical reasoning.

Everybody has a sense of intuition and attaches a certain meaning to it. Beyond the purely personal level, it plays a prominent part in interpersonal relations, in our judgments of other people and our behaviour towards them. This is the social aspect of intuitive processes.

Glancing through dictionaries, one encounters a plethora of definitions, most of them of a phenomenological nature. However, definitions more often than not are simply descriptive, they don't really explain in full conceptual detail.

As a scientist, what I would most like to understand is how the mental process we call intuition works at the neural level. What's happening in the brain? Which neural circuits are active? What's the scientific evidence from cognitive psychology and neurology? Science now has at its disposal modern techniques that were hitherto unavailable. Judging from the recent literature, the quest to uncover the neural basis of intuition is making constant progress.

Ludovica Lumer (LL): Yes! Intuition has always been considered a mysterious phenomenon, which lives outside the domain of science. Freud once even said that it's an illusion to expect anything from intuition! Intuition is considered the enemy of rational thinking and wise decision-making, but contemporary neuroscience is beginning – with the help of sophisticated technologies – to uncover the neurophysiological mechanisms underlying intuitive processes.

As the brilliant scientist, Matthew Lieberman says, “It may be fruitful to consider intuition as the subjective experience associated with the use of knowledge gained through implicit learning”. In other words, it might be useful to consider intuition as the feeling generated by an unconscious process.

EDW Still, returning to the definitions, even in the scientific literature a generally accepted one is still lacking. Depending

“These ‘feelings’ have an efficiency of operation, which it is impossible for thought to match. Even our most highly intellectualised operations depend upon them as a ‘fringe’ by which to guide our inferential movements. They give us our sense of rightness and wrongness, of what to select and emphasize and follow up, and what to drop, slur over and ignore among the multitude of inchoate meanings that are presenting themselves... These qualities are the stuff of ‘intuitions.’”

Dewey, J., *Experience and Nature* (La, Salle, IL: Open Court, 1925).

on the discipline, the term has multiple connotations. I refer to a statement made some time ago by the cognitive psychologist Arthur S. Reber that captures the situation well:

“There is probably no cognitive process that suffers from such a gap between phenomenological reality and scientific understanding. Introspectively, intuition is one of the most compelling and obvious cognitive processes; empirically and theoretically, it is one of the processes least understood by contemporary cognitive scientists.”¹

A definition I particularly like is summarised in the following quote:

“Intuitive responses appear as ideas or feelings that subsequently guide our thoughts and behaviours. In most everyday life decisions, we do not consciously go through steps of searching, weighing evidence, and carefully deciding which option to choose before we act. Rather, especially in situations where there is time pressure and/or uncertainty in terms of the probabilities and consequences of the options, we rely on instant responses of an affective character or “gut feeling.” It is these types of spontaneous judgment processes that can be defined collectively as intuition.”²

Through the ages, philosophers, starting with Parmenides, Plato and the Greek schools, have also vigorously debated the subject. Since it leads to knowledge that's not acquired by logical inference or observation, it was considered to be an original, independent source of cognition – referred

1. Reber, A.S., “Implicit Learning and Tacit Knowledge”, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 1989, pp. 118, 219, quote p. 232.

2. Kirsten G. Volz and D. Yves von Cramon, “What Neuroscience Can Tell About Intuitive Processes on the Context of Perceptual Discovery”, *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 18:12, pp. 2077-2087; Hogarth, R.M., *Educating Intuition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); T. Gilovich, D. Griffin, and D. Kahneman (eds.), “Heuristics and biases”, *The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press).

to in the “Soul of Eternity” (Plato), an “Illumination of the Soul” (Descartes) – which was “designed” to account for just those kinds of knowledge that other sources don’t provide. Also in mathematics, the question – where do axioms come from? – is an interesting one. Many great scientists have debated the role of intuition, and we can come back to that, if you like.

LL Even in everyday life, we heavily rely on intuitive processes to perceive and understand the world around us.

EDW Yes. I think that Stanislas Dehaene, a well-known cognitive psychologist – we can talk about his work later – adequately summarises, for our purposes, what intuition is when he writes:

“Its operation obeys three criteria that may be seen as definitional of the term “intuition”: it is fast, automatic, and inaccessible to introspection. It points to the operation of a special and largely automatic processing system. These properties constitute a decipherable signature of intuition.”³

For Dehaene, decipherable means that it has become possible – albeit in simple situations like arithmetic – to decipher the neural mechanisms involved, and even design successful mathematical (artificial neural network) models.

For him, intuition relies on (background) neural processes of which we’re unaware, and when provoked by certain cues, we assemble these in a coherent fashion from an entire stream of prior experiences. All this preparatory work – these neural network “calculations” – take place unconsciously.

LL We’ll go back to this later – we’ll look at the interplay between perception, memory, and emotions in intuitive processes – but, as neuroscientist Antonio Damasio always says, when you take a decision, “You don’t just remember facts, whether the outcome was good or bad, but you remember whether what we felt was good or bad.”

You know, in addition, it might be important to underline how intuition differs from insight. Often, they are somehow put together. Intuition is more of a feeling, which somehow precedes the insight.

EDW Indeed, the scientific literature clearly distinguishes between them.

Insight also relies on processes in the brain of which we are unaware, i.e., are unconscious, but suddenly one becomes aware of the logical relations between a problem and the answer. The transition into consciousness leads to a sudden and clear perception, i.e., insight. Intuitive processes and insight processes thus differ in several aspects: (I) insight builds on intuition and thus follows the latter; (II) becomes conscious; (III) leads to a solution.⁴

In the case of intuition, usually there is no insight into the logical relations, but simply an impetus, judgment, hunch, or behavioural response. Intuition is the subjective experience of a process

3. Dehaene, S., “Origins of Mathematical Intuitions”, *The Year of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 2009, Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1156: pp. 232-259.

4. Kirsten G. Volz and D. Yves von Cramon, “What Neuroscience Can Tell about Intuitive Processes in the Context of Perceptual Discovery”, *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 2006, p. 18, 2077.

that is fast and non-rational. Being highly dependent on previous experience and knowledge, it is capable of accurately extracting probabilistic contingencies, which then guide our thoughts and decisions.⁵

And then, of course, there is instinct.

LL Yes, exactly, which is also very important.

EDW Maybe there’s a difference. Instinct probably makes use of the same, or similar, neural memory structures invoked by intuition, but has been inherited.

LL Yes, these are the most visceral structures of the brain. To make a decision, for example, we need our cognitive apparatus, which analyses what happens in the world, but we also need our emotional one. It’s our emotions that allow us to mark things as good, bad or indifferent. And these are the brain structures that we share with animals.

EDW Yes, the more primitive ones, from our ancestors, and from millions of years ago; Darwinian evolution and selection...

LL Human beings seem to be very refined in using these structures to extract meaning. So, it’s not only the instinct that tells me, “I see something and I run away”, which is the visceral reaction of the brain, let’s say. But, we develop an intuition too, which is like instinct, but connected more to the cognitive aspects.

EDW A major difference – and evolutionary advantage – is that humans, contrary to animals, have quite recently in the evolution of hominoids developed language, thus giving the possibility to transmit these feelings and communicate them. This “language advantage” has of course been crucial for the development of larger social structures and inter-human communication.

LL Which is primarily human.

EDW Yes, human primarily. Maybe monkeys have it also, I don’t know.

LL Actually thinking of that, it’s incredible to realise that sometimes we have an intuition and we actually make sense of it while talking. Only talking through, speaking about, and elaborating on it – so adding the language layer – you untangle the feelings that you have about something. So once we have an intuition, a gut feeling, it’s language that might help us to make sense of it.

EDW So, to come back once again to the definition, what I’m most interested in is the neurological basis of intuition.

Among scientists, psychologists, cognitive scientists, neurologists, etc., it’s a much debated and much studied subject. Of course, the role of intuition in the genesis of art, music, literature, etc., is of utmost importance for the exhibition. But, since we are scientists...

LL – We need to stick to the basics.

5. Lieberman, M.D., “Intuition: A Social Cognitive Neuroscience Approach”, *Psychological Bulletin*, 2000, pp. 109, 126.

II. Intuition, Instinct, and Insight

EDW I prefer to leave aside art aspects for now, important as they may be. But what does science, neurology in particular, have to say on the subject? And what about philosophy?

From what I've read, the earliest extensive discussions can, not surprisingly, be traced back to Plato. In his book, *The Republic*, he tries to define intuition as a fundamental capacity of human reason to comprehend the true nature of reality. In his discussion with Meno & Phaedo, he describes intuition as pre-existing knowledge residing in the "soul of eternity" – a phenomenon by which one becomes conscious of pre-existing knowledge. He gives several examples mainly from mathematics. Mathematics is indeed based on axioms, which are posited and cannot be further proven by logical reasoning. They're accepted as truths using knowledge already present in a dormant form and accessible to our intuition.

In short, for Plato intuition was the supreme, the ultimate, and most profound form of knowledge. This idea was based on his well-known and very influential philosophy of *Forms* or *Ideals*: What we can know through the senses is only an imperfect copy of the pure, eternal, and unchanging world of the *Forms*, "as if in the mind of God".

Interestingly, René Descartes, in his book, *The Passions of the Soul*, from 1649, reasoned along similar lines. He wrote:

"Intuitive knowledge is an illumination of the soul, whereby it beholds in the light of God those things which it pleases Him to reveal to us by a direct impression of divine clearness."⁶

In 1704, the famous mathematician, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, was the first to develop a systematic doctrine that both allowed for and made reference to intuition as a source of implicit knowledge. He emphasised the importance of "insensible" or "unconscious" perceptions: ideas of which we're not consciously aware, but which do influence behaviour.⁷

Evidently, the whole subject has since then been much debated in philosophy before it was taken up in experimental psychology and "modern" science. The literature is extensive. For me, it keeps coming back to the idea that intuition relates to our deepest knowledge. It's unconscious knowledge. We are not aware about what is happening when we rely on intuition.

LL Maybe not intellectually. And this is what fascinates me about intuition. But we might be aware *bodily*. It's like an embodied feeling/knowledge.

In fact, it's popularly said to be a *gut feeling*. We *feel* that something is right, but we don't *know* what it is, and this is, in fact, the visceral part of our physiological system. This is a part of the brain, like the insular cortex, the basal ganglia, that's very connected to our body, and so it's there that we put together not

knowing something yet with the cortex, but knowing something with our body.

EDW Maybe we should return later to the role of basal ganglia and other neural structures? I'm not a neurologist and neither are most of our readers.

LL Intuition is definitely something that's endlessly fascinating – that's why it's so complex to study scientifically. I mean, in practical terms, to design an experiment, which could tell you in simple terms when the brain is having an intuition and what exactly is happening is very difficult.

It's very difficult, because intuition is a very complex phenomenon and mobilises a huge amount of structures in the brain. When one sees something, there's always a context, in which the person perceives the outside world – whatever the content of the perception might be. An intuitive process has a perceptual component, and an amnesic one; the stored memories of the past, of something that happened before, which might, explicitly or implicitly, be recalled at that particular moment.

When we talk about intuition it's very important to keep in mind the emotional factor as well. Let's try to put it in a simple way: you're looking at something, which is, let's say, a problem, and you have previous knowledge about other things that you don't even know exactly what they are. But, emotionally, you feel there's something right or wrong here.

So we're setting the entire brain to work: the visual part, the cognitive part, the perceptual, the emotional, the motor, and memory – all of it at once! Everything is happening there. Somehow you have the feeling that something you saw before could be right in this moment in time. But you don't know exactly what it is. So you have the emotional component that says, "Yes, you're on the right way", and you feel this *rightness* in your body.

This is exactly why it's extremely complex, for us neuroscientists, to approach the concept of intuition. It's one of the most complex things that we have in our lives.

EDW This complexity is what makes it so fascinating. We already talked about Plato's and Aristotle's idea that, for them, intuition is the supreme form of knowledge. They were well aware that to construct any formal deductive system – take Euclid's geometry as an example – one needs to start from "first principles", such as the axioms and rules of inference. The whole magnificent structure of Euclidian [plane] geometry with all of its theorems is based on just five such axioms. Axioms stand at the top of the pyramid in any logical system. The point with which the philosophers struggled – and still do – is that axioms, by definition, cannot be logically derived further. In a precise sense, they're "external" to the logical pyramid. To resolve this dilemma, Plato, *et. al.*, posited that axioms belong to the eternal, immutable realm of the *Forms* and are self-evident facts derived from intuition. Hence, the preeminent role that intuition plays in their philosophy.

Evidently, nowadays we don't any longer invoke a Higher Being or Deity [cfr. Descartes]. Rather, we seek the basis for

6. See e.g., James L. Mursell, "The Function of Intuition in Descartes' Philosophy of Science", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4, July, 1919, pp. 391-409.

7. Leibniz, G.W., *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (English translation), (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1916), p. 106.

INTUITION AND MATHEMATICS

*What then is mathematics if it is not a unique, rigorous, logical structure? It is a series of great intuitions carefully sifted, and organized by the logic men are willing and able to apply at any time.*¹ – Morris Kline

As a physicist involved in what many people consider as “esoteric” experiments, and very abstract mathematical theories, I’ve often wondered how the mathematician’s mind came to such discoveries. In fact, many of the most famous mathematicians themselves devoted quite some near-philosophical thoughts on the subject. Almost all stressed the prominent role of intuition in their work. It’s quite interesting that they often arrived at conclusions that coincide to a large extent with our present, experiment-based, findings. Let me illustrate with some quotes: Richard Courant (1888-1972), a German-American mathematician: *Mathematics as an expression of the human mind reflects the active will, the contemplative reason, and the desire for aesthetic perfection. Its basic elements are logic and intuition, analysis and construction, generality and individuality.*

He’s best known by the general public for his book, “What is Mathematics?”

Felix Klein (1849-1925); another great German mathematician:

Thus, in a sense, mathematics has been most advanced by those who distinguished themselves by intuition rather than by rigorous proofs.

Alan Turing (1912-1954), English computer scientist, mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst and theoretical biologist:

Mathematical reasoning may be regarded rather schematically as the exercise of a combination of two facilities, which we may call intuition and ingenuity.

He’s widely considered to be the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence.

And Albert Einstein’s well-known introspection: *Words and language, whether spoken or written, do not seem to play any role in my thinking mechanisms. The mental entities that serve as elements of my thought are certain signs or images, more or less clear, that can ‘at will’ be reproduced or combined.*

(From Einstein’s letter reprinted in Hadamard’s book, see below). One of the most influential proponents of the power of intuition was the distinguished French mathematician Jacques Hadamard (1865-1963), who published a systematic inquiry into his fellow mathematicians’ practices.²

Having consulted some of the greatest original thinkers of his generation, not only in mathematics, Hadamard noted that many major discoveries were preceded by long periods of unconscious “incubation” followed by sudden insight. Inspiration could strike anytime, particularly after an individual had worked hard on a problem for days and then turned attention to another activity. Hadamard proposed four chronological stages in the process of creation:

1. Preparation: Conscious attention is given to a problem.
 2. Incubation: Your conscious preparation sparks an unconscious mechanism that searches for the solution. The unconscious mechanism evaluates the resulting combinations on aesthetic criteria, but most of them are useless.
 3. Illumination: An idea that satisfies our unconscious criteria suddenly emerges into your consciousness.
 4. Verification: You carry out further conscious work in order to verify your illumination, to formulate it more precisely, and perhaps to follow up on its consequences.
- He concluded that, “the roots of creativity, in science as well as in the arts, lie not in consciousness, but in

long unconscious mental activity, and in the unconscious aesthetic selection of ideas that subsequently pass into consciousness.”

I should add that Hadamard’s four-stage theory was in fact borrowed from Graham Wallas (1858-1932), an English social psychologist and London School of Economics co-founder.³

Still, Hadamard was foremost influenced by earlier ideas on mathematical creation from his illustrious predecessor Henri Poincaré (1854-1912) in his book, “Science et Méthode”.⁴

Poincaré was concerned that intuition is the foundation upon which mathematics is based. However, he also emphasised that sudden intuition does not give certainty, can lead to wrong conclusions and thus needs verification, obviously a conscious act.

Eddi De Wolf

- ¹ Kline, M., *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty*, (Oxford University Press: 1980), p. 312.
- ² Hadamard, J., *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1945).
- ³ Wallas, Graham, *The Art of Thought* (New York City, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926); reprinted by Solis Press, 2014.
- ⁴ “Bibliothèque de philosophie scientifique”, Flammarion, collection, 1908.

intuition in previous experiences, or in neurological terms, and in memory structures built from such experiences or “hardwired” in the brain through millions of years of evolution.

LL How come, do you think, that when there’s something that we cannot prove or that it’s not derived from experience, we nevertheless *feel* that something is right?

I think – although I’m not sure, because I cannot prove it scientifically – that this is when emotions kick in and help us to explain the process. When we have a feeling that cannot be proven to be right perceptually, when we have never encountered it before, the only thing that could tell us if something is right or wrong, might be the emotional component. In fact we don’t have any knowledge, just a *feeling* that something is right or wrong!

EDW A feeling indeed, although that feeling can be misleading.

To stick to mathematics, where things are clearest, there’s the famous fifth Euclidian postulate about parallel lines that we all learned at school:

“Let B be any line and A be a point not on it. Then there is at most one line in the plane, determined by B and A, that passes through A and does not intersect B.”

This seems obvious when you try it, drawing lines in the sand on a beach as the Greek philosophers did. It’s an observational fact – provided you make abstraction of the fact that you can never draw a “mathematical line”, but only an approximation. But, you cannot derive a general axiom based on that observation, since it’s no longer true in curved geometry, as for example, on the surface of a sphere.

LL To link it with the more up-to-date, neuroscientific research, in all of the papers that one can read we found that intuition is defined as the preliminary perception of coherence. It’s defined as something that happens even before perception.

I was fascinated while reading the paper by Kirsten G. Volz and D. Yves von Cramon called, “What Neuroscience Can Tell About Intuitive Processes in the Context of Perceptual Discovery”.⁸

In the article, the authors described the role of the orbito-frontal cortex in intuitive processes. The orbito-frontal cortex is a part of the brain above the eyes, which is strictly connected with the insular and the visual cortices. In their fMRI study, and I'll read almost literally from their text:

“The attempt was to examine the neural substrates of intuitive judgment processes in the context of perceptual discovery. Intuitive processes were thought of as ‘the preliminary perception of coherence’ in terms of pattern, meaning, or structure, embodied in an affective valence or ‘gut feeling,’ which subsequently guides prospective behaviour.”

They proposed that clues of coherence might activate a relevant memory network, which integrates the entire stream of prior experiences making up the gist of the entity.

Basically what happens in the study is this: the subject lies in the fMRI – a device that measures how the brain reacts to certain stimulations – and looks at images. In some of the pictures, he can detect some objects, and in some of them he cannot. So the subject has to say, “Yes I can see something coherent, like an object. I have the impression – the intuition if you want – that I can recognise something, and in the other condition, I cannot.”

So the question becomes: How does the brain react to these different perceptual feelings then? I'll read again from their paper:

“The study showed brain activations within the medial orbito-frontal cortex when participants judged the fragmented drawings to be coherent, and this activation depended upon the possibility to perceive a coherent gestalt in terms of visual information. Activation within the median orbito-frontal cortex provides an initial guess, an intuition!”

It happens in everyday life to everyone, in certain moments: I see something and I have the feeling/intuition that I recognise something, and in other moments I don't have that feeling.

So basically what they have shown with this experiment is that when I see an object that I can't immediately recognise, but I have the feeling that something is there, I activate the frontal part of the brain, the more cognitive part of the nervous system, the one that links memory with all of the high cognitive functions. And this activation of the frontal parts happens before the one in the occipital-temporal lobes, where all the object recognitions functions take place.

So something is happening *before* seeing, before recognising objects. Trying to make it easy... when we see/perceive, we try to extract information and make sense of the world, but we don't perceive the object yet. That's why they say that intuition is sort of a preliminary perception of coherence.

You still don't see the objects, but you have the feeling that you are looking at something.

8. Kirsten G. Volz and D. Yves von Cramon, “What Neuroscience Can Tell about Intuitive Processes in the Context of Perceptual Discovery”, *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, Volume 18, Issue 12, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, December 2006), pp.2077-2087.

EDW Yes, well, this brings us to the fascinating topic of consciousness versus unconsciousness.

LL Oh yes! Intuition is pretty much always described as a feeling of “knowing something without knowing how you know it”. And it's exactly because of this split between the ability to report on the underlying cognitive processes and the intuitively guided behaviour, that intuition has so often been related to the unconscious.

EDW Your husband did some great work on that, as one can read in his text in this catalogue. As a non-expert, I was also very impressed by the review in Stanislas Dehaene's recent book “Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts”.⁹

Although there's no explicit discussion of intuition, the review of experiments and theories in cognitive psychology and cognitive neurology comes to close to suggesting what the neural correlates of intuition are.

Indeed, the way external stimuli or internal thoughts are processed to eventually reach a critical threshold and enter consciousness, is most likely similar and equally relevant for the pre-conscious neural “computations” that accompany intuitive processes.

According to the research of Dehaene and others, the initial stages of processing are identical for stimuli that do or do not become conscious, and unconscious computations play a crucial role in both.

At the neural level, according to what's called the “Global Neural Workspace” theory, consciousness is global information broadcasting within the cortex. It arises from a vast spatially extended neuronal network whose *raison d'être* is the massive sharing of pertinent information throughout the brain [book referred to in footnote 9, p.13].

Critical to this idea is the notion that a stimulus becomes conscious when pre-conscious sensory data coalesces into an integrated percept, what you call “coherence”. When one of the candidate's percepts reaches threshold, “ignition” occurs causing widespread activation of the brain and... conscious perception. Thus, consciousness means brain-wide information sharing via large-scale synchronisation of many neural centres triggered by a dominant percept.

In the catalogue for the *Proportio* exhibition – held here at the Palazzo Fortuny in 2015 – I discussed at some length the phenomenon of synchronisation [the “firefly” phenomenon]. I'm not surprised to see that very similar mechanisms are probably also relevant here.

Mathematicians and physicists would call the above-mentioned “ignition”, a phase transition – think of the sudden transition from liquid to solid at a critical temperature – or, what boils down to the same, a transition from an incoherent, loosely coordinated state to a self-organised critical state. These things are well understood mathematically.

LL Synchronisation is a characteristic of the nervous system. Neurons fire in a synchronised way, across different areas. Somehow the brain coordinates patterns of activation that activates

9. Dehaene, S., (New York City, NY: Viking Penguin Books, 2014).

behaviours. Feeling thirsty for, example, activates a network of reactions... I see a glass, extend the hand to get the glass, place it to my mouth... et cetera.

Synchronisation is a sort of filter, a catalyst for those activities that are relevant for a certain task. “We are chaos, forced into a pattern of coherence” as the famous artist, William Kentridge, once said during a performance of the *Magic Flute*.

EDW Translating the above in simpler terms, I always imagine the brain as a network of many microprocessors. Neural microchips, much slower than silicon processors, of course, but working in parallel, and each connected to thousands of other microprocessors. That makes for a tremendously complex neural network that surely surpasses anything we can build in silicon today. Remarkably, these microprocessors are constantly active, even when we are asleep or under anaesthesia.

LL Sure.

EDW When we are asleep or “unconscious”, these processes are active. We perceive and receive all of that information and it’s distributed, but it doesn’t pass through to the...

LL – Through the barrier of consciousness.

EDW Why is this so? There must be a mechanism of inhibition.

The synapses and all of these neural networks must have inhibitory phases and exciting phases. What’s essentially happening is that all of the information – auditory, visual, etc. – is processed, and it’s not shut off even when we’re not conscious about it.

LL Yes, there are various filters – and selective attention is one – but let me give you a more relevant example. There’s a wonderful example that I always give to kids. If you go to the forest with someone who’s hunting, this person can immediately see something significant like the nest of a bird, while you wouldn’t, because you are not able to recognise it – or because you’re not used to it. In this case, it’s attention that modulates what comes to consciousness, a sort of selective attention. We all can have the same visual stimuli in front of us, but some of us can see something and the others something else.

EDW All of the information is there, but it’s not used. It’s blocked. And only, by some kind of mechanism, some parts only of the information that’s present in these microprocessors is put together, synchronised, and reaches consciousness – so the frontal part of the brain.

LL Well, it’s a fronto-parietal network of areas that are activated when there’s a selection of that kind.

EDW This must be quite related to the mechanism of intuition.

LL Absolutely.

EDW Because, of course, there must be information stored in long-term memory, in the neural networks that do pattern recognition of all kinds.

LL Absolutely. Here is when emotions, too, play a huge role.

EDW Intuition must invoke this storage, this permanent storage, in one way or another and synchronise with other aspects. And then undergo a phase transition, a globally activated

network, and the information stored in the network becomes conscious.

LL Yes, which comes after the initial perceptual process. We can have intuition without consciousness. This is why intuition is so strict as an example. When one learns his own language – which is Italian in my case – one doesn’t need to study grammar. You just learn it. You learn by listening to people. But, if one has to learn a second language, at a later stage in life – like English for me – one needs to study all of the verbs, nouns, grammar, and the structure of sentences.

When you learn something implicitly, you don’t think about what you’re doing. At such a basic level, that’s the way that intuition works. It’s something that just pops up. You don’t know exactly what you are doing there, which pattern you are recognising, but you have a feeling that something is just right.

I think that when we talk about intuition, the emotional component is incredible. You feel it. You know it. In neuroscience, we don’t think about emotions as something magical. Emotions are expressed in physiological terms. I blush. I sweat. My heartbeat goes faster. So, I have all of these feelings triggered that are playing a part in whatever I get to think.

In the creative process, there’s a lot of this unconscious coming in. Many artists often say, “I don’t know exactly what I am doing. Until I do it.” Or, “I don’t know why I’m doing what I’m doing.” There are a lot of these intuitive processes going on in artistic creativity.

III. Intuition and Emotions

EDW What about the effect of emotions?

LL I think that emotions have a modulating effect. We’re just now beginning to understand that emotions play a huge role in memory recall.

Memory has two components. First, you store a memory, when you somehow put information inside the brain – or the body I would rather say – and then you have to recall it. And when you recall it, how do you do it? And why do you sometimes make mistakes? Why do we modify events as we recall them?

It’s because emotions are coming into play. Emotions are always linked with a point of view and the perceptions in a particular time and space. Emotions, and intuitions too I believe, modulate the storage of knowledge. They create a bridge between what is already inside – memory – and what’s happening around you at a particular moment.

EDW Okay, I’m not a specialist, but what I’ve learned about intuition over the last months is indeed that this must be an important ingredient.

LL Absolutely.

EDW I’m still thinking about all of these microprocessors that are storing the information and work continuously. In one way or another, part of that information must be combined and reach the level of consciousness. How does this happen? What is the trigger? Is it brain chemistry, neurotransmitters of all kinds?

LL Oh, but of course. Emotions are linked to – better to use the term made of – all of these chemical events. When we talk about emotions, we’re not talking about something spiritual. We’re talking about hormones. We’re talking about neurotransmitters, like the sense of rightness of dopamine, and the sense of attachment of oxytocin. We’re talking about physiology even when we speak about emotions. And it’s funny that we never take into account the amazing role that emotions play in our daily life.

EDW Another aspect that’s been studied quite a bit is the fact that intuitive decisions are made much faster than, let’s say, rationalised decisions. So, there must be special, fast anatomical pathways besides those used in “rationalised” actions.

LL It’s the fast track of the most visceral part of the brain; the one that skips the long elaboration provided by the cortex.

EDW Using a simplified version of the game of *shogi* [Japanese chess], a group of Japanese scientists compared professional players with amateurs who underwent an intensive 15-week training. Using fMRI, the purpose of the experiment was to find out which parts of the brain, if any, would undergo substantial changes in the course of the training.¹⁰

The trainees were presented with board patterns, and had to choose the best, next move within 2-3 seconds. This short interval certainly left no time for rational analysis of the best strategy. They had to rely on intuitive guesses. It would take us

10. X. Wan, et al., “Developing Intuition: Neural Correlates of Cognitive-Skill Learning in Caudate Nucleus”, *Journal of Neuroscience*, (2012) vol. 32 (48), p. 17492-17501.

INTUITION AND EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

*In the instant before he drove Kuang’s sting through the base of the first tower, he attained a level of proficiency exceeding anything he’d known or imagined. Beyond ego, beyond personality, beyond awareness, he moved, Kuang moving with him, evading his attackers with an ancient dance, Hideo’s dance, grace of the mind-body interface granted him, in that second, by the clarity and singleness of his wish to die.*¹ – William Gibson

In various scientific journals, I found several interesting studies on the link between intuition and professional expertise. This subject has been intensively investigated in diverse domains, such as mathematics, nursing, management, medical training, cognitive psychology, and even playing board games (e.g., chess). The Dutch chess master, Adriaan

De Groot, was one of the first to scientifically investigate the psychological mechanisms underpinning expertise in chess.² It’s by now well documented that the superior capability of experts – relative to novices – largely depends on automatic, non-rational, and quick information processing, which are the typical characteristics of intuitive processes. A rather nice and complete review can be found in the paper by C. Harteis and S. Billet.³

Eddi De Wolf

- 1 Gibson, W., *Neuromancer* (1984), cited in *Scientific American*, *MIND*, May 2015.
- 2 De Groot, A. D., “Het denken van der schaker” [Chess players’ thinking]. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Noord Hollandsche; De Groot, A. D. (1986). “Intuition in Chess”, *Journal of the International Computer Chess Association*, pp. 9, 67–75.
- 3 C. Harteis and S. Billett, “Intuitive Expertise: Theories and Empirical Evidence”, *Educational Research Review*, 2013, pp. 9, 145.

too far to go into the details, but the results were quite clear and interesting. The authors found that, as a result of training, neutral activation is steadily increased in the head of caudate nucleus, a dorsal part of the basal ganglia, deep inside the brain. So, this is where intuition may be stored or, at least, being triggered.

LL Well, triggered. Possibly triggered, because, then it’s not enough. It’s like explaining vision and the visual areas. You can never explain vision by only talking about the visual areas of the brain. You need the entire brain to be able to see.

The same I think happens with the basal ganglia. The basal ganglia have a role in the beginning, the trigger, the onset of what might be the intuitive process, but definitely you need the other parts of the brain as well, like the insular, and the orbito-frontal cortices. They play all together. Definitely the basal ganglia are fundamental, and the insular cortex, too. These are parts of the brain that are highly connected to our body.

EDW Is that why they say that it’s possible that we feel intuition in the body before feeling it in the intellect?

LL Yes. You know I was thinking – while reading a lot of these papers on intuition – that actually movement is becoming in neuroscience nowadays more and more an object of study. It’s in the premotor cortex that the first mirror neurons have been discovered. You know, these neurons that are activated not only if I do something, like moving my arms, but also when I see you doing something with your arms. My brain reacts as if I was moving my arms. In my motor cortex, my neurons light up, even if I stand still and I watch you moving.

So, it’s from the motor cortex activity that they began to explain neuro-physiologically, how empathy works. Why do I understand you? If you feel pain, I also feel pain.

We’re beginning to see how the motor system plays a fundamental role in a lot of things, which actually, we didn’t think of. You know, exactly like empathy. Through the motor system we understand other people, their emotions and behaviours.

Developmentally, we know that the child learns everything – his or her sense of self – through the motor system. So, it’s easy somehow to think that our body and our motor system play a fundamental role in intuitive processes, as well, particularly when it happens that before thinking something, we feel it. And when we feel, we feel it in our body!

Intuition requires the ability to have a holistic view. Physiologically, it’s interesting, because intuition is a way to put together many different aspects of our way of functioning. It’s such a complex process. Intuition brings together our cognitive part, and the perceptual one, and the emotional, the rational, the motor, and so on. So physiologically, it’s easy to think, of course, when you have an intuition you’re using the entire system, not only the brain, but the brain, body, and mind system all together.

What do you think about this idea, this holistic view?

EDW Well, I read about this also. I think this must be correct. So, the unconscious state is essentially a state of

INTUITION

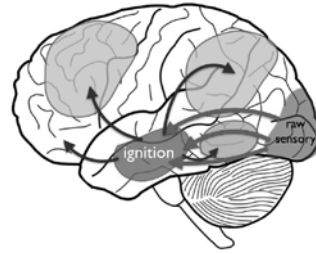


fig. 1

“Light: ‘preconscious’ sensory processing. Dark: ‘ignition’ area, when triggered, lead to widespread processing of a coherent percept. Ignition location appears with different sensory modalities.”¹¹

unsynchronised operations. All perceptions are still being accumulated and worked upon. Consciousness arises from the synchronisation between different parts induced by some kind of trigger, strong enough to “ignite” a phase transition that brings the gathered information into awareness [see figure 1]. That’s probably how we make intuitive decisions, assembling the pre-existing information. We are not realising this until much later – a few hundred milliseconds – when there’s complete synchronisation, when the barrier to the consciousness is removed.

20

IV. Reasoning, Recognition, and Consciousness

EDW (cont’d): This mechanism has implications concerning “free will”. In a controversial set of experiments, neuroscientist Ben Libet scanned participants’ brains as he instructed them to move their arm.¹² He found that brain activity increased even before participants were aware of their decision to move their arm.

Libet interpreted this finding as meaning that the brain had somehow “decided” to make the movement, and that the person became consciously aware of this decision only after it had already been made. Many other neuroscientists have used Libet’s findings as evidence that human behaviour is controlled by neurobiology, and that free will does not exist. It surely is a much-debated subject, and as far as I know there’s no consensus within psychology.¹³

LL Interesting, though I’m not sure. I can say that an expert, or somebody who has been trained, and works by intuition, usually reacts very quickly. In experiments in which participants

11. John Kubie in his book review of, *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*, by Stanislas Dehaene, on the blog, Brainfacts.org, published on July 27, 2014. <http://blog.brainfacts.org/2014/07/book-review-consciousness-and-the-brain/#.WOYWIVKBoQ8>

12. Libet, B., “Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of Conscious Will in Voluntary Action”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1985, pp. 8, 529-566.

13. Citation and further reading: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/proceed-your-own-risk/201311/do-we-have-free-will>

had one or two seconds to reach a decision, there’s a huge firing of the basal ganglia and the prefrontal cortex. The basal ganglia are activated, and then go through lighting up of the prefrontal cortex, where logic-based decisions are taken.

EDW Yes, I mentioned earlier that intuitive decisions do not always yield the correct conclusions. We’ve all experienced that! Imagine you throw a coin six times with the result: *HHHHHH*: six times the head side of the coin. You repeat the trial and have the result: *HTHHTT*. What do you think is more likely? Most people who have not studied probability theory would say that the latter one is more likely.

LL They would say: heads-tails-heads-tails-heads...

EDW This is an intuitive statement – but, of course, wrong. So it’s not true that intuition always gives you the right answer. There are many other fields in which this concept is studied and has value. For instance, in a field like nursing, in order to take care of people, and babies, etc., intuition is seriously studied. It’s interesting, but I didn’t pursue this very much in my reading.

LL That brings back the issue of the question between instinct and intuition. The process of taking care of babies and nursing babies, there is a lot of instinct involved. This is more than intuitive, but we could debate the difference between the two for the rest of the day. And we have to take social cognition into consideration, too.

EDW Expertise and social cognition are important topics indeed. In medicine, doctors make decisions based on expertise and, of course, they don’t have time – usually – to examine all options. So the question is, how did they acquire this intuition? Likewise, it’s a question in professional terms for managers.

LL Of course! The one on social cognition is really fascinating. We’re very social animals. We need each other. We don’t survive as babies if we don’t have someone feeding us. The social aspect in human beings is extremely important. We’re wired to be

social. Intuition and social cognition is an important field study. When we see someone crossing our path, we're faced with so many questions. Do I trust this person, or not? Shall I go close, or run away? Is this person someone that I might like? Or I might dislike? This is very much based on intuition. It is, once more, the deepest structure of our brains – the basal ganglia that helps us in answering these questions.

EDW During one of the think tanks for this exhibition in Belgium in the summer of 2016, you presented to us the example of recognising a face, through the variation and movement of the face, as well as recognising the same expressions between different faces. The point was to indicate just how many processes are involved in this kind of recording.

I believe this was also something you wrote about in your book with Semir Zeki, *La Bella e la Bestia*. This is something I wanted to discuss. Can you talk a bit about the links between image recognition and emotional reactions to images?

INTUITION AND PATTERN RECOGNITION

As a supplement to our conversation, I'd like to add information about pattern recognition and search for constancy by the brain. When the brain looks at colours, it sort of creates a chromatic constancy – it's called *colour constancy*. Despite changing the conditions of illumination, we always perceive the same green, even when it is reflected in the sun or in the clouds. In other words, the main characteristics of the world, as it exists, seem to be composed of an overwhelming amount of ever-changing disorder resulting in instability and ambiguity. The information that we receive through our perceptual organs from the world around us is never the same from one moment to the next. Our brain, in its frantic search for knowledge, has to be able to filter out the continual, ever-changing sensory inputs in order to extract the essence of objects. To do this the nervous system relies on some mechanisms – some inherited and some acquired – that allow it to organise its experiences and make them as independent as possible from external change. In other words, rather than perceiving chaos and disorder, we view the world around us as if it were an ordered place.

A variety of neurophysiological mechanisms, which allow our brains to organise perceptual inputs, have been uncovered by now. Let us consider, as an example, the complex process of colour perception. Colour is the subjective perceptual experience, which is a result of a variety of wavelengths of light reflected from a surface to our retinas at any moment in time. Yet – despite that – the particular mixture of, for example, red, blue and green light, is never the same from one instant to the next. Our brain is able to cancel out these continual shifts and assign a constant colour to a particular surface. This capacity of the brain is not confined to the perception of colour. In the same way that we see colours, we also look at objects from perspectives that are always different from one another, and from constantly varying distances, or under different lighting conditions. However, this doesn't stop us from recognising them instantly, employing neuronal mechanisms that are still largely a mystery. We “know” the object is a chair regardless of its position in space, its distance from us, its size, its colour, or its specific form.

Ludovica Lumer

“The hungry man will be (...) attuned to the discovery of food – he will scan the world for the slightest promise of nourishment. The starving may even project food into all sorts of dissimilar objects – as Chaplin does in *Gold Rush* when his huge companion appears to him as a chicken. Can it have been such experience, which have stimulated our ‘niam-niam’ chanting hunters to see their longer-for prey in the patches and irregular shapes on the dark cave walls? Could they perhaps gradually have sought this experience in the deep and mysterious recesses of the rocks, much as Leonardo sought out crumbling walls to aid his visual fantasies? Could they, finally, have been prompted to fill in such ‘readable’ outlines with coloured earth – to have at least something ‘separable’ at hand which might ‘represent’ the eatable in some magic fashion? There is no way of testing such a theory, but if it is true that cave artists often ‘exploited’ the natural formations of the rocks, this, together with the ‘eidetic’ character of their works, would at last not contradict our fantasy. The great naturalism of cave paintings may after all be a very late flower. It may correspond to our late, derivative, and naturalistic hobby horse.”

Ernst Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art*, (London, England: Phaidon Press, 1963), p. 7.

LL Absolutely, I will briefly answer, and then if you want to step in please do. The brain is wired to try to extract meaning, because we live in a world that's in constant change. If I turn my hand in front of my face, the projection that I receive on my retina of that hand is constantly changing.

We're continuously bombarded by auditory stimuli, tactile stimuli. We have smells, tastes, and vision, so we have to learn, from birth, to extract meaning from this chaos. This is a process of putting coherent things together in a patterns.

This is an acquired ability; we're not born with it. We're born with the predisposition to put together images and patterns, and yet we learn how to do this from experience. To try to make a very complex process easy, I would say that we need memory and perception to make sense of the world.

This is also what I think is important in the intuitive process – that we try to make sense of the world. We do this all the time, not only when processing visual information. We try to make sense of the world, grasping what we know from what's stored in our memory, and using it to make sense of what we are seeing in a particular moment in time.

But this isn't the end of the story. It would be too easy and nothing would ever change, if we only had to extract meaning and create patterns. As human beings we also attempt to put together patterns in new ways.

How do we create something? I think this is where intuition, together with emotions, might come into play. We would be stuck in object recognition and pattern making if we didn't have another push from a different side. Something tells us to get over the

pattern. Let's do something more. You can create new images. You can think about new images. You can move forward. This is the creative process.

EDW There are a few interesting points to mention. Obviously, the capacity of the brain is finite, and although there must be a physical limit to how many memories we can store, it's extremely large.

The human brain consists of about one 80-100 billion neurons. Each neuron forms about 1,000 connections to other neurons, amounting to more than a trillion connections. If each neuron could only help store a single memory, running out of space would be a problem. You might have only a few gigabytes of storage space, similar to the space in an iPod. Yet neurons combine so that each one helps with many memories at a time, exponentially increasing the brain's memory storage capacity to something closer to around 2.5 petabytes, or a million gigabytes.

By comparison, if your brain worked like a digital video recorder in a television, 2.5 petabytes would be enough to hold three million hours of TV shows. You would have to leave the TV running continuously for more than 300 years to use up all that storage.¹⁴

Still, to recognise a person or face the brain cannot accumulate every possible change in position, lighting, shadow, movement, and so on, because this changes, as you said, every fraction of a second.

Also, individual cells in the retina have a very limited receptive field, and information from all these cells, while continuously changing, must be bounded together. It's an enormous computational task. Fortunately, the brain has developed the capacity to extract...

LL – constancy.

EDW Yes, constancy, and we have to compress like a JPEG so that it can be stored and recalled in an efficient way.

LL And recognise in a certain way, with enough time.

EDW Yes, recognise. So it's all a question of pattern matching between what we see and what's already stored. Of course, our computers nowadays can do this very well; think of retina scanners. Computer algorithms are able to filter out these small movements, and these small discrepancies, between what's stored and what's recorded. So this is one point.

Another point is about dreams. Because, you said we have images stored or events stored in the brain, and apparently during dreams – or at least during some phases of dreams – all kinds of other images come up. Because, again, there's no global synchronisation. There's no master computer, which synchronises the whole thing. In a dream, for instance, you can have one scene and then suddenly another totally unrelated scene. It's a kind of random collection of events that have happened, and that are in a probably random way presented in the brain.

It's a guess, but I think that many works of art originate from the unconscious binding of previous earlier impressions and feelings, which eventually are able to cross the barrier of consciousness.

LL Creative process somehow surpasses the controlling part of the brain. When you drink alcohol or take drugs, such as psychotic drugs, you become less inhibited by the controlling part of the brain – and things just pop up; you create new things.

EDW That's exactly what I wanted to say – you can combine things.

LL It makes sense. We're talking about pattern recognition, and intuition has a lot of that. We said earlier that intuition is a "preliminary recognition of a pattern". We feel it in our body; we feel it in a sort of pre-conscious way, and then boom... light leads to the perception that this was right. So, we open up to the possibility of creating something new.

This is an interesting point, and it reminds me of what Dario Dalla Lana was telling us earlier, while we were discussing the themes for this exhibition. He said this specifically echoes the words and works of Giacometti. The artist explained that the difficulty in sculpting a face, for example, was giving the expression and the gaze to the eyes. If you sculpt the eyes too precisely, you must be uncertain in a way, and so you have the gaze. If you do it too strictly, you lose the gaze. According to Giacometti, the sculpture works if it's not too perfect.

EDW The ideal of perfection.

LL Yes, like blurred vision for example. You know, this also opens up the discussion to the relationship between intuition and ambiguity. Intuition happens, as we said, when you don't have enough information. If you have enough information, then the pattern is explicit. In art, there is a lot of ambiguity. Again, we could discuss about it for the rest of the afternoon, but art leaves open the possibility for interpretation.

I remember once, at the Pecci Museum in Prato, we were having a conference on the relationship between neuroscience and art. I think it was Marco Bazzini, the Director of Pecci, who asked, "What do you think would happen in the world, if art would have to disappear?"

I don't know what Pistoletto was envisioning, perhaps an apocalypse. And an artist, Cesare Pietroiusti, took the microphone and said, "If art would suddenly disappear from the world, then this microphone would be only a microphone. It would lose the possibility of being anything else."

EDW Very correct.

LL Considering all that we've been saying, that during the intuitive process, we're using the entire system of the brain, body, and mind. It's fascinating to think about the relationship between intuition and the appreciation of art. To think of intuition, not only as related to the creative process, but also as related to the way we experience art; the aesthetic experience of seeing art and living with it, which is not only experienced in our mind – and especially the conscious mind – but is felt in our in our body, too.

I was thinking about performative art – art that calls the spectator in. But even the art that we just look at; it has an effect on our minds, as well as our bodies. We might like something with our body, before thinking about what we like or dislike about it.

14. Cited from: Paul Reber, "What Is the Memory Capacity of the Human Brain?" *Scientific American Mind*, May 2010.



fig. 2

Alberto Giacometti, *Self-Portrait* (1935)

"This self-portrait, from 1935, is drawn in a sure hand. The face, represented frontally, is serious and intense, and is vigorously structured. The lines and shadows are firmly emphasised, and in no way anticipate the style, which became Giacometti's after the war. On the left, the eyebrow and upper lid, which slant down toward the temple, are very dark grey; together with the two arcs of a circle representing a ring around the eye, they form a kind of oval room out of which the eye, though barely suggested, peers firmly.

What is striking in this drawing, besides the asymmetry of the face and the fact that the nose is represented slightly in profile, is that the right eye has not been drawn in. It is hard to say, but perhaps the eye is closed.

One eye is open on the world: intently questioning it, insistently searching. The other is closed in darkness, turned inwards towards the inner self, and just as determined as the first to break through, to understand, to know."¹⁵

I think this is exactly what it is: art is like a metaphor. It gives things; it gives us – the viewers – the power to make something different, even to be something different. And when this happens, we need intuition because we need to make sense of all of these possibilities that are open for objects, for images, for us, for experiences to be new.

EDW You can make false deductions – false decisions – because conclusions that are reached unconsciously may be ambiguous. Is that it?

LL Ambiguous?

EDW Oh, yes, ambiguous, like the gaze of the eyes. But it's ambiguous. Then we have to decide for ourselves, and this can go in all kinds of directions. Various people will have different interpretations of the whole thing.

LL It's like looking at the clouds and trying to detect certain patterns.

EDW Yes, because for the brain, you have to decide among all of the various possibilities. There is a whole catalogue of possibilities that would fit in that particular gaze and you have to choose.

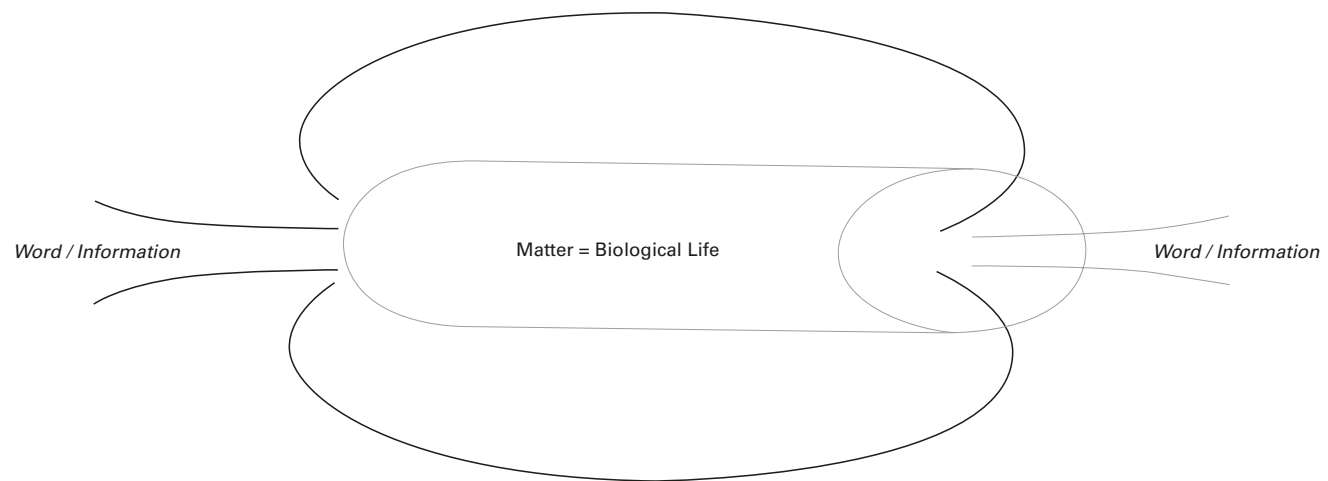
LL Here we are at the gaze again. And perhaps this is a great place to conclude our conversation. When we were talking about Giacometti, there's this amazing story about a self-portrait in which he depicts one eye open, looking, toward the outside,

and one eye closed, it seems, toward the inside. It's an incredible metaphor about what intuition is: looking simultaneously outside – through perception – and inside – through perception of the self, which consists of memories and experiences.

EDW Thank you for this conversation – it's been a great experience.

LL Thank you.

15. Juliet, Charles, *Giacometti*, (New York City, NY: Universe Books, 1986). Originally published in French, translated into English by Charles Lynn Clark.



Jesus answered,
"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

(Matthew 4:4)

INTUITION INSIGHTS

Modern science is based on the observation that all phenomena are observable, and therefore, does not consider the concept of nothingness, because it's not observable. However, throughout history that predates modern science, no distinction was made between observable and non-observable, as everything was simultaneously both.

All of the aspects that are covered by science today were covered by philosophy, which was the one and only science. The teachings of Hermes Trismegistus covered all fields of knowledge, and they constituted the base of subjects such as alchemy, religion, philosophy, and science alike. These teachings inspired all religions today in which God stands for the Whole, the oneness of all, hence the terms *holy*, meaning entire, one with All, and *healing*, which stands for becoming one with All again.

The more we try to understand the universe by subdividing, reaching for the smallest building block (particle of matter), the more it becomes obvious that one cannot comprehend that smallest part without its relation to the whole, thus everything.

To understand *everything* we have to accept the notion of *nothing or void* (non-matter), scattered energy or chaos, state of essence (non-matter), the holistic field, and the form-field (zero-point energy field), which has no structure, no matter, body, or shape. This essential state contains no matter, therefore, it's not subject to physical laws such as time and space. It is simultaneous and synchronous (cause = consequence, creation = creator, the oneness of All, wave = particle).

All matter comes forth out of non-matter, and is always simultaneously both – it's as darkness is to light, and light is to darkness. To put it in religious terms: we are constantly creating God, who is creating us at the same time. We, the entirety of humanity, are the image of God.

Non-matter is the holistic field, and matter is its temporary manifestation, given the equivalence of mass and energy expressed by Einstein's

$E = mc^2$; any point in space that contains energy can be thought of as having mass to create particles. Energy needs to manifest, gather, and organise itself in order to transform (evolve/heal).

These ideas keep attempting and reattempting formation until they reach a state of perfect harmony. This is a never-ending process. At every frustrated attempt, karma is created. Told another way, karma is the consequence or residue of every frustrated attempt to reach harmony. Frustration, in this case, means *something unfinished*. This karma seeks to be resolved in the next successive attempt, and so on.

There is no distinction between collective and individual karma, because everybody's personal karmic load dates back seven lives and seven generations. Seven, in this case, is symbolic, because the seventh generation before us is the result of the seven generations before that generation. It goes back to the origins of humanity. The healing of each individual contributes to the healing of the collective field, therefore, there's no judgment, and no guilt, because what you heal is always common, never yours alone.

Intuition is the connection between the holistic field and us as a temporary person.

Intuition is the manifestation of information – the constant when matter shifts to non-matter – between *All* and *Nothing*, and vice versa.

Intuition is information linked to non-matter, therefore, it's not subject to time; it connects everything. It has no time or space reference. Future, past, and present are all in the same frame as time and space only apply for moving bodies in space.

Our body is an energy field, with chakras and energy centres, points, and channels. Every part of our body resonates on different vibrations. It is our antenna to communicate and capture, store and resolve subtle information from the form-field of *all*. This subtle body is in constant immersion with e-motions and intuition. (In this case, e-motion = energy in motion.)

In the present moment, we constantly create our past, present, and future.

The intrinsic reason to live is to heal karma and frustrations. To heal is to rewrite our truth with new information.

Intuition inevitably reflects this truth in our environment. We see the world through the lens of our *own truth*. *We are the world we live in*. This world is the result of *karma*, pre-birth information, complete with *programming*, current life experience, and knowledge. The latter results in ego, so ego is what we identify with, idem + facere, Latin for “*what makes ones equal*”.

Ego depends on concepts and ideas. It identifies with our reference frame of beliefs and values. This search of identity is necessary to create guidelines and acquire skills for our survival in the present incarnation.

However, in present times, it has become a life-purpose unto itself. Excessive branding and opinion making is the same as forcing our truth upon our environment instead of observing, without judgment, what it wants to show us about ourselves.

Ego overwrites our intuition! Our intellectual programming seeks to understand what is not needed. Excessive identification is at the source of all violence in the world, and confrontation of truths.

If you feel triggered by something and you understand it is a manifestation of a memory from the past projected into the present, then you can heal it, without judging yourself. Nothing is ever good or bad; all is always just exactly as it is. It's about suspending all judgment. To evolve, not improve. Thank yourself, without judgment, for the transformation of something that is not yours.

We can only create in the present. If you get stuck in the past because of a traumatic event, we will victimise without redemption, and the future will merely be a repetition of that unchanged past. The past always and constantly repeats itself with increasing intensity, until it can heal. We rarely completely heal a frustration. It mostly goes in cyclical phases. You come across the same topic at various times. Until you've really healed it, only then will it cease to exist.

Artists train and practice to become more sensitive to the information in the form-field and acquire the skills to represent that information in their artistic distillations. They reveal this information or emotion in its raw state, enabling the public to resonate in confrontation.

The early work of an artist may reflect other issues than the later work does, as their healing evolves or does not evolve. Artists, because of their high sensibility, tend to be early whistle-blowers, and therefore, there is often a delay between art's creation moment and the point at which the public can pick up its frequency and make a connection with it.

Whether we believe in past lives and future lives is irrelevant, because even if you make abstractions of re-incarnation, and consider blockages that result from this, and not previous lives, it is still the same mechanism. If you wait long enough, the traumas will manifest themselves in this life.

Our social environment – as our political, cultural, and even geographical environment – is but a reflection of ourselves. It reacts on our energy vibration and reflects it back to us. Anger, fear, joy, and aggression perceived from friends and family are mirrors of our own state and not theirs.

If friends and family experience anger and fear towards you this is an illustration of your personal traumas and points – not theirs. They give us a possibility at insight, and thus, an opportunity to heal. Therefore I am thankful that my environment cares (wants) to be a mirror to me, I perceive it as a pure act of love.



FROM SUBLIMINAL TO SUBLIME

“The subliminal self is in no way inferior to the conscious self; it is not purely automatic; it is capable of discernment; it has tact, delicacy; it knows how to choose, to divine. What do I say? It knows better how to divine than the conscious self, since it succeeds where that has failed.”
– Henri Poincaré, *Science and Method* (1908)

Our brain constantly processes internal and external stimuli covertly, without us being aware of their existence. Only a tiny fraction of these stimuli manage to work their way into our conscious experience. Yet, the subliminal activity that ripples through the nervous system below the threshold of awareness can profoundly affect our emotions, our thoughts, and our behavior.

How widely do subliminal stimuli travel in the nervous system and what distinguishes brain processes that remain at a subliminal level from those that burst into consciousness? One clever trick that neuroscientists have used to investigate these questions is known as subliminal priming. Flash an image for a few dozen milliseconds, preceded and followed by a random pattern, and the image will go totally unnoticed. Follow this subliminal stimulus with another image that you can easily see and are tasked to report on, and one can now study how the subliminal stimulus impacts your response to the visible target.

In one such experiment, participants were flashed a single-digit number flanked by random patterns that made it invisible. Immediately afterward, they were shown another single-digit number, this time easily visible, and had to report whether the latter was larger or smaller than 5.

They had no awareness of the first number, and yet the experiment demonstrated that semantic priming had occurred: participants responded faster when the two numbers were congruent, either both larger or both smaller than 5. Brain imaging further showed a trace of this priming effect in the motor cortex, demonstrating that subliminal stimuli could activate not only higher-processing areas of the brain involved in semantic interpretation, but also the ones connected to actions.¹

In another experiment, words with a disturbing meaning, such as *rape* or *poison*, were flashed subliminally to epileptic patients that had electrodes implanted deep in their brain to spot and excise the damaged tissue causing their seizures. Although these words were invisible to the patient, they caused a slow response in the amygdala – a brain nucleus that has evolved to detect fearful stimuli and that plays a key role in our emotions. No electric response was registered in the amygdala when neutral words, such as *fridge* or *sonata*, were flashed instead. The brain had registered the disturbing words that remained invisible to the patients themselves.²

fig. 1, 2

Using another psychophysical trick, called binocular rivalry, in the late nineties my colleagues and I were able to track down what distinguishes conscious experiences at the neural level from those that remain at subliminal levels.^{3,4} Binocular rivalry arises when dissimilar images are presented to the two eyes. Our brain is unable to produce a unified conscious interpretation of the incongruent images. Instead, the perception of this ambiguous visual display alternates spontaneously every few second between each monocular view. We used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a noninvasive technique that measures brain responses in humans, to map out the neural basis of these subjective perceptual changes. What we found was that whereas both the temporarily suppressed and the perceived monocular images could elicit extensive activation throughout the cortical areas of the brain specialised for vision, an additional network of brain areas, in the frontal, pre-motor and parietal cortex, was specifically engaged by the subjective perceptual changes that occurred during rivalry.

Conscious experience is a distributed neural process involving vast swaths of the brain. Not only the ones feeding in from our peripheral senses, but also the ones connecting to our internalised history, allowing us to re-experience

1. Naccache, L. and Dehaene, S. "The Priming Method: Imaging Unconscious Repetition Priming Reveals an Abstract Representation of Numbers in the Parietal Lobes." *Cerebral Cortex II (10)*: pp. 966-74, 2001.

2. Naccache, L., et al., "A Direct Intracranial Record of Emotions Evoked by Subliminal Words." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 102*: pp. 7713-17, 2005.

3. Lumer, E.D., Friston, K.J. and Rees, G. "Neural Correlates of Perceptual Rivalry in the Human Brain", *Science 280 (5371)*: 1930-34, 1998.

4. Lumer, E.D. and Rees, G. "Covariation of Activity in Visual and Prefrontal Cortex Associated with Subjective Visual Perception", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 96 (4)*: pp. 1669-73, 1999. Naccache, L. and Dehaene, S. "The Priming Method: Imaging Unconscious Repetition Priming Reveals an Abstract Representation of Numbers in the Parietal Lobes", *Cerebral Cortex II (10)*: pp. 966-74, 2001.

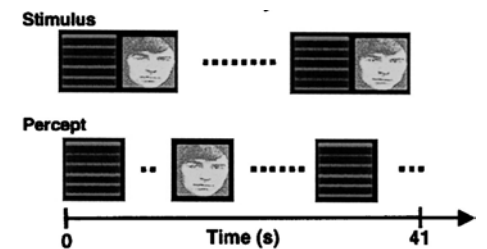


fig. 1

Schematic representation of the conflicting monocular stimuli and the alternating perception that ensues during the binocular rivalry experiments.^{3,4}

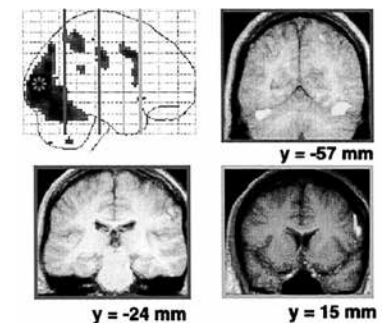


fig. 2

The frontal and parietal areas responding together with the visual cortex in a coordinated neural process associated with the conscious perception of the stimuli.

the present in the broader context of what we already know to matter and what brews deep inside in the unconscious realms, and in relation to our egocentric body mappings in order to conceive in actionable terms what might come next and to share it with others. For the reason of it all is ultimately to move, to survive, and to transmit. To comprehend means literally to seize, to take in mind – understanding is first and foremost a motor act. Therein lies the limitation of consciousness: it must be integrated, univocal, in constant struggle to resolve the ambiguity of the world, and thus highly selective. For the mechanics of our body allows us to only walk in one direction at a time.

Integrating widespread networks of neuronal activity into a coherent whole takes time and consciousness is typically slow to arise. But sometimes we must quickly grasp the gist of a novel situation that can only be understood on the basis of subliminal processes. The signs of this new reality are sprouting everywhere, but they still lie below threshold. We are wandering in the dark. Our brain somehow already knows, yet we cannot comprehend it. A few people, however, are starting to perceive a pattern – a faint draft, a muffled sound, a glimmering light – that is invisible to the rest. They are able to reach deeper inside. For them, the signs have already crossed the threshold. Enough to get hold of their intuition, relying on the visceral language of the body more than of the mind to gauge their relevance. They walk decidedly towards a door, reach for its handle and let the light flood in. Now we can all see. And what we see is so unexpected, yet strangely familiar, that it appears sublime. While we slowly elaborate the full meaning of the revealed beauty, the artist turns around and steps back into darkness.



WANDERING IN THE LAND OF INTUITION

Whenever someone speaks about “intuition”, everyone seems to understand immediately what it means, but as soon as we try to offer a precise definition, we find ourselves plunged into a realm of floating uncertainty. In other words, we could say that everyone intuits what intuition is, though by its very nature the term seems inexorably to elude any attempt to bring it into a clear and distinct conceptual focus. This applies both to when we are trying to explain our own personal experiences of intuition, and those of others.

In his book, *Intuition of the Instant*, Gaston Bachelard is correct then, when he writes: “an intuition is not demonstrated, but experienced”.¹

Intuition – we are told by dictionaries and encyclopaedias – is a form of direct knowledge that does not depend on reasoning; it is a modality of knowledge that cannot be explained in words, cannot be rationalised. It reveals itself, instead, through an instantaneous form of clarifying vision, almost an “illumination”, which cannot be defined.

In the history of philosophy, the term “intuition”, in the generic sense of immediate knowledge in relation to an object, is normally linked to the concepts of perception and experience.

To offer only the briefest of outlines, on the one hand intuition could be considered as experience, that is, as the immediate understanding of a present object, and as such, it is identified with perception. On the other hand, it can be considered as an originary and creative knowledge. This last aspect is the one most directly connected to art and figures,

1. Gaston Bachelard, *Intuition of the Instant*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013).

in particular, in the aesthetic theories that we associate with German idealism and romanticism, in a line that runs from Friedrich Schelling and Arthur Schopenhauer to Benedetto Croce.

For Schelling, aesthetic intuition (and its objectivation in artworks) is, in the logic-dialectic just described, a higher form of knowledge capable of seizing the spiritual essence of Nature (or at least some fragments, some sparks, of it).

Schopenhauer, for his part, opposes practical and rational knowledge to the contemplation of art. The latter frees us from the principles that bind us to the ephemeral world of phenomena, and allows us to arrive at the intuition of the immutable form of ideas. The romantic genius expresses itself through pure intuition: its peculiar quality is fantasy (the etymology of which is, not coincidentally, linked to *phos*, which means, “light” in Greek).

Croce argues for the total autonomy of art from any other form of knowledge: art is images, and a priori synthesis between a content of a sentimental nature and a form whose nature is intuitive; it is a “lyrical intuition” (or a “pure intuition”) with universal validity. The limit of this conception is the identification between “intuition” and “expression”, because it fails to take into account the concrete phases of experimentation, elaboration, and realisation of the artwork, as these characterise the expressive research of every artist.

34

Opposite Croce’s idealistic vision, we find Luigi Pareyson’s more fruitful aesthetic theory of formativity (also developed by Umberto Eco). Pareyson argues for an understanding of art as an organism, as a formed materiality that is characterised by an autonomous life that develop itself through rules, rhythms, balances, and tensions that are stimulated by the work itself and evinced in its making. Pareyson’s is a conception based on the idea of “production” that prompts an entire re-evaluation of the role of matter as physical presence whose resistance continuously offers breaks, obstacles, and suggestions for formative and inventive actions. Thus, artistic production becomes a procedure for questioning matter, an ever on-going experimentation that “has an indefinable but extremely solid criterion: the presentiment of success, ... the divination of the form”. It should be noted that “form” is not the opposite of “content”, and that the concept of matter in Pareyson takes on an enlarged sense: it encompasses the entire set of elements that the artist works with (not just expressive means, techniques, and varying modalities of language, but also the concrete materials themselves). Above all, it is from this perspective, which insists on an exploration of the entire and complex process, at once mental and material, of artistic production, that we can offer an account of the fundamental role of intuition as the primary source of the creativity of any truly inventive artist.

Intuition may seem more evident and easily visible in artists whose working attitude is instinctive, immediate, emotional, oneiric, highly imaginative, and full of suggestive irrational impulses. But, it is equally present in artists with a more meditative, contemplative, and detached disposition; it is also often found in those artists who seem decidedly to favour careful and rational planning, and even in those who are radically conceptual in their practice.

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate (without any pretensions to being systematic) the fundamental importance of the intuitive component in the process of artistic creation is to look at what artists themselves have to say when they speak about their work. This reveals that some underlying constants remain across differences in generations, tendencies, and methods. In one way or another, when artists (in their own texts or via answers to interview questions) try to pinpoint – to voice – the essential source of their creations, the answers are always suggestive, yes, but also often problematic. While artists are generally willing and able to bring into focus the main aspects of their art – the underlying themes and concerns, the different phases of their research, the distinctive use of techniques and materials – most of them also admit that they are unable to rationally explain, even to themselves, what that “secret” something is that suddenly triggers the aesthetic success of the work. On this latter front, we are barraged by a vast panoply of terms: some are of a more idealistic or romantic character, like inspiration, a flash of insight, revelation; some are more psychologically subjective, like deep impulse, intense emotive vibrations, unconscious energies; some are seemingly more materialistic, and refer either to the tensions internal to the concrete operation, or directly to the happy conclusion of a particular work. It should be said, however, that all these indications have something to do, as a whole, with the intuitive component of artistic production.

We can now try to trace a synthetic trajectory through the variegated territories of intuition by selecting some particularly pregnant reflections and declarations from artists.

Illumination. Revelation

The great founder of romanticism in painting, David Caspar Friedrich, offers a definition of creative intuition that remains fascinatingly current, in spite of the fact that his words reach us from the distant past, as well as the mystical tendency towards the infinite mysteries of nature of his language. He writes: “Every authentic work of art is conceived in a consecrated moment and born in a joyous one, often out of the inner forces of the artist’s heart without his knowledge.” Also: “Close your

bodily eye, so that you may see your picture first with the spiritual eye. Then bring to the light of day that which you have seen in the darkness...”²

This “spiritual eye” is that of the enlightened mind; it is the inner eye of the fantastic intuition of seizing some flashes, at least, of the deeper and more mysterious dimension of the reality we are immersed in. Perhaps there is, even if they are separated by vast chasm in time and space, some link between Friedrich’s “spiritual eye” and the “third eye” of Buddhist stupas.

Although re-elaborated into the most indefinite and restless of symbolist poetics, we encounter this type of creative intuition again in Odilon Redon’s conception of artistic creation. For Redon, the logic of the visible is at the service of the invisible, and rationality must leave space for the exploration of the ambiguous world of the indeterminate. According to him, “The artist submits day after day to the fatal rhythm of the impulses of the universe surrounding him. His eyes – those ever-sensitive, ever-active centres of sensation – are hypnotised by the marvels of nature which he loves, which he scrutinises. Like his soul, they are in constant communion with even the most chance phenomena, and this constant communion is a pleasure for him when he is a true painter; ...”³

Friedrich’s distant but always current “spiritual eye” resonates likewise in the metaphysical vision – filtered by the philosophical eye of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche – of Giorgio de Chirico. This is how that artist describes the revelation that spurred his first metaphysical painting, *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* (1910):

“One clear autumnal afternoon I was sitting on a bench in the middle of the Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. It was of course not the first time I had seen this square. I had just come out of a long and painful intestinal illness, and I was in a nearly morbid state of sensitivity. The whole world, down to the marble of the buildings and fountains, seemed to me to be convalescent. In the middle of the square is a statue of Dante [...]. The autumn sun, warm and unloving, lit the statue and the church façade. Then I had the strange impression that I was looking at these things for the first time, and the composition of my picture came to my mind’s eye.”⁴

For De Chirico, the “revelation” (we could also say the “illumination”) of a work of art is the “intuition of an image” that must represent something that has sense on its own, independently of any meaning compatible with human logic. It is the discovery of the profound *non*-sense of life. The terrible void he discovered is the senseless and quiet beauty of matter.

2. Quoted in *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany* (1996) by Fredrick Berwick and Jürgen Klein, and in “Culture: Caspar D. Friedrich and the Wasteland” by Gjermund E. Jansen in *Bits of News* (March 3, 2005).

3. Odilon Redon, “Introduction to a Catalogue”, *A soi même*, pp. 115-116, as quoted in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Herschel Browning Chipp and Peter Selz (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

4. Giorgio de Chirico, “Meditations of a Painter” (1912), Manuscript in the collection of Jean Paulham. This translation is from *Giorgio de Chirico* by James Thrall Soby, 1955, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and reprinted as quoted in Chipp, Selz, et. al.

The unconsciousness of matter, automatism, chance

The profound, mysterious, and surprising energy of intuition is undoubtedly a decisive component of the most “automatic” processes practiced by those artists who gravitated towards Surrealism, all of whom were committed to the exploration of the territories of the unconscious, of the dream realm, and of the estranging meanings of everyday reality.

We shall limit ourselves here to some allusions to the way of working of three artists: Max Ernst, Joan Miró, and Jean Arp, each of whom was able, in his way, to discover secret sparks of intense creativity through a free experimentation that examines the most secret folds of the materials they used.

fig. 1

In 1926, while working on the drawings for *Histoire naturelle*, Max Ernst, who was subsequently followed in this by many artists, invented the creative use of *frottage*: an automatic technique that consists of rubbing, with pastel or lead pencils, a piece of paper placed on a non-smooth surface (wooden plank, stone, leaves) in such a way as to bring out forms and textures capable of creating material effects that stimulate images in the viewer, which are at once fantastic and disturbing. The method, although carefully guided and corrected by the artist’s hand, is capable of forcing inspiration to bring into being unpredictable internal landscapes. One also notices a significant affinity with the procedure that Leonardo da Vinci recommends in *Treatise on “Painting”*: “I will not omit to introduce among these precepts a new kind of speculative invention”, and he continues, “By looking attentively at old and smeared walls, or stones and veined marble of various colours, you may fancy that you see in them several compositions, landscapes, battles, figures in quick motion, strange countenances, and dresses, with an infinity of other objects.”⁵

Great lover of the potentiality of chance (as were all the Surrealists), Ernst compared the artist to the deep-sea diver, since the diver never knows what he will bring back to the surface.

The importance of intuition is absolutely crucial for Joan Miró, an artist who worked everyday with precise regularity (“I work like a gardener or vine-grower”, he once said). For him, the beginning is something immediate, and it’s always the material that decides. He says: “I find it very difficult to speak about my painting as it is always brought into being in a state of hallucination induced by some shock, whether objective or subjective, for which I am not at all responsible.”⁶ Also: “To make use of things found by divine chance: pieces of iron, stones, etc., just as I make use of a schematic sign drawn on paper by chance, or an accident that also takes place by chance. That magical spark is the only thing that matters in art.”⁷

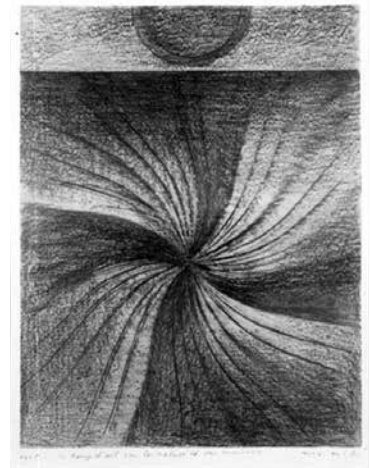


fig. 1

Max Ernst,
Un coup d'oeil sur la nature et ses environs

5. Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on ‘Painting’*, trans. John Francis Rigaud (Elibron, 2005), p. 62.

6. Joan Miró in 1933, as quoted in “Joan Miró, a shaman from prehistory to the heart of the 20th century” by Martine Heudron, September 4, 2015, in an online post at new-softheartworld.com.

7. Joan Miró. *Anotacions de treball* (Working Notes), 1941-42, (Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona).

Immediacy (meaning the absence of rational mediation), sudden visual hallucinations, divine chance, magic spark: it goes without saying that these are all facets of our subject, the one and only luminous source of creative energy. For the Dadaist Jean Arp, one of the founders of the poetics of chance, the starting point of his fluid creative process is the notion of vital intuition, the creative hand that works, not with preconceived subjects, but with suggestions that prompt poetic associations. Automatism is a means to stimulate the imagination and a starting point from which to reach images that are consciously reworked in a subsequently moment. Numerous phyto- and biomorphic configurations emerge in his work, but their forms are always ambiguous and never allow themselves to be identified. When the state of grace is reached, Arp says, “It’s enough to close your eyes and the internal rhythm will flow through the hand with greater purity.”

I don’t search, I find

When Brassai asked Pablo Picasso if his ideas come to him by chance or by design, Picasso replied:

“I don’t have a clue. Ideas are simply starting points. I can rarely set them down as they come to my mind. As soon as I start to work, others well up in my pen. To know what you’re going to draw, you have to begin drawing. [...] When I find myself facing a blank page, that’s always going through my head. What I capture in spite of myself interests me more than my own ideas.”⁸

To argue for the superiority of this intuitive attitude (for the realisation of a creative work) and against an attitude that is too studied and rational, Picasso makes the following critical remark about Henri Matisse’s method:

“Matisse does a drawing, then he recopies it. He recopies it five times, ten times, each time with cleaner lines. He is persuaded that the last one, the most spare, is the best, the purest, the definitive one; and yet, usually it’s the first.”⁹

8. Brassai, *Conversations with Picasso*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

9. Brassai, p. 66.

It is clear that the comment is slightly ironic given how much he esteemed his friend and painter. But, what is nevertheless significant is the fact that Picasso, especially in his late work, loved to emphasise the more immediate and spontaneous aspect of his work, almost as if his extraordinarily constant engagement in experimental research (characterised by an absolute awareness, conceptual as well, of the most diverse possibilities offered by pictorial and plastic languages) was not vitally essential.

The figure of Picasso as a genius improviser received its most suggestive and emblematic visualisation in the famous series of photographs

taken by Gjon Mili and published in *Life* magazine in 1949: a spectacular series of images that capture on film the ethereal drawings that Picasso – drawing in a blacked out space with a small flashlight – traces in the air in an instant. Art is magically born like light in the dark: a pure expression of the creative genius.

From darkness, in darkness

The search for light in darkness (from darkness) has been a constant metaphor at least since the romantics, and we find it in the most varied forms, including in the most radical conceptual propositions.

At the other end of Picasso’s vitalistic intuition we find, for example, the attitude of existential suffering and pessimism (characterised by a perennially unsatisfied creative tension) of Alberto Giacometti. Here is an exemplary statement on this head: “When I make my drawings, the path traced by my pencil on the sheet of paper is, to some extent, analogous to the gesture of a man groping his way in the darkness.”¹⁰

So, too, Willem de Kooning, who loved to experiment in darkness in order to liberate a more instinctive expressive energy: “The drawings that interest me most are the ones I do with my eyes closed. With eyes closed, I feel my hand slide down on the paper. I have an image in mind, but the results surprise me.”

10. Alberto Giacometti, as quoted in *Figurative Painting with Collage*, Rod Jenkins, (Ramsbury, Marlborough: Crowood Press, 2016).

This blind perspective was taken, literally, to its extreme by the conceptual artist and one of the founders of Process Art, Robert Morris. Starting in 1973, Morris produced hundreds of drawings that, divided into several series, compose the cycle, *Blind Time Drawings*. These are drawn with eyes closed (with some preventive measures in place) in order to underline the gap between idea and realisation, between the artist’s intention and the limits and characteristics specific to the body’s physical action.

fig. 3

fig. 2

On a purely conceptual key, we can also cite, *Secret Painting* (1967), by Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, from *Art and Language*. The work is composed of one square panel, totally black (a tribute to Malevich), and alongside, a square frame, smaller, with the following text: “The content of this painting is invisible; the character and dimension of the content is to be kept permanently secret, known only to the artist.”

These two artists, as a provocation, give carte blanche to the imagination of the viewer. The operation is decidedly ironic and self-referential, in so far as it refers back to the most mysterious roots of art and its myth.

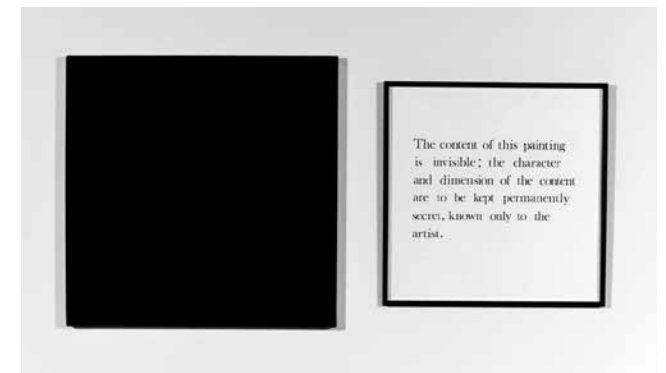


fig. 2

Art and Language,
Secret Painting (1967)

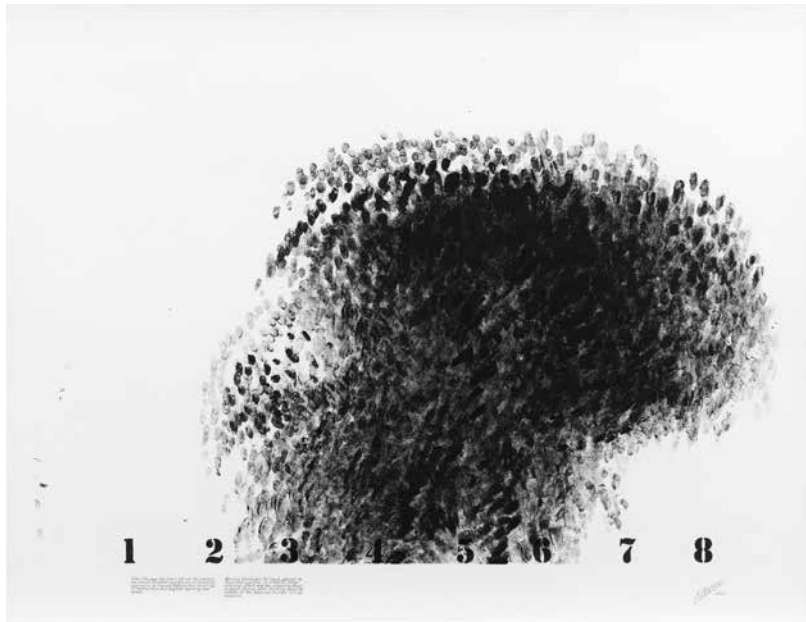


fig. 3
Robert Morris, *Blind Time Drawing*

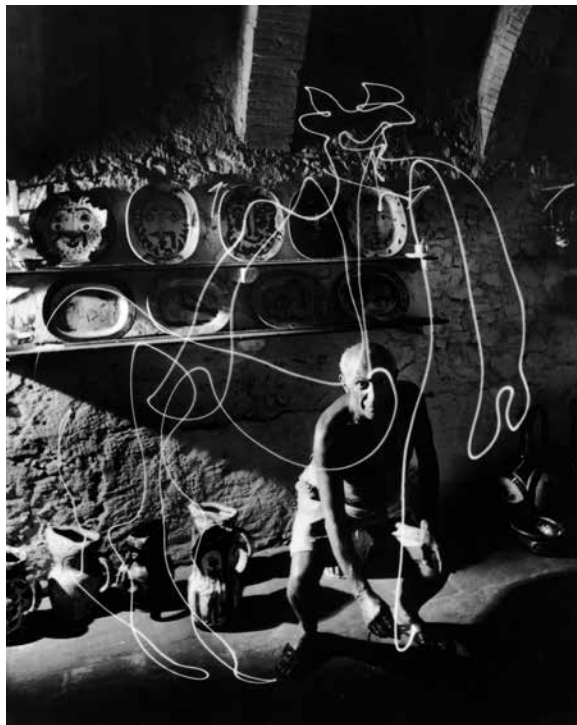


fig. 4
Pablo Picasso by Gjon Mili,
from *Life magazine* (1949)



fig. 5
Jackson Pollock in his studio

Gesture and matter

Coming back to painting – in particular to action and informal painting – here, too, there is no shortage of declarations that exalt the intuitive, instinctive, irrational, and emotional dimension of the creative process. To show this, we shall limit ourselves to citing the singularly analogous perspectives of two artists who are very different in their work, but are joined nevertheless in their tragic destiny: Jackson Pollock and Nicolas De Staël.

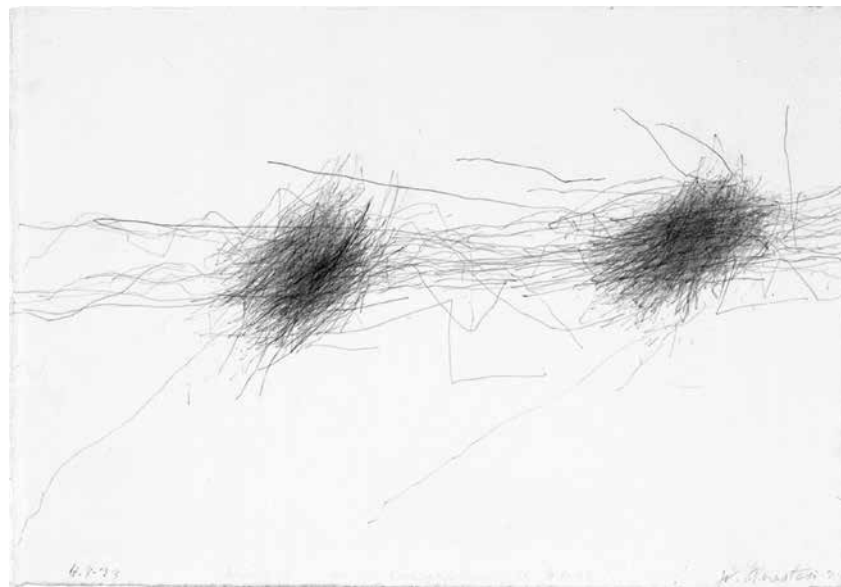
fig. 5

Pollock, in a well-known statement, says: “When I’m *in* my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It is only after a sort of ‘get acquainted’ period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. [...] It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess.”¹¹

And, here is a passage from De Staël: “...I lose contact with the canvas at each instant, find it again, lose it again... This is necessary because I believe in the adventitious; I can only proceed from incident to incident. As soon as I sense too much logic, I become irritated, and swing naturally over to the illogical. Of course, none of this is easy to say, or to see; there is no vocabulary for it and, if you like, the metric system of it all remains to be invented when I have stopped painting.”¹²

11. Jackson Pollock, “My Painting”, in *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, ed. Pepe Karmel (New York City, NY: MoMA, 1999), p. 18.

12. Nicolas De Staël, letter to Douglas Cooper, January 1955.



PROFANE ILLUMINATION

From the late 1970s, the artist William Anastasi made almost daily journeys on the New York subway to play chess with John Cage. En route, he balanced a drawing tablet on his knees and held a pencil in each hand poised lightly on the surface. His body vibrated and swayed with the movement of the train producing what he called, *Subway Drawings*. Eyes shut, ears muffled, Anastasi gave himself over to the automatism of modern life as it passed through his body. He transformed himself into a medium in a trance or a sensitive recording instrument, receiving and recording the “pulse” of the city. There is both a scientific basis and a whiff of the Ouija board about the artist’s experiment, not to mention a large dose of Dada and Surrealist automatism. The resulting drawings, concentrated around two adjacent points, look like marks tracking the motion of restless eyes.

Intuition is a concept of uncertain signification, perhaps appropriately, as it refers to a faculty or form of knowledge that dispenses with conceptual categories, reasoning, and the separation of subject and object. It has roots in Romanticism, and is more recently associated with the philosophers Benedetto Croce and Henri Bergson. For Bergson, intuition is a supplement, or “fringe” surrounding the “bright nucleus of scientific intelligence”. Yet, it enables us to grasp what intelligence fails to grasp.¹ Bergson called for an “unmaking” process in order to “restore to intuition its original purity and so recover contact with the real.”² Walter Benjamin paid tribute to Bergson’s effort to theorise an authentic mode of experience:

1. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 114.

2. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), p. 241. For a thoughtful art-critical use of Bergson see Charlotte De Mille, “Sudden gleams of (f)light: Intuition as Method?” *Art History*, 34.2, 2011, pp. 370-38.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy has made a series of attempts to grasp ‘true’ experience, as opposed to the kind that manifests itself in the standardised, denatured life of the civilised masses. [...] Towering above this literature is Bergson’s early monumental work, *Matière et mémoire*.³

As this passage implies, alternative forms of experience involving intuition and the unconscious have been invoked as a form of resistance to the rationalisation and utilitarianism demanded by advanced technologies and commodity capitalism. The current invasive and pervasive power of digital technologies, forming a closely woven net of social control, has prompted renewed calls for resistance and raised a number of urgent questions. Is there any place for intuition in the era of the algorithm? Has art become thoroughly integrated into media culture? Does resistance to our present condition in the form of intuitive art practices necessarily imply a nostalgic longing for a pre-mediatic past? This essay attempts to address all these questions, but it focuses particularly on meeting the challenge posed by the last question by developing a notion of intuition that includes within it the capacities of certain technologies such as photography or Anastasi’s makeshift apparatus. The *Subway Drawings* are exemplary of a kind intuitive, indexical, involuntary, yet technologically mediated art, which gives access to phenomena on the fringe of perception and cognition.

Roland Barthes’s influential *Camera Lucida* (1980) is a well-known contribution to the history of writing about the revelatory power of indexical recording technologies. He emphasised the light sensitivity of film and its automatic recording of the contingent photographic detail, the wounding punctum. The experience of the punctum takes the form of a sudden revelation – “the wakening of intractable reality”. Barthes’s “mad realism”, a late form of Surrealism, induces “photographic *ecstasy*”.⁴

Reading *The Preparation of the Novel*, notes for lectures he gave while writing *Camera Lucida*, it becomes clear that Barthes long-standing interest in the form of the haiku informed his conception of photographic ecstasy. He wrote of the haiku’s attachment to the circumstantial and contingent, which “instils the certainty that *this took place*”. Contingency, he declared, is “what, in a unique instant, once *befell* the subject”. The effect of the indexical character of both the haiku and the photograph on the subject is of “language fading into the background, to be supplanted by certainty of reality”.⁵ He refers in this context to the Japanese Zen Buddhist term *satori*, which is the name for

3. Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, *The Writer of Modern Life*, Michael Jennings (ed.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 171.

4. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard, (New York City, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 119. See also Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, first published 1977.

5. Roland Barthes, *The Preparation for the Novel*, trans. Kate Biggs (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 51, 70.

this jolt or rupture or shock of emptiness that accompanies the cessation of language in an encounter with the real. D.T. Suzuki defined *satori* as “an intuitive looking into the nature of things” that leads to “an unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically trained mind”.⁶

Camera Lucida also owes a great deal to Benjamin’s “Little History of Photography” (1931). In that essay, Benjamin proposed that mechanical reproduction was responsible for the withering of the aura and the decay of authentic experience, yet he also argued that the early years of mechanical reproduction might promise the possibility of a post-auratic aura. For Benjamin, the effect on the viewer of early photography is owing to its extended duration of exposure and the image’s consequent “continuum of brightest light and darkest shadow”. In other words, early photographs are not black and white, not readily readable. The process renders the image unfamiliar, that is, resistant to easy perceptual mastery or conceptual grasp, and so subject and object are momentarily suspended in an intermediary auratic space. The post-auratic aura of early photography suggests that intuitive experience can be technologically mediated. Benjamin was also heir to the surrealist belief in photography’s promise of revelations comparable to the discovery by psychoanalysis of an unconscious subtending consciousness. The camera’s blind mechanism, as Benjamin noted, makes it incapable of censoring the punctum-like “inconspicuous spot”, such as the trace of some trauma on the face of a photographed woman: “For it is another nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye: ‘other’ above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious.”⁷

In “Little History” and the “Work of Art” essays, the “optical unconscious” is exemplified by cinematic and photographic techniques, such as chronophotography, which reveal otherwise imperceptible phenomena such as the position of the body “in the split second when a person actually takes a step”.⁸ Benjamin’s restriction to optical phenomena is explicable in the context of studies of photography, but similar instruments were in wide use to receive and record sounds and vibrations. Étienne-Jules Marey’s early work is particularly relevant in this context. Before he became interested in chronophotography, he spent years experimenting with receiving and recording instruments, which in a clinical setting could trace the small involuntary motions of the body, such as heartbeat, blood pressure, respiration, and so on. The instruments he devised could pick up minute

6. D.T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings*, William Barrett (ed.) (New York City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 84.

7. Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography” (1931), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927-1934, edited by Michael Jennings et al., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 510.

8. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 37.

vibrations and transmit them via a stylus, which inscribed an irregular line on a rotating cylinder. He hailed these machines, because they're more sensitive than human perception, and because the graphic trace is a direct, uncoded language for communicating the information recorded.⁹

fig. 1 Marey wanted to trace the trajectory of animal movement on a single field. He tried to do so using a camera, but the cumulative effect of overlapping photographic exposures tended to obscure the picture. To remedy this problem, he devised a way to blind the camera to all but the most essential movements: he dressed his model in black velvet cloth and attached silver buttons and metallic strips to the joints and limbs, and had this *homme squelette*, or skeleton man, move in front of a wall painted black. In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Mary Ann Doane commented on Marey's "geometric" chronophotography noting that he moved "from graphic method to photographic method only to defamiliarise, de-realise, even de-iconise the photographic".¹⁰ It was a fundamentally new kind of automatic writing that could pick up, as Friedrich Kittler wrote, "the murmuring and whispering of the unconscious oracles".¹¹

Kittler's comment makes oblique reference to the Surrealists' interest in these technical devices. Indeed, André Breton may have actually used one of Marey's apparatuses in a medical capacity during the First World War. What is certain is that artists and writers associated with the Surrealist movement adopted them as models for their automatic writing and drawing.¹²

In his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*, the essay that formally founded the group, Breton discussed the successes and failures of attempts at automatic writing. He accused most writers of being too full of pride.

But we, who have made no effort to filter, who in our works have made ourselves into simple receptacles of so many echoes, modest *recording instruments* who are not mesmerised by the drawings we are making, perhaps we serve an even nobler cause.¹³

In this passage, Breton confuses the sensitive receptivity of the instrument with a lack of filtering, whereas we've seen that Marey's chronophotography depended on elaborate means of screening unnecessary information. However, Breton makes an important point about the connection between technological innovations and a radically new approach to art. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986), Kittler

9. Étienne-Jules Marey, *La méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales, et principalement en physiologie et en médecine*, (Paris, 1885). See also, Francois Dagognet, *Étienne-Jules Marey: A Passion for the Trace*, translated by Robert Galeta with Jeanine Herman, (New York City, NY: Zone Books, 1992) and Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

murmuring

10. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 54.

11. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800-1900*, trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 229. See also his *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, translated, with an introduction, by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

12. This moment has been documented in detail by David Lomas in "Modest Recording Instruments": Science, Surrealism and Visuality", *Art History* 27, 4 (September 2004), pp. 627-651.

13. André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, edited and translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1969), pp. 27-28.

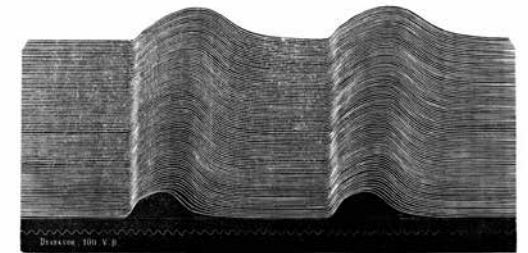


fig. 1

Étienne-Jules Marey, *Trace of Muscular Contractions*, from: *La Méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales et principalement en physiologie et en médecine*, (Paris: 1875), p. 194

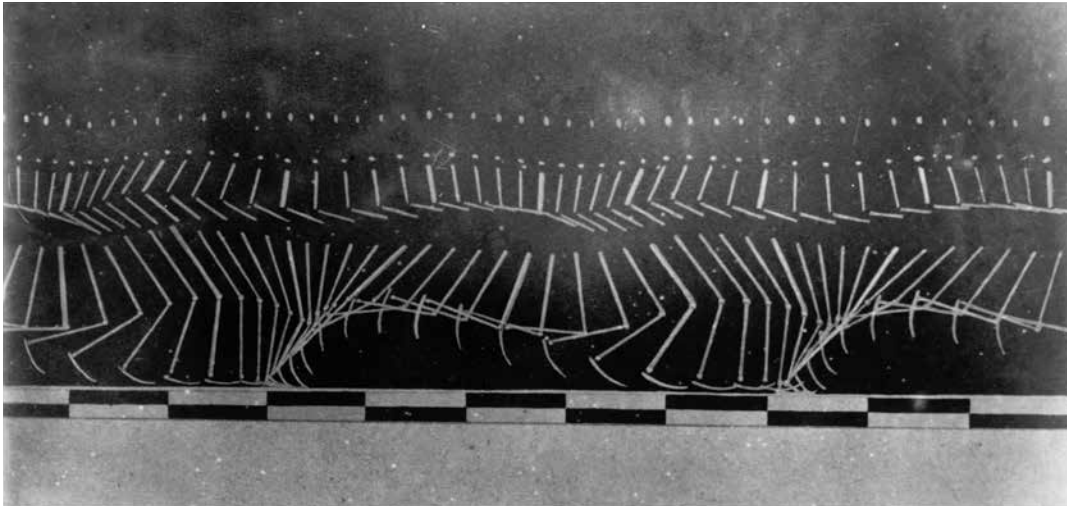


fig. 2

Étienne-Jules Marey, *Course: repères géométriques et schémas*
(1880-1890)



fig. 3

Jacques-André Boiffard,
L'Affiche lumineuse de 'Mazda' sur les grand boulevards,
from: André Breton, *Nadja* (1928)

identifies the basis of this connection, pointing out that the recording of sound, for example, unlike an encoded score or written text, doesn't distinguish between noise and articulate sounds. This lack of discrimination, he claims, provided a model for "an aesthetic of indifference".¹⁴

Yet, one might better understand the model provided by recording instruments in more Surrealist terms: recordings necessarily include the accidental, the involuntary, the unconscious or the unintentional detail, even in cases, such as that of geometric chronophotography, where the bandwidth of information received is deliberately restricted.

In a short piece on the subject of technology, indexicality and contingency, Mary Ann Doane wrote:

The emergence of photographic and phonographic technologies in the nineteenth century seemed to make possible what had previously been beyond the grasp of representation – the inscription of contingency. Anything and everything in the order of materiality could be photographed, filmed, or recorded, particularly the unexpected, the rupture in the fabric of existence.¹⁵

This passage suggests the possibility of an artistic appropriation of the model of recording that is aimed at capturing, not an indifferent field of information, but rather the "rupture in the fabric of existence". Doane explains that the capacity of these technologies to capture the contingent is owing to their indexical nature and that, further, indexicality is prized precisely because it is partially outside of conscious control; it "registers without consciousness of registration".

Surrealism

Writing in 1929, Benjamin credited the Surrealist movement with "a true, creative overcoming of religious illumination" by replacing it with a kind of "profane illumination, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration". It's a mistake, he argued, to reduce what we understand as Surrealist experience to "religious ecstasies or ecstasies of drugs", although hashish might offer "an introductory lesson".¹⁶

As an illustration of profane illumination he referred to André Breton's anti-novel *Nadja* (1928).¹⁷

Breton and Nadja are the lovers who convert everything they have experienced on mournful railway journeys (...) on Godforsaken Sunday afternoons in the proletarian quarters of the great cities, in the first glance through the rain-blurred window of a new apartment, into revolutionary experience, if not action.¹⁸

14. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 23.

15. Mary Ann Doane, "Notes from the Field: Contingency", *Art Bulletin* 94:3 (September 2012), p. 348.

16. Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia", *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), p. 227. See also "Hashish in Marseilles", pp. 215-224.

17. André Breton, *Nadja* (1928), trans. Richard Howard (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

18. Benjamin, "Surrealism", p. 229.

Profane illumination, as exemplified here, retains something of the transformative power of religious illumination, but it differs in that the revelatory experience of the transitory scene is far from otherworldly; rather, it has a snapshot character and is set in an everyday, poor, urban environment, lending it political rather than spiritual significance. In his reconsideration of Benjamin's conception of aura, Lutz Koepnick underscored the continuities between photography, the optical unconscious and profane illumination. The camera, he wrote, "pierces quotidian surfaces with its peculiar technologies of representation".

Film then is capable of ushering the spectator into the realm of profane illumination, into an arena of flash like, non-intentional and sensuous cognition similar to the one Benjamin unearthed in the work of the surrealists...¹⁹

This "realm of profane illumination" is one of intuitive revelation reconfigured for the age of mechanical reproduction.

fig. 3

One of the many photographs taken by Jacques-André Boiffard for *Nadja* is captioned "the luminous Mazda poster on the Grand Boulevard". Breton must have been aware that Ahuru Mazda is the highest deity in Zoroastrianism. 'Mazda' means wise or enlightened, so the word's degraded appearance in the street on a billboard advertising a brand of light bulb is a perfect illustration of profane illumination. Indeed, a common phrase in English meaning intuitive insight is "a light bulb moment".

Surrealist dream, fantasy, intoxication, ecstasy, and trance are tied to the contemporary every day, not to some pre-modern archaic past. They involve modern technologies and media. As Susan Laxton pointed out in her discussion of Dada and Automatism, "there is an insistence on instability, the unforeseeable inserted into a model of technological rationality".²⁰ In other words, the very technology that damaged experience has the capacity to restore it. The urban scene from *Nadja* described by Benjamin, briefly framed by train and apartment windows, has all the hallmarks of a revelatory chance encounter. The encounter has the sort of photographic character well summed up by Peter Geimer who remarked that beyond photographic agency, "there is also a dimension of the unforeseen. A photograph is, in this respect, also an *occurrence*: something in the image *occurs* or something *falls into* the image".²¹ The early avant-gardes particularly valued this aspect of photography. Margaret Cohen put the point succinctly: "The paradigmatic surrealist act of representation is not to hold a mirror up to the world. Rather the surrealist presents the world with a

19. Lutz Koepnick, "Aura Reconsidered: Benjamin and Contemporary Visual Culture", in Gerhard Richter (ed.) *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 105.

20. Susan Laxton, "Flou: Rayographs and the Dada Automatic", *October*, v. 127, 2009, p. 45.

21. Peter Geimer, "Notes from the Field: Contingency," *Art Bulletin*, 94:3, September 2012, p. 351.

yielding substance where traces are left.”²² The mimetic image is replaced by the indexical trace.

Automatism

The German Surrealist, Max Ernst was responsible for inventing or adapting many innovative indexical procedures.

fig. 4

Frottage, for example, involves putting a sheet of paper on a textured surface and rubbing it with graphite or another medium. The process suppresses indicators of subjectivity with anonymous repetitive marks in the service of reproducing the contours and textures of something otherwise inaccessible to visual perception. The resulting image doesn’t resemble what is given to daylight perception. Ernst used frottage as a way of stimulating subjective projections of strange worlds. He took rubbings from diverse materials, combining them in a collage-like fashion to make pictures of imaginary landscapes, plants, and animals with, as he said, “unhoped-for precision”. The procedure of frottage was a means of intensifying “the irritability of the mind’s faculties by appropriate technical means, excluding all conscious mental guidance”.²³

Frottage is a form of pure psychic automatism, which, as Breton declared in the first “Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924), is “dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern”.²⁴ Given Ernst’s evident careful preparation of materials to be rubbed and their combination to form highly articulated images, his claim that frottage radically reduced the level of his “mental guidance” seems exaggerated.

The Belgium-born poet and artist, Henri Michaux, is well known for his *Idéogrammes*, ink drawings inspired by Chinese calligraphy, which he thought signified, not by picturing, but via the immediate gestural expressivity of the hand. He also made use of frottage. Michaux cited as influences Ernst and Paul Klee, Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey, as well as Classic Chinese painting. Given these precedents for his work, it’s not surprising that his frottages are quite abstract, sketchy, and indecipherable. They are automatist in spirit and loosely figurative. As he remarked: “Draw with no particular intention, scribble mechanically, nearly always there appear faces on the paper.”²⁵ A few strokes with a broad piece of graphite suffice for Michaux to pick up traces of ghostly personages or creatures – his “apparitions”.

Ernst developed other automatist techniques such as *grattage*. At its simplest, *grattage* is a way of adapting frottage to oil paint, that is, laying the canvas on a textured surface and scraping paint over it with a palette knife.

22. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 134.

23. Max Ernst, “Beyond Painting,” *Max Ernst, Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and his Friends*, edited by Robert Motherwell (New York City, NY: Wittenborn, Schulz, 1948), p. 8.

24. André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924), *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1972), p. 26.

25. Henri Michaux, “En pensant au phénomène de la peinture,” *Passages*, 1963. Cited in *Henri Michaux*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, (New York City, NY: 1978), p. 49.

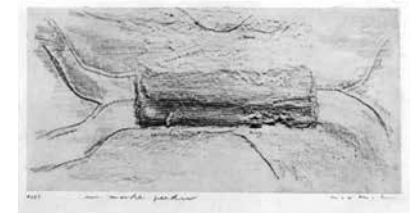


fig. 4

Max Ernst, *Un Monde Perdu* (1925)
frottage sur papier, 11 x 21 cm

Ernst elaborated this by layering different coloured paints on a canvas, ending with a dark layer, and then scratching the surface to partially reveal the hidden layers. The technique produced what look like strange nocturnal landscapes. In the 1940s, he added another technique to his repertoire. *Decalcomania*, which was invented by the Spanish artist Oscar Dominguez, involves sandwiching paint between two non-absorbent surfaces and then separating them. The distinctive motley texture this technique produced resembles eroded rock formations.

The magical quality of Dominguez's and Ernst's experiments with these techniques is countered by Isa Genzken's series of *grattages* called *Basic Research* (1988-91). She laid canvas directly onto the studio floor and squeegeed dark paint evenly across the surface. The result is an all-over texture that's opaque and flat. Early automatist experiments seem poised between projective and receptive aims, which, on the one hand, stir the projective imagination of artist and viewer, and on the other hand, automatically register an optical unconscious. When these strategies are revived, it's the latter, non-pictorial tendency that predominates.

Automatic drawing is the closest visual counterpart of automatic writing. As practised by André Masson, the technique involves uncontrolled scribbling until the lines eventually give rise to suggestive forms, which can then be made more explicit. In the early 1920s, the Surrealists conducted experiments with automatic speech, writing, and drawing in collective trance sessions. In his participatory performance piece, *Doors of Perception* (2013), the artist Marcos Lutyens conducted similar experiments with hypnosis in a gallery setting. *Ambideliious* (2016) develops the idea by drawing on research about the different functions of the two hemispheres of the brain. Although the science is uncertain, it seems that the dominant left brain is more active in functions requiring analytic, logical, and linguistic tasks, while the right brain is more engaged with pre-verbal, emotional, and creative activities. Lutyens's collective performance aims to induce a participant, through hypnosis and specially constructed chairs, to inwardly separate as far as possible the brain's hemispheres and draw simultaneously with both hands on clay tablets.

In all of these procedures, there's a sense of finding means of bypassing artistic agency, of groping blindly in the dark, in order to encounter whatever eludes consciousness and daylight perception. In fact, this may explain why so many indexical works of art have a dark ground and are monochrome. Indexical procedures are often referred to as "blind", and the work produced can seem impenetrable, as it cannot be readily subsumed under concepts.

Since the early 1960s, William Anastasi has experimented with "un-sighted" works, including his *Subway* and *Pocket* drawings. His *Abandoned*

series of paintings combines literal unsightedness with the blindness of chance. As he explains: “The *Abandoned* is the result of chance and unsighted gestures. A black gessoed canvas mounted on a wall is mentally divided six across and six down. A die is thrown to determine where a mark is to occur horizontally, then thrown again to determine where vertically. A marking instrument is applied (graphite or oil stick) to the selected spot with an unsighted gesture.”²⁶

Another common feature of the work discussed here, related to the blindness of the procedures, is the adoption of tactile modes of making. This is effectively explored by the

fig. 5

artists Allis/Fillioli whose work *Alieno* (2011) involved excavating with their bare hands negative moulds of heads in crates of soil and then casting the invisible forms in plaster. The unearthed plaster heads resemble the imagined forms of things that one has only explored by touch. This emphasis on touch, as opposed to vision, can also be seen in the work of Kimsooja, a Korean artist who is interested in participatory, yet meditative installations. Her *Archive of the Mind* (2016) involves participants forming clay spheres with their hands to the accompaniment of music.

Flatbed

The commonly held view of the work of art as the paradigm case of a mind-formulated artifact, wholly porous to the intentions of its maker, is here challenged by a view that understands it as the product of creative receptivity involving an intuitive, involuntary encounter with the world. Many artists and writers including the celebrated American critic, Leo Steinberg, revived this Surrealist attitude to explore post-war artistic processes. He introduced the concept of the “flatbed” in his crucially important essay, “Other Criteria” (1972). It focuses on Robert Rauschenberg’s early work, yet it’s really a general critique of the then prevailing conceptions of the artist, the work of art and the viewer, and an account of emergent alternative ideas. As a young refugee from Nazi Germany, Steinberg lived in London for the duration of the War and studied at the Slade School of Art. Still mastering English, he carried a copy of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* tucked in his pocket. This is pertinent as Joyce is an important point of reference for any account of how automatic or involuntary procedures enter contemporary art. The critic Michael Levenson argues that Joyce’s prose “carries meanings that do not depend on the intentions of the speaker”. In his writing, “language itself establishes connections, sees resemblances, marks differences. A space opens up between the self and its form of representation”.²⁷ The author imagined here is one caught up in a complex net

26. William Anastasi, Email correspondence with the author, January 31, 2017.

27. Michael Levenson, “Stephen’s Diary in Joyce’s Portrait – The Shape of Life”, in Mark A. Wollaeger (ed.), *James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 191.



fig. 5

Alis/Fillioli, *Alieno* (2011)
plaster, 29 x 22 x 20 cm



fig. 6

Robert Rauschenberg, *Almanac* (1962)
oil and silk-screen print on canvas

of linguistic automatisms, which he calls, with a nod to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, a “linguistic unconscious”. Yet in the midst of the warp and weft of the text woven by language, there are evanescent moments of what Joyce called “epiphany” or sudden revelation.

Steinberg brought his early immersion in Joyce (and in Freud) to bear on his art criticism.²⁸ In “Other Criteria”, he proposed that in the mid-twentieth century the conception of the picture plane was rotated through 90 degrees from a vertical to a horizontal position: the new work, he wrote, “is no longer the analogue of a world perceived from an upright position, but a matrix of information conveniently placed in a vertical situation”. He called this rotated support, the “flatbed” picture plane, a term that refers to the horizontal bed of a printing press where type is laid down in preparation for the paper and press. Steinberg credited Marcel Duchamp with setting a precedent for this shift, especially in his *Large Glass* (1915-23), and the painting, *Tu m'* (1918).

fig. 6

Yet, the artist who did most to develop the flatbed was Rauschenberg, who, after an era of abstraction, “let the world in again”.²⁹ This last comment suggests that the “horizontal” reorientation of the support signals its transformation into a receptive surface susceptible to whatever befalls it. It’s in this sense that the flatbed resembles what Bergson understood as intuition, that is, experience prior to, or on the fringes of, intellectual selection and representation. The artist, freed from the exigencies of daily life and present action, draws on this pre-analytic intuition and, consequently, the work of art relies on us to complete it, forcing our intense engagement.

The conception of the picture plane as a view through the window is, in Rauschenberg’s and other artists’ work of the period, definitively exchanged for a model of it as “any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed – whether coherently or in confusion”. Steinberg sometimes compared the flatbed picture plane to solid things such as the flatbed itself, tabletops, studio floors, charts, and bulletin boards. These analogies emphasise the collage-like materiality and opacity typical of Rauschenberg’s combines with its accumulation of found materials. Yet, he also describes the horizontal picture plane in less tangible terms, that is, as an analogue of mental processes in contact with the technological, mediatised world. It’s as though his prose is suspended between material and electronic worlds. This might be because he was trying to encompass both Rauschenberg’s “objectified,

28. “But I am conscious of belonging to a generation brought up on Freud and James Joyce. *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake* were the pabulum of my teens.” Steinberg, “Objectivity and the Shrinking Self”, *Other Criteria*, p. 320.

29. Leo Steinberg, “Other Criteria,” *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 85, 90. It was originally delivered as a lecture at MoMA in 1968 under the title “Reflections on the State of Criticism” and published 4 years later, slightly revised in *Other Criteria*.

materialised imagery” of the combines and the “relatively substance-less imagery” of his later transfer drawings and silk screens.³⁰ Or, he might have been deliberately mingling terms denoting mind and matter, subject and object. Certainly the accumulation of analogies suggests the impossibility of distinguishing clearly between inner and outer worlds; the work is for “a consciousness immersed in the brain of the city”.

The model of the (post) modern mind that’s conjured up by the work is a “dump, reservoir, switching centre, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal monologue – the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field”. Information is imperfectly registered: the pictures include the “waste and detritus of communication – like radio transmission with interference; noise and meaning on the same wavelength”. The images render “the ceaseless inflow of urban message, stimulus, and impediment”.³¹ These analogies, which seem to pre-figure a post-print era, are at odds with the imagery of the flatbed press.

The flatbed subject evoked by Steinberg is a “switching centre”, an intermittent, precarious “I”, hastily assembled from found bits of debris. Freud had a good word for the sort of experiential overload evoked in “Other Criteria”: *Reizüberflutung*, meaning a flooding of the mind with an excess of stimulation. More generally, the language recalls the Freudian conception of the unconscious as the interference or gaps in our speech and behavior. The emphasis on the value of detritus is also familiar, as Freud thought that dreams were formed of the day’s “residues”, and noted that psychoanalysis is accustomed to finding treasure in the “rubbish heap of our observations”. Yet Steinberg’s language also evokes Lacan’s reading of Freud through both Surrealist and Structuralist lenses. Consider, for example, the following passage from, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973):

Impediment, failure, split. In a spoken or written sentence something stumbles. Freud is attracted to these phenomena and it is there that he seeks the unconscious. There, something other demands to be realised – which appears as intentional, of course, but of a strange temporality. What occurs, what is *produced*, in this gap, is presented as *the discovery (la trouvaille)*. It is in this way that the Freudian exploration first encounters what occurs in the unconscious.³²

Lacan is referring in this passage to phenomena familiar from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), such as forgetting, mistakes, and flashes of wit, and also to the

30. These characterisations are lifted from Branden W. Joseph, “A Duplication Containing Duplications”: Robert Rauschenberg’s Split Screens”, *October* 25, Winter 2001, p. 8. He doesn’t associate this shift with Steinberg’s ambivalent descriptions of the flatbed.

31. Steinberg, “Other Criteria”, pp. 84, 90, 88, 89.

32. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 25.

Surrealist's revelatory found object stumbled on by chance in the flea market, *la trouvaille*.

The flatbed field is marked by indexical traces, transmissions that bypass artistic agency. Yet, as Steinberg notes, the source of these transmissions is not nature, for we no longer inhabit the world of the Renaissance man who "looked for his weather clues out of the window; but the world of men who turn knobs to hear a taped message, 'precipitation probability ten percent tonight' electronically transmitted from some windowless booth." Steinberg's reference to radio transmissions and interference recalls John Cage's famous, *Imaginary Landscape No.4* (1951), a composition for twelve radios each operated by two players, one for volume and one for tuning. The piece, according to critic Julia Robinson, "positioned the work as part of a network of communication in which perception is subjected to reception".³³

As early as 1961, Cage published a piece on Rauschenberg's work, which may have planted the germ of the Steinberg's reading. In it he wrote: "This is not a composition. It is a place where things are, as on a table or on a town seen from the air." Referring specifically to the transfer drawings, he wrote "the pencil lines scan the images transferred from photographs; [...] it seems like many television sets working simultaneously all tuned differently".³⁴

What Steinberg calls the vertical and horizontal orientations of the picture plane should be understood as metaphors that accumulate multiple connotations; the first connotes composition, agency, and opticality, the latter, receptivity, chance, and indexicality. Although he doesn't use the language of semiotics, Steinberg clearly conceived of the flatbed picture plane as a field that gathers indexical marks rather than a plane where an artist composes a picture. What he described, then, is essentially a photographic model of making, or perhaps more precisely a model based on camera-less photography: it as if the sensitised canvas automatically registers ambient information, images, signals, subtle vibrations, and waves. In fact, in the early fifties, Rauschenberg and his wife at the time, Susan Weil, made a series of photograms using large sheets of blue print.

At one point in the essay, Steinberg contrasts the diaphanous quality of the vertical plane with its horizontal other:

Perhaps Rauchenberg's profoundest symbolic gesture came in 1955 when he seized his own bed, smeared paint on its pillow and quilt coverlet, and uprighted it against the wall. There, in the vertical posture of "art," it continues to work in the imagination as the eternal companion of our other

33. Julia Robinson, "John Cage and Investiture: The Unmanning of the System", *John Cage*, Julia Robinson (ed.), October Files 12 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) p. 193.

34. John Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and his Work", *Silence* (London: Marion Boyars, 2004), pp. 99, 105.

resource, our horizontality, the flat bedding in which we do our begetting, conceiving, and dreaming.³⁵

In this passage, the shift in orientation implies a relation to another order of reality accessed in the dark, involuntarily, unconsciously, blindly, via the sense of touch. The horizontality and implied corporality of *Bed* recalls Jackson Pollock's gestural process of pouring and dripping thinned paint onto a horizontal canvas. Particularly relevant in this context are Allan Kaprow's remarks made soon after Pollock's death on the artist's "ecstatic blindness". Looking at the work, he wrote, we "take pleasure in participating in a delirium, a deadening of the reasoning faculties, a loss of 'self' in the Western sense of the term".

For Kaprow, there is something Zen-like in Pollock's approach: "There is, as I said earlier, a certain blindness, a mute belief in everything he does, even up to the end."³⁶ While Kaprow was calling, in 1958, for an expansion of the action in action painting, a number of artists in Japan who formed the Gutai group were doing just that. Kazuo Shiraga, for example, performed ritualistic acts of painting with his bare feet, sometimes swinging from a rope suspended over the canvas. He resorted to this method in order to evade his too learned hands, "to become 'naked', to shed all conventional ideas".³⁷

Rosalind Krauss's important two-part essay, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America" (1977-78), was written in the wake of "Other Criteria". As the subtitle of Krauss's article indicates, her point in discussing indexical procedures was to demonstrate that an indexical model of making governed the contemporary art of the time, and especially site-specific installation. Krauss discussed Duchamp's use of indexicality in his painting, *Tu m'*, and Man Ray's camera-less photography. The Rayograph, his name for the photogram, is an exemplary case of a type of photography that takes advantage of indexical, more than iconic, aspect of the medium.

While all photography is indexical, the Rayograph, as Krauss observes, "forces the issue of the photograph's existence as an index".³⁸ The images that result from putting objects directly onto light sensitive paper are described as the "ghostly traces of departed objects". Man Ray put it beautifully when he called the Rayograph, "a residue of an experience... recalling the event more or less clearly, like the undisturbed ashes of an object consumed by flames".³⁹ What's crucial about the Rayograph, for Krauss, is the way its physical genesis seems "to short-circuit or disallow those processes of

35. Steinberg, "Other Criteria", 89, 90. See Branden W. Joseph (ed.) *Rauschenberg*, October Files 4, (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2002).

36. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (1958) *The Blurring of Art and Life*, edited by Jeff Kelley, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 1, 5, 7.

37. Kazuo Shiraga, "Only Action", *Gutai* 3 (October 20, 1955), p. 22.

38. Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America" (1977), *October: The First Decade, 1976-1986* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 2, 9.

39. Man Ray, "The Age of Light," Alan Trachtenberg (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), p. 167.

schematisation or symbolic intervention that operate within the graphic representation of most paintings”. Like other indexical signs, the photogram “could be called sub- or pre-symbolic, ceding the language of art back to the imposition of things”.⁴⁰ The photogram, a photosensitive flatbed receptive to whatever befalls it, models the openness of intuitive experience.⁴¹

Camera-less photography is one way of rendering the medium more indexical than iconic. Another way is to subject an exposed photographic negative to heat before enlarging and printing. *Brûlage*, as this technique is called, produces unpredictable distortions like those seen in Raoul Ubac’s work from 1939, *L’envers de la face* (The reverse side of the face).

fig. 7 Another technique, the chemigram, is both camera-less and light-less. It does however use photosensitive paper, and developing and fixing fluids. Applying a resist to the paper forms the image, because the chemicals only react to the exposed parts. The title of a chemigram by Umbro (Otto Umbehr), *The Growth of Salt* (1935), presumably refers to the crystalline silver salts in the emulsion, and signals the greater importance of chemistry in this process than light or the camera’s lens or shutter.

Many contemporary artists have recently revived experimental photographic processes pioneered by early avant-gardes. Among them is the Italian, Renato Leotta, who has made a series called *Tempo (Memoria e Materia)*, 2016, an allusion to the New Realism of Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris. Leotta submerges light sensitive paper in the sea at night where the rays of the moon filter through the ripples on the surface of the water creating a dark photogram crossed by pale reflections and gleams of light: “I imagined the sea as a large dark room and the moon as an enlarger whose phases determine the diaphragm apertures.” He has also made casts of the surface of the beach.

Another contemporary artist, Nicola Martini, makes installations by painting the plaster walls of the gallery with bitumen of Judea – the photosensitive tar reveals past marks in the plaster, like memories coming to light. Over the course of the exhibition, the walls fade unevenly, gradually, so that the work evolves over time. Both these artists evince an interest in the duration of exposure.

Drawing in the Dark

fig. 8 Gabriel Orozco’s photograph, *Path of Thought* (1997), shows a human skull on which a grid has painstakingly been drawn. The grid, which normally defines a flat surface, is here distorted like a stretched net. It’s a photograph of work in progress on the sculpture *Black Kites*, a skull painted with a chequer board pattern. Using chiaroscuro effects, Orozco

40. Krauss, “Notes on the Index”, p. 203.

41. For more on this topic see Margaret Iversen, *Photography, Trace, and Trauma* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).



fig. 7

Raoul Ubac, *L’envers de la face* (1939)
gelatin silver print, 23,9 x 18,1 cm

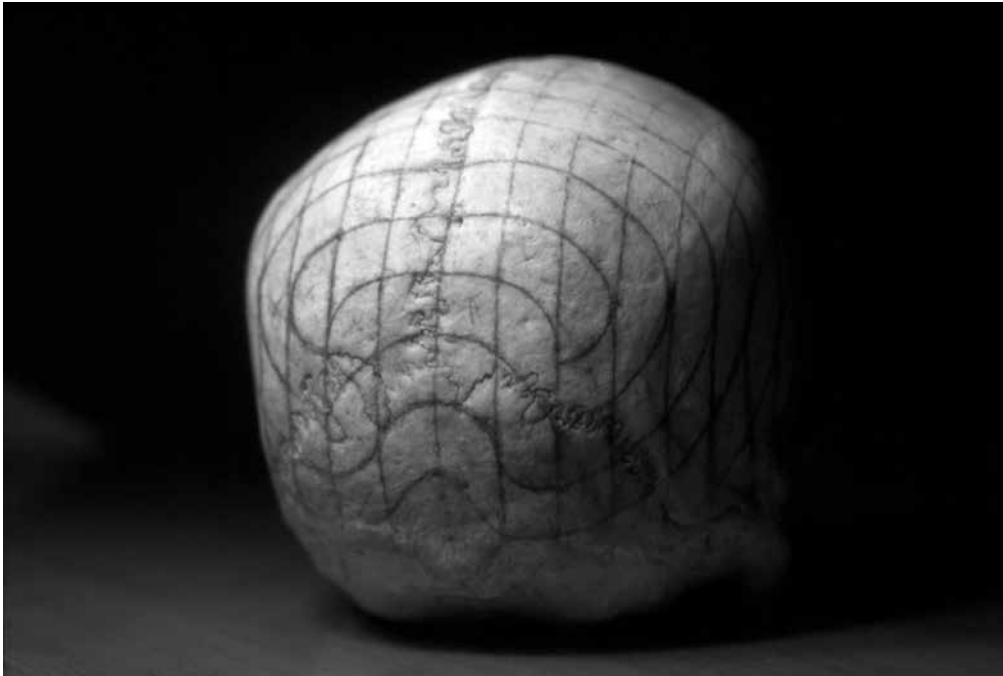


fig. 8

Gabriel Orozco, *Path of Thought* (1997)
Silver dye bleach print

highlighted the irregular path of the coronal suture. He must have been aware that this image resembles a printout from an electroencephalogram, an electronically recorded “path of thought”. Orozco’s photograph makes reference to indexical registrations of states of mind or body using sensitive recording instrument. One precedent for this is the electroencephalographic self-portrait made by Robert Morris’s work, *Untitled (Hook, Track, Memory Dents)*, 1963. It consists of eight lead plaques naming the different areas of the brain monitored by electrodes attached to the artist’s head, and the EEG printouts recorded at each location. Morris discussed the piece in an interview conducted by art historian Paul Cummings in 1968, noting that during the recording of the EEG, he thought about himself for the time it took the graphic line to equal his height, thereby compounding its self-reference.⁴² Morris understood the work as a kind of automatic drawing.

In her essay, “Drawing in the Dark”, British artist Susan Morris commented on Steinberg’s account of Picasso’s series of preparatory drawings for *L’Aubade*, 1942 and *The Women of Algiers*, 1955. She noted that Steinberg understood the drawings as “the pursuit of a self-portraiture that stages the inside and the outside, self and other, simultaneously, with an unbroken continuity that you can follow like a Mobius strip”.⁴³ The drawings, he said, “present two modes of vision. One, a seeing in the light – ‘normal physiological vision’ – one, a blind groping, ‘a vision released from fixity, a vision at large’”.⁴⁴ These remarks bear directly on Morris’s series of *Motion Capture Drawings*. Made in a motion capture studio, the process involved attaching reflectors to her body, much like a high-tech version of Marey’s process for his geometric chronophotography. She recorded herself in the process of repeatedly positioning and snapping an ash-coated carpenter’s plumbline onto a large sheet of paper. The data collected during these sessions was converted into line, using algorithms, and, like a digital photograph, printed with an inkjet. Morris observes that “the build-up of black ink, solidifying like accumulated soot, makes visible that which would otherwise remain unseen, that which occurs simultaneously and as if underneath a set of marks as they are being laid down: one in the light of day, one unfolding in the darkness of a digital recording”. The prints reveal that the motion required for the plumbline marks is the very opposite of straight up and down: they’re like an elaborate looping dance tracked in white thread-like lines. Morris’s work engages in a strategy of displacement aimed at “a portraiture

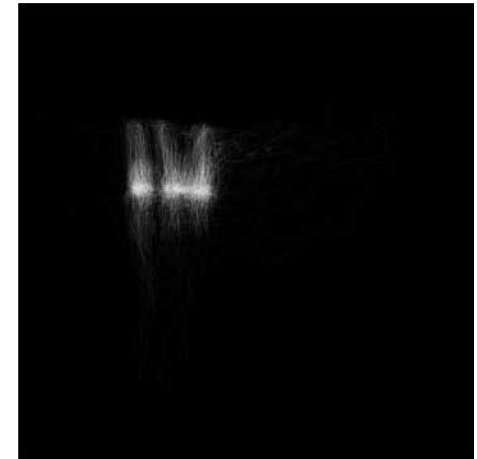


fig. 9

Susan Morris, *Motion Capture Drawing (PLD_1 HR_HEAD): View From Above* (2012)
Archival inkjet on Hahnemühle paper,
29 cm x 29 cm

42. Paul Cummings, “Oral history interview with Robert Morris, 1968 Mar. 10”, *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-robert-morris-13065>, accessed December 31, 2016.

43. Susan Morris, “Drawing in the Dark”, *Tate Papers* 18, Autumn, 2012.

44. Leo Steinberg, “The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large”, *Other Criteria*, p. 234.

that is more interested in what ‘I’ am not”. It captures a bodily unconscious of labyrinthine complexity and convulsive beauty.

The idea of profane illumination, as elaborated here, offers a way thinking about art practices that incorporate technical media and automatic procedures with a view to discovering what lies beyond rational cognition. It acknowledges the importance of technology in shaping intuition and auratic experience. This, together with the introduction of the receptive flatbed picture plane, are crucial factors in the post-war revival of a fundamentally Surrealist approach to art as an attempt to capture experience prior to any analytical preconceptions. Above all, arts involving indexical procedures have been shown to play a crucial role for they are capable registering what Benjamin called, “the tiny spark of contingency”. Cohen observed that, in opposition to visual realism, “Surrealism proposes that the artist enters into direct contact with the reality to be captured.”⁴⁵ This statement needs to be amended in view of the Surrealists’ and later artists’ conviction that they must make use of technical devices, automatic procedures and sensitive recording instruments as means of opening onto a reality unavailable to rational thought or ordinary perception. On this account, although technology may destroy the contemplative distance usually associated with aura, it may also make possible the technical-auratic experience of “profane illumination”.

45. Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, p. 133.



THE NECESSARY

“He thought he could detect in nature – both animate and inanimate, with soul and without soul – something which manifested itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less under one word. It was not godlike, for it seemed without reason; nor human, for it had no understanding; nor devilish, for it was beneficent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance, for it evinced no succession; it was like Providence, for it hinted at connection. It seemed to penetrate all that limits us; it seemed to deal arbitrarily with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded space. In the impossible alone did it appear to find pleasure, while it rejected the possible with contempt. To this principle, which seemed to come in between all other principles and separate them, and yet link them together, I gave the name of Daemonic, after the example of the ancients and others with similar experiences. I sought to escape from this terrible principle, by taking refuge, according to my wont, in a creation of the imagination.”
– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe¹

1. *Poetry and Truth: From My Own Life*, vol. II (1811-1833) (London, England: George Bell & Sons, 1908).

Strange Objects

Five wooden boards, aged by time and nailed to one another with artisanal precision, compose a small box – no larger than a regular paper sheet – whose form recalls, probably intentionally, an old toolbox.

This container seems at first sight to be entirely empty, but, if we come closer, we can see that there are three different inscriptions hidden on the top part. There is the word “Intuition”, accompanied by two parallel lines: the first, clearly marked on the wood’s light fibres, is a closed line segment; the second, less clearly defined, is a half-line.

If we think of a straight line as a visualisation of the stream of consciousness, a segment of one can be considered as a representation of rationality. A segment acquires its own meaning by the fact of being complete, finite, separate. A half-line, in this case longer and less defined than its neighbour, is born at a definite point but does not have a determined end and is, in that sense, full of possibilities. It is a symbol of intuitive thinking: the hazier but the infinite source of knowledge.

In 1968, Joseph Beuys started to produce the multiple, *Intuition*, in a limited edition with the help of his publisher Wolfgang Feelisch.² The edition of about 12,000 copies, all carved and signed by the artist himself, were originally hand-delivered or sold by post.³ The practice was perfectly coherent with the German artist’s idea of sculpture, which he saw first and foremost as a collective social phenomenon that,

2. Through his publishing house, VICE-Versand, Remscheid.

3. A single copy cost eight German Marks, a very modest sum, which is the equivalent of around two Euros in 2017.

fig. 1

Oscar Dominguez, *Decalcomania* (1943)

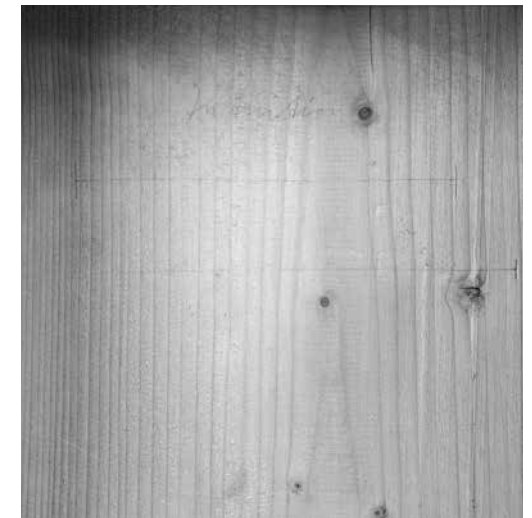


fig. 1

Joseph Beuys, *Intuition* (1968)
wooden box and pencil (detail), 30 × 21 cm

without distinction, sculpted both the mind of the person who produces it and of the one who experiences it.

“Everyone is an artist” and “we are the revolution” are the two sentences that Beuys repeated most frequently to advance his idea of art as an instrument of self-affirmation. This multiple is an invitation that tends in the same direction, a call to use aesthetic thinking to overcome the blind spots of rationality by following the road whose endpoint we do not know a priori.

In that sense, *Intuition* can be regarded as an *epistemic object*, or, as we so often defined this category of objects during the meetings of our curatorial team, as an “intuition object”.

The experimental sciences describe as “epistemic” any apparatus or *dispositif* capable of conveying knowledge and of generating it as well. The concept was already introduced to visual arts by Herbert Molderings, who applied it, with precision, to the ready-mades that populated Marcel Duchamp’s studio-laboratory in New York.⁴ It is not impossible, however, to expand that definition to the multiplicity of works that have populated the landscape of modern and contemporary art over the past hundred years, to those works that do not offer cheap answers to the appetites of the spectators, but that continuously put our aesthetic sensibility to the test.

This small box enters gracefully into this great category of active and poetic objects: it is a straightforward instrument that, instead of simply transporting knowledge, succeeds in generating doubts in the mind of the viewer. A seemingly empty box waiting to receive, or stimulate, future intuitions.

The choral individual

If we pause a moment to consider the syntagm [*work of art*], we cannot but regard the latter both as a *medium* that communicates, and as the process that produces. In this order of ideas, to speak about art means to observe the attitudes, the system of references, and the desires that an artist sculpts in order to produce his works, understood as the milestones on this trajectory of growth. It is no accident that art has often been defined as a mental process, as an instrument for thought, as a *mantra*⁵ capable of linking the subject to the totality, a single mind to the collective unconscious that permeates our world like a great and living ecosystem, at once natural and cultural.

These days, it is common to hear people speak about new discoveries in the field of augmented reality, that is,

4. See Herbert Molderings, “It Is Not the Objects that Count, but the Experiments: Marcel Duchamp’s New York Studio as a Laboratory of Perception”, in *Re-Object: Marcel Duchamp, Jeff Koons, Gerhard Merz*, ed. Eckhard Schneider (Cologne: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2007), pp. 146-154.

5. From the Sanskrit *man-*, “thought”, and the suffix *-tra*, which determines the instrumental value.

about all those applications where a virtual reality is joined to our world through optical means and apparatuses. But the first “augmented” reality created by humans is culture, understood as an always-evolving system of beliefs, theories, objects, and know-hows that continually mould our symbolic universe. Culture augments our perception and expands the confines of our physical universe; it shows us the infinite possibilities of our material world. Art, consequently, whether as the mother or daughter of this “expanded” reality, becomes an instrument to efficiently navigate the multiple dimensions, symbolic and physical, which defines the confines of our shared knowledge.

Seen through this lens, artworks are the receptacle, the – never entirely passive – recording instrument with which the artists manages to frame and share their intuitions. And, from a curatorial point of view, choosing works for this show has meant, first of all, choosing intuitions and ways of thinking just as much as physical objects. This approach is intended to underscore the value, as *medium*, of artworks, of these strange objects capable of connecting minds, people, and attitudes.

The process of selection itself was pursued as a collective sculpture through the choral work of the team guided by Daniela Ferretti and Axel Vervoordt, with whom I have had the pleasure of collaborating, together with Anne-Sophie Dusselier and Dario Dalla Lana. This choral structure allowed us to mobilise our different experiences and points of view in the effort to cover as great a swath of this vast, if not infinite, universe of research. Moreover, such plurality tried to limit the narcissism inherent to curatorial work, in so far as that is possible: the show, then, is the result of multiple situations that coexist simultaneously, and that complete their journey only in the experience of the spectators.

The writing of thought

Intuition is a process that is at once passive, since it’s based on the capacity to reap and record one’s own ideas, and active, since it gives meaning to that which we’ve heard or received. What we experience through rational thinking is nothing more than a synthesis of the parallel processes that take place in our brains unbeknownst to us. The coherence we perceive is the result of a filtering process that our minds perform to construct a stable image of the world before us, and the illusion of a continuous consciousness within us.⁶

André Breton used the name “interior ear” for the instrument necessary both to listen and to distinguish the various parallel processes that define our mental life as a constant “dynamic present”, as Boncinelli puts it.⁷ This “ear” focuses our hearing on the background noise of

6. On this topic, see also Erik Lumer’s text, “From Subliminal to Sublime”, in this book.

7. See Edoardo Boncinelli, *Come nascono le idee* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 2008), p. 79.

consciousness, orients it towards those movements that accompany or precede rational thought, and that, if properly analysed, can describe the secret life of our mind.

“On 27 September 1933 (around eleven at night, as I was trying to fall asleep earlier than usual)”, Breton writes, “I once more recorded such a series of words, not provoked by anything conscious in me. Although spoken as if by an actor off stage, they were quite distinct and, to what is aptly called the interior ear, constituted a remarkably autonomous group. I have been forced at various times to turn my attention to these particular verbal formations, which, in any given case, can appear very rich or very poor in sense but – at least by the suddenness of their passage and by the total, conspicuous lack of hesitation which reveals the manner in which they are brought to us – bring to mind such an exceptional certainty that one does not hesitate to examine them in greater depth.”⁸

fig. 2

Breton himself defined this form of psychic automatism as *thought-writing*, and automatic writing was the Surrealist method for registering it. A symbol of the paradigm shift promoted by this French intellectual,⁹ this practice deprives interior discourse of rational objective by eliminating any interruption in, or segmentation of, the stream of consciousness. In doing so, it transforms the artist into a “modest *recording instrument*”.¹⁰ For me, the image that best captures that definition is the phonograph wax cylinder that Thomas Edison invented towards the end of the nineteenth century. These simple cylinders were capable of recording sound simply through a membrane connected to a needle. Trembling, it was able to engrave sound vibrations in the soft and sensible surface of the wax and, subsequently, to replay them.

This attention to the mechanical receptivity of the Surrealist artist helped to limit, insofar as that is possible, the vanity of the author; to eliminate any virtuosity that can reduce even the most mature research to the easiness of effects. Once it had been brought into such clear relief, this tendency ran through the various artistic revolutions that succeeded it; indeed, it is still operative today, most notably in practices where collaboration with instruments and materials is central to the production of the work. In the “decalcomania without preconceived object”¹¹ of Óscar Domínguez, for example, the composition was born solely from the encounter between paper, ink, and the will of the artist. But the same tendency can be found in Max Ernst’s *frottages*, and in the canvases where Isa Genzken uses oil paint is to bring out the drawings hidden in the floor of the artist’s studio (*Basic Research*, 1989).

8. André Breton, “The Automatic Message”, in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. by Franklin Rosemont (New York City, NY: Pluto Press, 1978), pp. 132-33.

9. “SURREALISM, *n.* Pure psychic automatism, by which is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real functioning of thought. The dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations. ENCYCL. *Philosophy*. Surrealism rests in the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of associations neglected heretofore, in the omnipotence of the dream and in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin, definitively, all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in the solution of the principal problems of life”. See Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism”, in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, pp. 163-164”

11. André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon W. Taylor (Boston, MA: MFA Publishers, 2002), p. 128.

10. Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism”, in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, p. 171. For an extensive discussion of these themes, please see Margaret Iversen’s text, “Profane Illumination”, in this book, as well as her essay, “Index, Diagram, Graphic Trace”, which stimulated many of my reflections here, and which also suggested the image of the wax cylinders to me. See: *Tate Papers*, no. 18 (Fall 2012), available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/18/index-diagram-graphic-trace>.

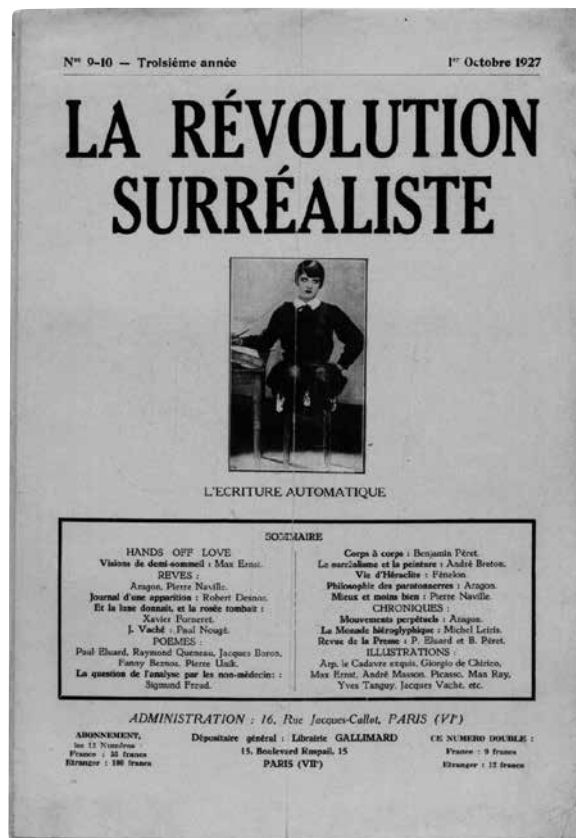


fig. 2

Cover of *La Révolution surréaliste*, n.9-10 (1st October 1927)

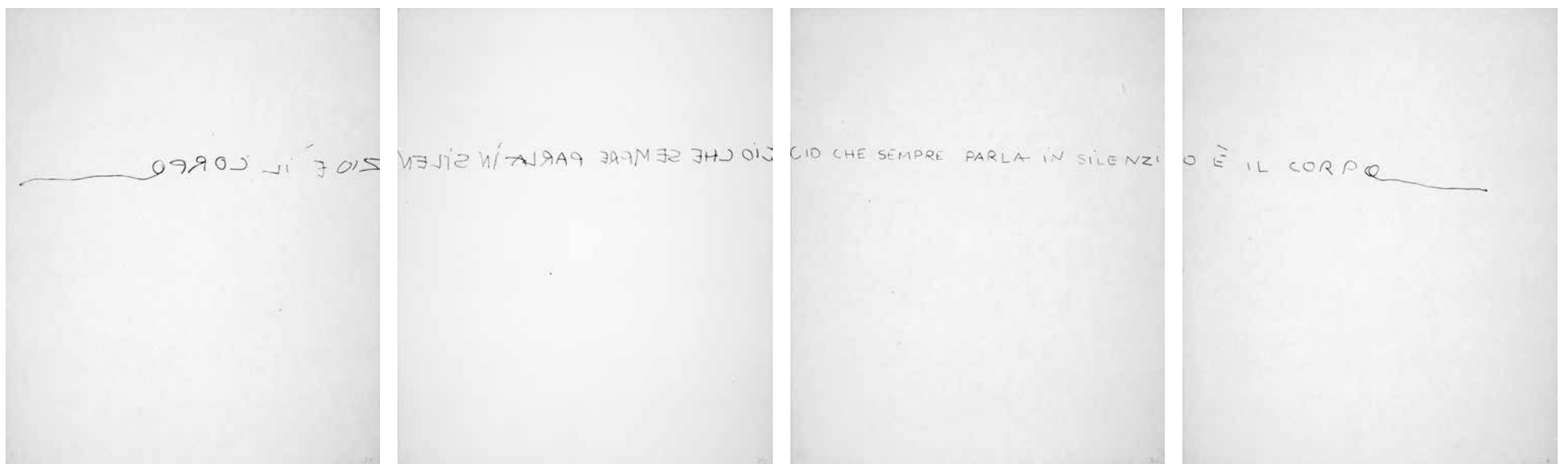


fig. 3

Alighiero Boetti, *Ciò che sempre parla in silenzio è il corpo*, plates from *Insicuro noncurante* (1975), mixed media, 55 x 45 cm

But let us return to the image of the artist both as source and as recording instrument. We find a direct example of that tendency in the series of self-portraits Robert Morris made in the early 1960s. *Self-Portrait (EEG)*, from 1963, is a recording of the artist's brain activity, monitored through electroencephalography, a simple scientific instrument capable of automatically transposing the invisible movements of our mind into graphic form.

fig. 4

This intuition allowed the artist to recognise and translate his own mental activity into visual poems, whose form is akin to a musical score. Thus, we see recorded on a piece of paper, all of the oscillations and intermittences that characterise our consciousness. It's a new form of automatic drawing, in which the mind expresses itself "on its own".

Starting from the same presuppositions, Matteo Nasini pursued and updated the technique using new typologies of exploration (*Sparkling Matter*, 2017). This Italian artist has focused his research on the oneiric dimension of consciousness and created new methods to give form to the invisible contents of the mind as it dreams up scenarios that are free from any rational order. To give voice and body to these dimensions of our internal life, Nasini monitored the electric activity of the cerebral cortex of several subjects during one or more sleep cycles with an instrument similar to Robert Morris's. Subsequently, the artist took the linear traces produced by the electroencephalograph and rotated them on their axis. The result is a translation of two-dimensional information into geometric solids, which were subsequently printed in ceramic.

fig. 5, 6

These cylindrical and conic forms, like old wax cylinders, still retain the trace of all the intuitions hidden in the rest of our conscious mind. These works, which allow us to observe the quality and length of dreams, reveal their hidden syntax, which is made up of jumps, interruptions, and depressions. It is the mind itself that, unbeknownst to it, sculpts onto matter the trajectory of its secret life.

The same data recorded using the electroencephalogram became the starting point for the creation of a new automatic composition, aural rather than visual, produced using algorithms that translate in real time the data of oneiric mental activity. Although the creation of this sound of thought is indirect, it is still capable, like three-dimensional objects, to give form to the irregularity of consciousness. If sculptures show us the spatiality of dreams, sound confronts us with its temporal and participative dimension. The noises we hear are the inarticulate voice of thought freed from any external interference. Like Breton's interior ear, they allow us to hear the background noise of our own consciousness.

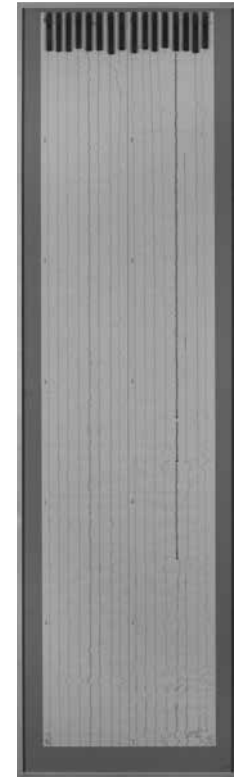


fig. 4

Robert Morris, *Self-portrait (EEG)* (1963)
pencil on paper, 193 × 55,2 cm



fig. 5

Matteo Nasini, *Sparkling Matter, Dream portrait* (2017)
3D printed porcelain, 40 x 20 cm

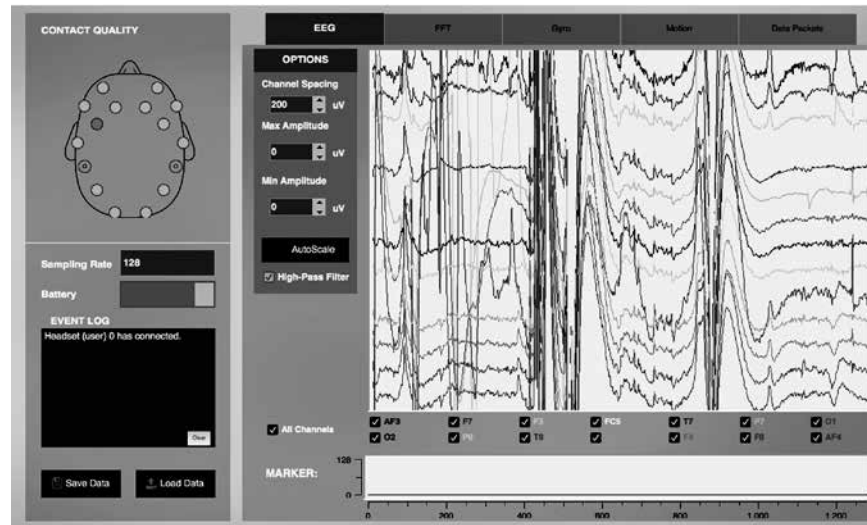


fig. 6

Screen capture of EMOTIV Pure-EEG™,
Matteo Nasini's software of choice to record brain waves.



fig. 7

Marcos Lutyens, *Ambideliious dérive* (2017)
digital drawing

The writing of the body

fig. 3 “That which always speaks in silence is the body” (“*Ciò che sempre parla in silenzio è il corpo*”), wrote Alighiero Boetti in his distinctive handwriting, both specular and ambidextrous (*Insicuro noncurante*, 1975). Marcos Lutyens likewise tries to give voice to this silent language by using instruments of suggestion that can bring to light previously hidden memories and reflexes. In, his project for the Palazzo Fortuny, the public is invited to participate in a collective hypnosis session. The subjects are brought into a state of bodily and mental relaxation, in order to facilitate a hypersensibility for and a hyper-receptivity to every stimulus, be they internal or external. Lutyens leads the sessions himself, using tones, voice, and breathing modulations. On top of that, the control of the narrative, the setting, and other variables amplifies the spectators’ receptivity and sensibility. He writes: “My interest in hypnosis has always been far less about implanting or suggesting ideas into visitors’ mind, but rather listening for that emergent voice of the unconscious as it traces the world and pushes against the boundaries of the collective psyche”.¹²

In this sense, hypnosis is akin to every other aesthetic experience, in that it, too, is a contemplative experience, though not only. Once this state of relaxation, defined as cataleptic,

is reached, the public is directed towards the use of small tools: holding one in each hand, they will freely trace the drawings produced during this new session of automatic writing on two small clay tablets. In particular, the apparent conflict induced from the twofold use of small scalpels and tablet is intended to activate both brain hemispheres simultaneously.¹³

Usually, the dominant hand is tied to the centres of language and rationality, while the non-dominant hand is linked to the hemisphere responsible for our more intuitive behaviours. The competition between these two is inverted to facilitate the “spontaneous” movement of our body so that, freed from rational control, it can leave its own unconscious knowledge upon the clay surface.

“I’d say that the intuitive sense informs a deeper, longer-lived rationality,” specifies Lutyens in the course of a private exchange. “Conscious rationality gives us economic bubbles and environmental catastrophe. The unconscious system that keeps 100 trillion cells together as a functioning human body is far superior to the conscious, supposed ‘puppeteer’ we call ‘me.’”

To account for the multiplicity of information produced by the body outside our conscious perception, the artist Susan Morris recorded her movements as she worked on a new series of drawings in a motion capture¹⁴ studio. Her *Motion Capture*

12. Marcos Lutyens, *Memoirs of a Hypnotist: 100 Days* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015), p. 76.

13. The union of the Latin word, *ambi* (on either side), and the Greek word, *δηλος* (visible, manifest), forms the word *Ambideliious*.

14. A technique normally used in film studios: the movement of human actors is replicated on the digital copies that will substitute the actors on the screen.

Drawings (2012) are produced by connecting a variable number of sensors to the artist's body.¹⁵ These instruments follow the entire trajectory of a work session, and they translate it into spatial data. She writes: "Digital technology has allowed me to produce, automatically, charts, notations and diagrams that record information drawn directly from the body. Manifested as inkjet prints and tapestries, these are works that trace a body in the grip of a rhythm dictated by its own, unruly, desires."¹⁶

Consequently, what we see gathered on a single sheet are the traces of her unconscious behaviours and her posture, now translated into a graphic dimension. This sort of involuntary drawing shows us with absolute clarity how the artist's work is a practice that necessarily involves the body in its entirety. It actually gives the impression that one is looking at the result of collaboration between several elements, and not of a single subject at work. This sense of plurality bears a not coincidental resemblance to Étienne-Jules Marey's experiments with *cronophotography*.

In contrast to the studies of Eadweard Muybridge, who captured movement using a series of cameras arranged sequentially, Marey was able to capture several exposures of one subject on a single plate. In particular, in his first experiments, from the 1880s, white strips and circles signalled the models' limbs and joints, who for their part were hooded and entirely dressed in black. Photographed against a black background while running or jumping, the bodies of the models disappeared entirely, and were turned into synthetic, graphic forms that reached a level of geometric abstraction that anticipated the Futurist's reflections on speed and inspired Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912).

Both Marey's and Morris's research focus on the representation of kinetic movement that appears and impresses itself upon a sensible technology, like a lightning bolt in the night. But Morris's movements, unlike the Marey's running models, encompass not just an action, but contemplation as well. If we look carefully at *Motion Capture Drawing [ERSD]: View from Above* (2012), we notice how a thinner group of lines distance themselves from the work area of the wall, only to return to it later after a short and homogenous pause. This captures the artist stepping away from the wall to observe the results of her drawings. These lines represent a pause in the action, and without that, as the composition shows, the final result would not have been the same.

Morris's *Motion Capture Drawings* trace the posture of a body caught in the creative act, and in so doing, they create an involuntary drawing that cannot but remind us of the signs traced by a spider with its web:

15. On her hands, feet, knees, hips, elbows, forehead, and between the shoulder blades.

16. Susan Morris, "Drawing in the Dark", in *Tate Papers* no. 18 (Fall 2012). Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/18/drawing-in-the-dark>.

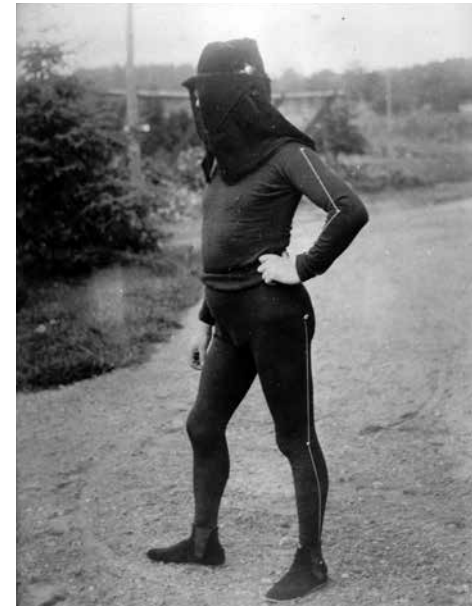


fig. 8

Étienne-Jules Marey, *Demeny portant le costume noir à lignes et points blancs* (1883)
black and white print, 24 cm x 18,1 cm

fig. 8

fig. 9



fig. 9

Susan Morris' *Motion Capture Drawing* in progress,
Culture Lab, University of Newcastle

the expression of a necessity that is physical and biological, certainly, but also aesthetic, as the Argentinian artist Tomás Saraceno has shown us numerous times with his series *Hybrid Webs* (started in 2012).

Likewise, this narrative of the limbs is at the centre of Yasmine Hugonnet's research. In *La ronde/quatuor* (2016), four figures construct a circular and never inert space with their bodies. They continue to share, slowly, a precise set of movements – the basis for their gestural alphabet. Although Hugonnet orchestrated the choreography down to the smallest details, its genesis is in fact the direct result of the exchange of postures transmitted among the four dancers. A calm and calculated translation of unconscious bodily gestures that, bound together in a dynamic and interdependent system, allows for the emergence of an empathetic dance. It's not a simple imposition of figures, but an active dialogue based on the capacity to hear raw matter itself, and allow it to be the choreography's organic guide. Hugonnet writes:

“The movement is always there, in the body, its postures, in the mind, in the ways I focus my attention. [...] Even when the body is an apparently immobile state, the only thing visible is a lack of obvious movement, many other movements and changes continue inside my body. [...] A posture is for me a starting point, an inventory-taking, a promise, acting as a reservoir of shapes and content to be visited: potential figures, affects, fantasies, invisible and visible movements. Based on a given posture, I can read the potential moment and the psychic or physical intentions already at work in the body, in the daydreams it offers me.”¹⁷

Our presence in the world is the result of an endless negotiation between rational thought and intuitive consciousness. Rationality takes into consideration how things should be, while intuition shows us how things could become. The latter power can be seen as a critical instrument to limit our adherence to expectations, whether personal or external. A mental resource to free oneself and follow one's metabolism, understood as a different learning system. In this sense, performative arts are capable of showing the importance of physical intuition in the creative process, since they stage a constant negotiation between mind and body, control and relaxation, script and improvisation. “It is a state of premonitory daydreaming; you intuit the pre-movements of your movement, and you take the time to choose resisting it or giving in to it. The creative act is just there.”¹⁸

The writing of the mind

Ideas are not born only in our mind; they are born but in our body as well. Unlike such metaphorical terms as “enlightenment” or “inspiration” – which link the birth of new concepts to the contribution of an external



fig. 10

Yasmine Hugonnet, *La ronde / quatuor* (2016)
Choreography

17. Yasmine Hugonnet in conversation with Mathieu Bouvier, “Awareness through the Chasms”, in *watt*, no. 1 (January 2017), pp. 62-3.

18. Hugonnet in conversation with Mathieu Bouvier, p. 67.

agent like light and air – intuition locates this phenomenon directly inside our organism. The etymology¹⁹ of the word underlines how this particular mental event is born from the capacity to listen to one’s self through what Kant already called an *inner sense*.²⁰ Normally, we individuate the mind or the brain as the site for these events, but if “the heart has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing”,²¹ then it, too, will have its intuitions and desires. And the same holds for our eyes, our skin, our muscles, our motor apparatus, and our entire nervous system.

fig. 11

In Valencia, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) was able to observe, using a microscope, a selected field of grey matter, carefully coloured with a ferrous solution. With this innovative method, this Spanish doctor was able to follow the arborisations of nervous cells with a definition never seen till then. At that moment, the scientist found himself face to face with the neuronal basis of consciousness, and this well before this was given the name “neurons”²² or, as Cajal called them, “butterflies of the soul”.

“Against a clear background stood black threadlets, some slender and smooth, some thick and thorny, in a pattern punctuated by small dense spots, stellate or fusiform. All was sharp as a sketch with Chinese ink and transparent Japanese paper. And to think that that was the same tissue which when stained with carmine or logwood left the eye in a tangled thicket where sight may stare and grope for ever fruitlessly, baffled in its effort to unravel confusion and lost for ever in a twilight doubt. Here, on the contrary, all was clear and plain as a diagram. Dumbfounded, I could not take my eye from the microscope.”²³

Following this first encounter, Cajal turned to instruments and skills he had acquired in his youth, drawing and painting, to document and share the result of his explorations. Like an expert cartographer, he started to trace the confines and to describe the geography of the landscapes that he visited every day in his lab.

Cajal first succeeded in looking at these arborisations using the method developed by Camillo Golgi,²⁴ and he proceeded thenceforth to improve and refine the definition of his observations. He succeeded in making such highly detailed depictions that he changed our very idea of the brain, which had till then been described as a reticulum of continuous cells. Cajal showed instead, with the evidence of his studies, that the relation between nervous cells is not continuous but contiguous: nervous cells exchange information through pre-determined pathways, specifying their specific functions

19. From the Latin *intuēri*, which literally means to “observe” or “look within”.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 53. “Inner sense is not pure apperception, a consciousness of what man *does*, since that belongs to the faculty of thinking. Rather, it is a consciousness of what he *undergoes*, in so far as he is affected by the play of his own thoughts. It rests on inner intuition...”

21. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1996), frag. 423.

22. The name was proposed by Heinrich Wilhelm Waldeyer in 1891.

23. Cajal, cited in Charles Scott Sherrington, “Santiago Ramón y Cajal. 1852-1934”, in *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. 1, n. 4, December 1935, p. 430.

24. Italian histologist (1843-1926) with whom Cajal later shared the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1906. His method, known as *black reaction*, relied on the ability that silver nitrate has to reveal single neurons by staining brain tissue.

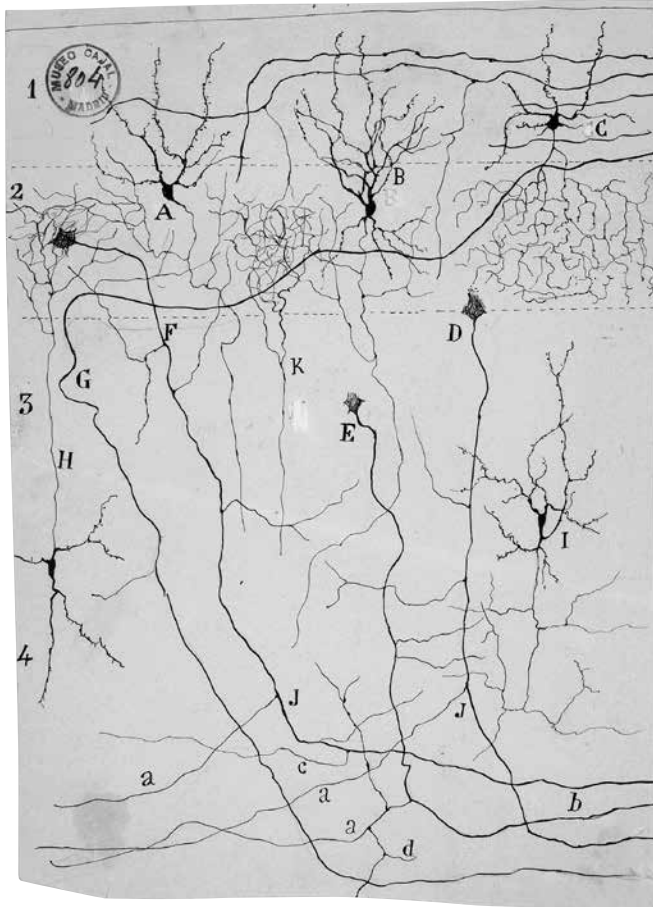


fig. 11

Santiago Ramón y Cajal, *cross section of the olfactory temporal cortex*
China ink on paper, 216 × 155 mm



fig. 12

Mariano Fortuny, *Device for clouds' projection* (ca. 1905)
gelatin dry plate, 18 × 24 cm



fig. 13

Mariano Fortuny,
Stage model for the Fourth Scene of Richard Wagner's The Rheingold,
applied to the Bayreuth's theater model (after 1903)
celluloid film, 4,5 × 6 cm



fig. 14

Elena Mazzi, *Fracture (s)* (2016)
print on Pescia cotton paper from photoengraving matrix with lava dust
and calcographic ink, 46, 4 × 69,7 cm

and communicating through points of contact that only later came to be called synapses – the term was officially coined by Charles Scott Sherrington in 1897.²⁵ Notably, the English scientist wrote in a detailed and heartfelt obituary to honour Cajal, that the Spanish doctor “had, indeed, reshaped our knowledge of the cellular architecture of the nervous system”.²⁶

To capture the sensation of visual and diagrammatic distinctness, Cajal let ink itself define the details of these fascinating elements. His drawings, with their synthetic traces, continue to this day to stimulate, in the mind of anyone who looks at them, the possibility of a direct and intuitive awareness of our brain’s functions. His drawings are defined by a value at once epistemic and aesthetic, and they show how art and science are both expressions of the self-same desire for knowledge. “It is an actual fact that, leaving aside the flatteries of self-love, the garden of neurology holds out to the investigator captivating spectacles and incomparable artistic emotions. In it, my aesthetic instincts found full satisfaction at last. Like the entomologist in pursuit of brightly coloured butterflies, my attention hunted, in the flower garden of the grey matter, cells with delicate and elegant forms, the mysterious butterflies of the soul, the beating of whose wings may some day – who knows? – clarify the secret of mental life.”²⁷

Cajal’s drawings show us how our body and mind are part of the same complex organism, in which idea and matter are joined in a same dynamic whole. “The current opinion shared by most neurobiologists today,” writes Edoardo Boncinelli, “is that what I am at this moment – with my inclinations, idiosyncrasies, memories, and aspirations – coincides with the total architecture of my cerebral, and above all cortical, synapses.”²⁸ Intuition is the spark that generates the creative path, the moment when mind and body effortlessly reveal their entanglement. It is a shaping moment. It shapes our mind, defines our beliefs, our truths and, inevitably, it shapes who we are, or could be.

This action, be it material or immaterial, transforms and sorts the structure of our brain into a stream of electric possibilities. “We are, then, in every moment, the totality of our millions of billions of synaptic contacts.”²⁹

The writing of light

The ability to reap and represent the complexity of nature is one of the foundations of visual arts. The system for projecting clouds created by Mariano Fortuny to enrich theatre sets is only one example of this synthetic capacity.

25. From the Greek συνάπτω: “to connect, unite, adjoin”.

26. Sherrington, ‘Santiago Ramón y Cajal. 1852-1934’, p.433.

27. Santiago Ramón y Cajal, *Recollections of My Life*, trans. E. Horne Craigie and Juan Cano (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1989), p.362-363.

28. Boncinelli, *Come nascono le idee*, p.54.

29. Boncinelli, *Come nascono le idee*, p.54.

fig. 12

A mirroring surface is painting with fast, and functional, brushstrokes that are nevertheless charged with their own sensitivity. On the mirrors, sparse groups of clouds are already in movement, waiting to be illuminated. These painted surfaces, mounted onto an adjustable support, were ready to receive and reflect light from a spot placed behind the theatre scenes. Thus, they were transformed into clouds made of pure light, images that could thenceforth be adapted to any theatrical need.

fig. 13

Fortuny had already studied this natural subject on various occasions but, through these small sculptures, he managed to inscribe it in a new dimension, at once pictorial and photographic, architectonic and theatrical. The projection of these clouds – composed of light and pigment – pays tribute to the randomness of natural drawing with their unpredictable transparencies. The final images that the spectators could observe in the theatre scenes were not actually fully controllable in the pictorial act, since the clouds were painted in negative. Knowing how to accept the contribution of randomness as a gift inside one's own compositions is an expression of modernity, of the acceptance of nature's ability to write itself.

Every substance, Aristotle argues, is generated in four modes: “artificially, naturally, fortuitously, and spontaneously”.³⁰ The intuitions can appear as a vision that leads instantaneously to an unpredictable conclusion; as an experimental strategy born out of experience and instinct; and, lastly, as the final touch, the missing link in our unfinished equation: we start moulding our sculpture in clay, proceeding through trial and error, but then, just before we fire it in the oven, the intuition arrives as the final touch that gives sense to the entire composition. It wasn't calculated, at least not consciously, but without it the work would not have had any reason to exist. It works in non-linear fashion; cause is anticipated by effect.

In the experimental sciences, intuitions are more operative in the conception of a fruitful experiment design than immediate search for an exact solution. In retrospect, it could be defined as the unconscious prefiguration, or as the premonition, of the answer yielded by the best arrangement of the factors behind the question. The same arrangement is applicable as well to all of the “experimental” arts, in sum, to any and every research that puts reality to the test without possessing an answer a priori. As Herbert Molderings writes, it is not the object that counts, but the experiment.

fig. 14

Elena Mazzi's *Fracture(s)* (2016) are likewise an example of an aesthetic experiment. The series explores the natural randomness in the dynamic morphogenesis of lava on the slopes of Mount Etna. Because

30. ἢ γὰρ τέκνη ἢ φύσει γίγνεται ἢ τύχῃ τῶ αὐτομάτῳ (*Metaphysics*, 1070a 6-7). In fact, Aristotle distinguishes between αὐτομάτων (“that which happens of its own accord”, “spontaneously” or “automatically”) and τύχῃ (“fortune”, “luck”, “destiny”), reserving one to when he speaks about causes that refer to natural events, and the other to human beings.

of its frequent eruptions, the Sicilian volcano continuously alters its surrounding landscape, always stratifying new layers that crack in accordance with a chaotic and complex behaviour.

The aesthetic analysis of this “lava-syntax” produces a series of matrices engraved from the photographs of these unpredictable fractures. They are an example of chaos theory applied to inorganic behaviours. These engravings restore the material presence of the subjects themselves. The matrices have in fact produced a series of prints that use lava powder, which, when combined with calcographic inks, produce images that can exist in the absence of any figurative obligation.

Nature’s ability to represent itself through the intuition of artists is the motivation behind the birth of photography. William Henry Fox Talbot, not surprisingly, defines photography as “the pencil of nature”, an expression he uses to describe his “photogenic drawings”, that is, his first experiments that reproduce a given subject mechanically, using nothing more than light and silver chloride: “They are impressed by Nature’s hand; and what they want as yet of delicacy and finish of execution arises chiefly from our want of sufficient knowledge of her laws.”³¹

Nature’s capacity for self-representation has been put to the test of photographic experiments close to the Surrealists, who tried to develop this internal potentiality into new visual imaginaries. I am referring, in particular, to the first “chemigrams”,³² photographs that, even though they use the same pencil as Talbot, depend only on the reactions internal to the paper, the acids, and the light to give body to a new automatic drawing.³³ Freed from any obligation to its subject, Raoul Ubac’s *Photo relevée* (1939-40), for example, presents itself in its “natural” state as a chemical reaction and shows, with no inhibition, the physical unconscious of photography.

In his series *Tempo (Memoria e Materia)* from 2017, the Italian artist Renato Leotta directs the same tendency for self-representation towards new poetic dimensions. To give form to the aesthetic intuitions of nature, the artist, equipped with photosensitive paper, immersed himself in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Leotta writes this on the margins of the description of his project:

“I imagined the sea as a large dark room and the moon as an enlarger whose increasing and decreasing phases determines the flow of light that impartially operate and enlighten us and everything that surrounds us. Light collects on the surface of the paper submerged in the seawater; filtered by wind and by the undulations of the sea, the light records a picture of the water surface at a given period of time. What we perceive with our naked eyes as a sequence of lines and twines rushing on the sea floor is now secure on the picture plane.”



fig. 15

Renato Leotta, *Documentazione, Praiola* (2017)
digital photograph

31. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1844), p. 1.

32. Artist Pierre Cordier coined the term on 15 March 1963, and he used it to define a photographic technique based solely on the reaction between a photosensitive emulsion and the chemical baths.

33. Not surprisingly, Breton also defined writing as a “veritable photography of thought”. See Breton, “Max Ernst”, in *The Lost Steps*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press), p. 60.

fig. 15

By exploiting the chemical-physical properties at the basis of the photographic process, Leotta succeeds in arresting the time and space that surrounds the shallow waters of the sea's basin. Time, visible in the projection of the ripples of water on the paper, and accentuated by the glare from the light of the moon, allows the artist to register the unconscious movements of this silent nature, resting at night, but still capable of painting itself as it sleeps. Space too, like time, has been frozen in this material memory of silver nitrate. The rotational axes of the Earth and Moon, responsible in part for the movements that modulated the image on the paper, were quickly slowed down until they crystallised in Leotta's photographs. These pictorial objects take us under the moving surface of terrestrial water and elevate our mental gaze, through an imaginary elevator, to the faraway moon, whose phases have become the aperture of our natural enlarger. Time and water, paper and salt, light and gravity are the actors who have staged, unconsciously, the representation of this poetic experiment in black-and-white.

Using the same indexical property of photography, the sculptor Nicola Martini recreates an environmental intervention capable of giving voice to the unconscious layers of the Palazzo Fortuny, soaking the walls of one room with bitumen of Judea (*Untitled*, 2017). When exposed to light, this photosensitive asphalt hardens and becomes insoluble, fading into and penetrating its support.³⁴ Martini has cultivated in his practice the ability to listen to the behaviour of his materials. He leaves to the physical properties of bitumen the task of revealing the invisible drawings hidden inside the exhibition surfaces. Once in contact with the museum walls, this material brings into view each and every trace of the preceding shows: past interventions become visible once more and compose a portrait, in negative, of the work processes undertaken in that same space, awakening the sensibilities that have passed through them in the past.

34. In the 1820s, Joseph-Nicéphore Niepce used it in fact to produce the first photographic positive prints on pewter, which he called *heliographs*.

The writing of stones

fig. 16

A blurry landscape appears in the first images of Giovanni Giaretta's video, *A Thing Among Things* (2015). Clouds loaded with sand cover an invisible horizon, and these alternate slowly with clearer skies and more delicate colours. However, a careful change of focus interrupts the illusion of this changing landscape. Slowly, this silent vision shows itself as the result of an extreme close-up of the internal drawings of a crystal. For the artist, these immobile objects become a background for the narrative of blind people trying to recover their last visual memories. The exploration of these blurry patterns becomes the means to stage the

attempt to focus on what can no longer be seen. Even though we know that we are looking at the internal drawings of stones, we continue our efforts to read into and project meaning onto these inanimate objects. We remain on the lookout for the “hidden evidence” and “improbable truths” lurking in the interstice created by the artist between narrative and matter.³⁵

“A molecular frenzy at that point takes control of inert matter, shakes it, galvanises it. Despite a generalised inertia [...], such trepidation can yield the amorphousness of prisms and to the light of crystals, or the rigorous and furtive hyperbole of silica’.³⁶ The molecular syntax that constitutes the silent language of stones attracts our attention because of its own mineral alphabet. ‘The periodic vibrations provoke, or accentuate, a hypnosis, a submission that affects the inanimate just as much as the living.’³⁷

The practice of regarding stones as active objects capable of awakening the imagination had already been recognised in antiquity. In China, it was common to decorate desks with *scholar’s stones*: irregular rock formations selected for their ability to stimulate thought and imagination. And, still in China, the ability to recognise possible forms in the involuntary drawings of marble surfaces was regarded as an exercise comparable to every other aesthetic expression. These *dream stones* became real artworks signed by the artist, solely on the action of selecting and giving it a title. And this long before the readymade or the *objet trouvé* had been “invented”.³⁸

fig. 17

In a similar fashion we see the spread, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy, in Tuscany especially, of the practice of *paesine*: stones whose surfaces seemed painted with of a forested or rocky landscape. Their discovery stimulated the wonder and imagination of artists, who sometimes used these images as the background upon which to represent characters, stories, or religious episodes, thus completing the natural drawing with their own painting.

The study of this natural alphabet occupied the French intellectual Roger Caillois for at least thirty years of his life. His reading of stones tells us a new and important element of the intuitive process. We are not neutral observers separated from the external world. Our intuitions are not born with a dynamic relation to the environment that surrounds us. The interaction between objects, beings, and events continue to modify our perception of reality. In point of fact, Caillois says that “imagination is nothing more than a prolongation of matter”, since the latter, with its innovations, anticipates the course of our thoughts. For Caillois, mind and matter “find themselves intertwined in an immense labyrinth that

35. See Roger Caillois, *Le champ des signes. Récurrences dérobées* (Paris: Hermann, 1978), p. 36.

36. Caillois, *Le champ des signes*, p. 57-8.

37. Caillois, *Le champ des signes*, p. 52.

38. See Roger Caillois, *Malversations* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1993), pp. 43-8.



fig. 16

Giovanni Giaretta, Still from *A thing among things* (2015)
Video Full HD, 7'13"



fig. 17

Tuscan school, Landscape with figures (XVII century)
Oil on *paesina* stone

encompasses the entire universe, including the ghosts of an infirm mind”.³⁹ Our thoughts are part of this world just as much as the atoms of which our neurons are composed. The possible interpretations of each natural event, always caught between the fortuitous and the necessary, are at the basis of the Surrealist reading of reality: the search for that “convulsive beauty”⁴⁰ that Caillois always defined as “intimate”, “intrinsic, infallible, immediate”, and as “answerable to no one”.⁴¹

The writing of the other

“Je est un autre”.
– Arthur Rimbaud, 1871

Our identity, seemingly stable and continuous, is constantly redefined by the writing of our thought, by the graphism of the environment that surrounds us and by the matter that constitutes us. The stability we perceive is the result of the filtering process that our brains are constantly performing, resizing and shaping reality through the language of our senses and the psycho-physical structure of our body.

In this sense, intuition allows us to see beyond this predetermined structure, to step out of the limits we have learned to live within. It introduces a fundamental tool: the critical capacity to stop the writing of reality and to re-elaborate it towards new possibilities.

The necessary is that which doesn’t stop writing itself, as Lacan explains in one of his seminars.⁴² Intuition allows us to discern, within the automatic text of the real, either what is really necessary, or what we can grab onto so as to negotiate the tide of randomness, whether human or not.

“For I”, Rimbaud writes in the *Letter of the Seer*, “is someone else”. We are written from external events while we write ourselves. Our subjectivity is the fruit of multiple factors that, in the best of cases, play a part in drafting our identity code. In this sense, *I* is simultaneously oneself⁴³ and another.

The other is the doubling of the conscious self, split between thought and action. The other is the dancing body that forgets its borders. The other is both Alighiero and Boetti. It is in our hands, in our neurons. It is the matter where we swim, the invisible that we dream.

The distance we manage to introduce between us and the flux of events – be they internal or material – between us and our thoughts, us and the *other*, is what allows intuition to emerge from this rupture. In that gap in consciousness

39. Caillois, *Malversations*, pp. 59 & 60, respectively.

40. André Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 10.

41. Roger Caillois, *The Writing of Stones*, trans. Barbara Brey (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985), p. 2.

42. In the original: “ce qui ne cesse pas de s’écrire”. See Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, Seminar XX, trans. Bruce Fink (New York City, NY and London: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 59. Marcel Duchamp appeared here and there in the course of this text due to his more or less indirect relation to the works discussed. He can be considered as one of the first contemporary artists to have really

made visible the automatic writing of the real, going so far as to render explicit, with his readymade, examples of our collective unconscious. This predisposition can be found as well in the photographic experiments he made in collaboration with Man Ray, in which invisible drawings were born, for example, from the writing of dust (*Dust Breeding*, 1920).

43. But also no one and thousands.

between action and contemplation we are able to see our double, ourselves split between the one who dictates the action and the one who produces it, between the voice of the Socratic *daimon* and the performative application of such intuition.⁴⁴ This activity is not limited to great discoveries or epiphanies, but defines as well our everyday thinking as qualitative, critical, and poetic. A thought that is not separate from sensation, in which intuition and reason succeed in reconciling what we *read* with what has not yet been written. “The ability to act, or to refrain from acting, is secondary to the ability or inability to feel.”⁴⁵ The negotiation between rational and intuitive mind provides the necessary basis for constructing a ritual in order to be able to create.

Intuition is that instant of consciousness in which art discloses itself as a completely human process, and it is also, at the same time, the moment where art begins to transcend the human and to create bonds with the world in order to propagate ideas within our shared environment. Artists face the world that surrounds them in order to reverberate their intuitions into reality. The process of projecting the mental onto the material is something that, in other cultures, might be called “magic”, at least if we define that as the ability to change our reality solely through force of will. This open description can be applied, without any friction or supernatural implications, to any and every artistic work. The projection of one’s intuitions onto matter is a natural instinct, and it is also the instrument with which we delineate both our physical and symbolic universe.

The necessary emerges in this union.

44. See Pascal Rousseau, ‘Under the Influence: Hypnosis as a New Medium’, in *dOCUMENTA (13), Catalog 1/3, The Book of Books* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), pp. 515-517.

45. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Dell Publishing/Delta, 1967), p. 82.



LOOKING INSIDE ONESELF THROUGH THE EYE OF THE MIND

Etymology-wise, intuition comes from the Latin verb *intuèri*, which means *to stare*, but also *to look inside*. Now, *looking inside* cannot be done through one's eyes, therefore its meaning is clearly oriented towards the unknown: intuition is the art of looking inside oneself through the eye of the mind. Hence, intuition goes hand in hand with music, i.e., the art with the most transcendental use of senses. Nothing is more internal than music, and no music is more contemplative, profound, and *intuitive* than Gesualdo da Venosa's, who miraculously concocted harmonic geometries and significances from the restless inner world of humans. Rigour and unpredictability coexist within intuition: just like shadows were the first unintentional forms of painting that we know of, intuition was the first actual form of knowledge (fuelled for centuries by more shadows and the relative intuitions necessary to reveal them).

Basically, intuition is the intangible part of knowledge, just like a soul to its body. Besides, geometrical correspondences (such as music) are always met with the need for a new intuition, in a never-ending process. Think of the process of knowledge or sentimental evolution: it runs through information, will, and ability, (and the countless other categories of the relation between the individual and the whole) relentlessly searching for significance into its own individuality and destiny.

Gesualdo da Venosa's responsory goes, *Tristis est anima mea* [My soul is sad], thereby relating emotionality and logic. The ability to bring together such extremes lies – once again – in the extraordinary, sometimes alienating power of *intuère*.

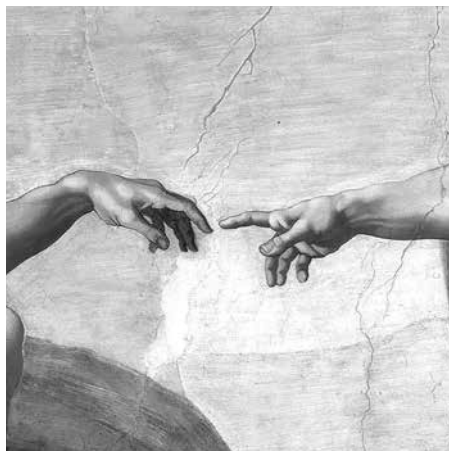
Besides being what livens up Gesualdo da Venosa's music, the voice is the only human element capable of disembodiment, which makes it a full-fledged counterpart of the soul. Its vibration, though, is perceptible; a voice-revealed soul can be sensed by the body. It therefore interrupts the metaphysical contemplation of the above-mentioned primordial shadow, (which, unintentional and backlit, generated a first, primitive sentiment of self-perception within humans) and becomes conscience, i.e., the very pillar of human evolution and the very core of all human contradictions. In fact, conscience is nothing but the shadow of one's soul (absolutely similar to that primordial shadow humans inferred their tangible form from). Now, as in Gesualdo's music, logic subsumes flairs of creativity in a perfect symmetry; the only way to thoroughly understand the question is a new intuition.

The cycle never ends: intuition pulsates, like a heart, like breathing.

Tristis est anima mea, in its solitude and its ability to lift upon contingency and flee the weight of logical thinking through the levity of dreams, intuition powerfully gathers the ultimate meaning of life.

The last shadow to be glimpsed is death, looking into which is in fact fatal; it should not frighten us, though. On the contrary, it should encourage the cult of beauty and perfection as they contain us all, although no reason can thoroughly embrace them. And, once more, intuition is what directs us to perfection. Intuition is, at the same time, a sparkle and shadow of the soul in a wonderful play that won't make us immortal, but can still make us full-fledged parts of the Infinite.





THE LEAP AND PARADOXICAL SPACE OF INTUITIVE CREATION AND IMAGINATION IN RELIGIOUS AND MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

From times immemorial, people have sensed that the aesthetic impulse – as an intuition/inspiration/animation, i.e., not as a performing action – does not “take place”. We cannot assign a *locus* to this impulse. Whenever people wanted to refer to this “non-place”, they saw it as an in-between, a border zone, a transition.

Interstitium: space in-between, hiatus, crossing, leap, finding: the paradoxical state in which creative energy is released and lends shape to that which is so strongly desired/feared, but which is also beyond words. In its most powerful shape, this almost unspeakable thing appears as an epiphany of the *Sublime*, the aesthetic category that refers to the almost unbearable, the more-than-beautiful on the border of the trauma. The tension in this in-between space, a tension that cannot/must not be cancelled – *noli me tangere* – is a tension that has to do with the *transition-at-the-border* zone. The in-between space does not exist, yet it is there. From a logical and logicist point of view this is nonsense. Yet in the most diverse cultures, it has been considered an absolutely crucial “space” (or non-space).

In Western figurative painting, Michelangelo’s famous fresco in the Sistine Chapel is perhaps the most moving in evoking this in-between space. God reaches out his hand to the still half-reclining Adam, who weakly reaches out with his hand. He is still an inanimate body, but the near-touch will blow the energy of life and soul in him. Michelangelo preferred to leave some distance between the divine and the human finger. The spark, the vivification, turns into the suspense of an indivisible

moment, and in a “void”, a non-space between the two. The fact that this fragment of Michelangelo’s huge fresco is so often depicted, points to its being sensed as the main element, the essence of the entire fresco.

In Christian art, there is yet another theme in which the essence is a near touching, an in-between space: *noli me tangere*, literally “be so good as not to touch me”.¹ The theme refers to Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the resurrected Jesus. She is lamenting at the empty grave and notices two angels, whom she asks whether they have taken Jesus away. “Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus” (John 20:14), like we do not recognise someone in a situation in which we consider it absolutely impossible to meet this person. In the text, it is not mentioned that Mary turns away after this non-recognising, but that is what must have happened, as can be deduced from what comes next. For in the Gospel we read, “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said to him in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means “my Master””) (John 20:16). Jesus then gently stops her. In Christian art, this moment has been depicted countless times as a near touching. Mary Magdalene then reaches out to Jesus, who gently repels her by, for example, holding up a hand in her direction. The urge to touch is accompanied by an intuitive recognition, “Rabboni!” The mystical and physical *coming near* does not involve appropriation: it is a *loving* movement toward, in an in-between space between both. Especially amongst women in convents and *beguinages*, this subject was immensely popular:² the spark, the loving, “unreserved” surrender, even without physical touch. This is the “leap”, the deep contact without identifiable links.

In former times in the Tunisian countryside, female attire was comprised of a shawl, called *bakhnoug*. It was made with a fabric into which the women weaved very fine motifs with a sometimes particularly complex meaning. One of these looked like two angles pointing at each other in a near-touch – like the fingers in Michelangelo’s fresco, or in *noli me tangere* scenes. For some fabrics, such as the *ta’jira* from Ghomrassen (South Tunisia), this was the main motif shaping the composition. In this instance, the void between the points was the heart of the fabric. The motif was called *khaleila*, literally “little needle”, “the angle where one can find something from both directions”, as the women who weaved the fabric in Gabes told me in 1991. The term is related to the verb *khalla*, which means “fixing something with a pin”, but also “doing something special”

1. Barbara Baert, ‘Do Not Hold on to Me’ or the Gaze in the Garden: Body and Embodiment in *Noli Me Tangere* (John 20:17), in Ead., *Interspaces Between Word, Gaze and Touch. The Bible and the Visual Medium in the Middle Ages*, (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2011), p.11-33. Also: Barbara Baert, *The Touch with the Gaze. Noli Me Tangere and the Iconic Space*, s.l., 2012.

2. Hooglied. *De beeldwereld van vrouwelijke religieuzen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden vanaf de 13^e eeuw* (translated: The Song of Songs. The visual world of religious women in the Southern Netherlands from the 13th century), Society for Exhibitions, Palace of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium, 1994. Exhibition catalogue: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1994.

(which has to do with the specific insertion of the pin), or “penetrating something”, or “conceiving something mentally”. But the term also refers to “entering somewhere to find something” and to innerness. *Khalal* or *khilal* is the in-between space, the interval, the deepest interior of a home, and the pin (which penetrates something to fix things together, without claiming any appreciable space for itself). The concept points to innerness, a penetration, a suture, and a *hiatus that links*. It was said that in this non-space “something can be found” – paradoxically from both sides. It is a movement towards a non-space inside, in which things can be found.

I. Creative Potential in the In-Between Space in Monotheistic Traditions

In various religions, this in-between that boosts the creative powers has been considered a crucial movement. Indeed, it relates more to movement than to space or time: it is a dynamic, processional energy, longed for but not enforceable, and creative, but not subject to reason. In Judaism, it is called *shekhina*; in Christendom it is called the Holy Spirit; in Islam it is the *barzakh*. But this *location-less* potential is also at the heart of religions and worldviews from the Far East.

A. *Shekhina* in Judaism

One of the meanings of the Hebrew word *Shekhina*, is “presence”.³ The concept refers to the “(female) presence” of God and to his revelation in the secular. But, it also refers to the intuitive sense of someone’s presence.

The concept of *Shekhina* is first mentioned in the *Targum Onkelos*, which was written around the start of our calendar.⁴ It preferably “dwells” in the tabernacle: it is “larger than the world”, but it can also be present in a minimal space. The *Sefer HaBahir*, a mystical text that saw the light in Provence around 1180, tells us that the *Shekhina* is not an essence that exists by itself. Israel always carries the divine presence with it, even in exile. *Shekhina* is, as it were, the *threshold* to or the *path* toward the divine reality of the *sephirot*.⁵

Every Sabbath, the divine presence among the people (*Shekhina*) is celebrated in the song *L’cha Dodi* (written by rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, 1505-1567, a Moroccan-Jewish cabalist). The song tells the story of a female presence through the “bride” who enters the synagogue.⁶ She comes from the west (Maghrebi Jews also call her *El Ghriba*, which means “she from the west”) and is heading east (Jerusalem), thus entering a more “masculine” world. There she stays while

3. E. Wilner, *Shekhinah*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Michael Lodahl, *Shekinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

4. See *The Shekhinah. I. The Menorah, Temple, Bride of Messiah*, in www.yashanet.com, with many texts from the Soncino Zohar.

5. J. Laenen, *Foodse mystiek. Een inleiding*, (Tielt, Belgium: Lannoo, 1998), p. 94.

6. J. Toledano, *Les Juifs maghrébins*, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1989), p. 180.

the community prays, and she leaves when the community separates. For a week, the “bride” remains “outside”; she is “exiled”. Her power is felt the strongest on the day of the Sabbath, when the community is intensely united in the temple and at home.

Many consider the *Shekhina*, as the female side of the divine presence or manifestation, a spark of divine energy that interacts with the creation.⁷ The *Shekhina* is God’s dimension that is able to dwell among the people, and that sometimes can be perceived with the senses. Therefore, after the Jewish exodus from Egypt, a tabernacle was built for her, where she could “dwell”. “That day something descended upon us that seemed to have never existed before since the beginning of the world. From the Creation to this day, the *Shekhina* had never dwelt among the lower creatures. But the moment we had made the tabernacle, it dwelt there”, as numerous Talmudic texts from the first to the third century of our calendar relate. After the Diaspora, the *Shekhina* remained among the Jewish people to comfort it and to support it.⁸

Gradually a character of her own was ascribed to her – especially compassion and mercy came to be considered her attributes. Thus, the severity of God was mitigated. Especially since the Diaspora, the *Shekhina* was called upon for motherly comfort and support – a role comparable with that of the Holy Virgin in Christianity. More particularly, since the medieval-mystical tradition of the Zohar, the *Shekhina* is referred to with female tropes such as “queen”, “orchard”, “moon”, “rainbow”, and “mother” (*metronit*). In the Zohar, there are for that matter also references to other hypostases of God’s femininity, such as the *Bina* and the *Imma*. *Shekhina* is the radiant *shabbath hamalka*, God’s bride as it were; she “appears” when every Jewish woman lights the Sabbath candles.

At the sensory level, *Shekhina* is associated with the tinkling sound of a bell. The *Shekhina* is like a spark, a transfer of divine energy that allows the deity to interact with the creation and humankind. The *Shekhina* is the (in)-tangible presence of God among humans, a presence from which originates all that is ethically good and creative.

With roots in the Jewish tradition, but also participating in “Western” traditions, for a quarter of a century Bracha Ettinger has made fundamental contributions to rethinking/commemorating the creative moment as “*metramorphosis*”.

B. *The Holy Spirit in Christianity*

A Christian who seeks to realise the Good and the Beautiful is “inspired” (breathed into) by the Holy Spirit. The nature of this Holy

7. Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, (New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1991); see also: Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, (New York City, NY: KATV Publishing House and Avon Books, 1978).

8. Berachot 6a; Megillah 29a; Sanhedrin 39a; Shabbat 12b; Yoma 56b.

Spirit has been the subject of countless reflections since the dawn of Christianity. Already in the embryonic stage⁹ of Christianity, the actions of the Spirit were essential: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:1-4). It was this *being-filled-with-the-Spirit* that made them speak languages they did not know, made them cast prophecies, heal. The Apostles themselves did not understand what happened, but they felt that their “source” had a different origin, that an unfathomable reality transformed them.

Yet, from early Christianity (in particular from the 3rd and 4th centuries onwards), a legalistic urge to define matters was translated into dogmas and incontestable doctrines. By its own account, the Church resorted to this because it worried about the rampant Christian “heresies” and sects. This urge for theological security manifested itself all the more with regard to issues that were considered crucial, such as the concept of the Holy Trinity. This issue resulted in rivers of ink being spilt since early Christian times.¹⁰ Entire libraries were written about how the three divine “persons” relate to one another.¹¹ It was, for that matter, the conflict regarding the “place” of the Holy Spirit that resulted in the schism between the Western and Eastern (“orthodox”, i.e., “having the right doctrine”) Church. In 1437, in their final debate concerning the matter, the “Latins” and the “Greeks” confronted each other in the monastery of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. For the Western Church, the Spirit proceeds from (the so-called *processio*) the Father *and* the Son (*ex utroque*, “from both”); for the Eastern scholars, the Spirit proceeds solely from the Father.¹² For the Western Church, the Spirit proceeds from both, not by “generation” but by “spiration” (cf. *spiritus*, literally “breathing”, “blowing”).

The Spirit is essentially a mediator, an in-between force that offers mercy and wisdom, as well as forces and faculties, which serves the faith. The Spirit provides two sorts of gifts. The first category consecrates souls and individuals. For a full list of the category, theologians usually refer to Isaiah 21:2-3. The second category confers *charismata* that benefit others: the ability to speak wisely (*sermo sapientiae*), to speak with knowledge (*sermo scientiae*, for example with regard to the mysteries of the faith), as well as faith itself, the gifts of

9. Michael Ramsey, *Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977). David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, (Scottsdale, AZ: Herald, 1983).

10. Stanley Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).

11. Esther Schandorff, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: A Bibliography Showing its Chronological Development*, (*ATLA Bibliography Series*, 28), 1995 (1296 pp.).

12. Stanley Burgess, *The Holy Spirit*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989).

healing and realising miracles, casting prophecies, spiritual discernment, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of the word. But, above all, the Holy Spirit effectuates that which raises humans, the unspeakable good, the loving inspiration. Therefore: “(...) every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matthew 12:31). Finding pleasure in evil, in deliberate destruction, fighting the loving inspiration, refusing repentance – these are sins against the Spirit.

Despite countless dogmatic attempts to define the identity of the three “divine persons”, the Spirit remained fluid, defying any definition.¹³ As the Spirit is actually a dynamic in-between, He is both indefinable and *im-personalisable*. The Spirit moves in-between, between the “persons” of the Trinity, and between God and humans.¹⁴ The Spirit is present at the time of the Creation: “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). He is the life-giving principle, the breath of God.¹⁵

Of course the Holy Spirit is a religious concept, but it is also a fundamental anthropological concept: a central, but culturally almost ineffable category. Since the events on Whitsun, the impact of the Holy Spirit is a key moment in early Christianity: the in-spir-ation, the ek-stasis, not as a goal in itself, but as a potential. In the two thousand years Christianity has existed, the “construal” of the concept of the Holy Spirit has led to sheer endless disputes. The Spirit, as such, is an in-between category, fundamentally creative, dynamic, process-oriented, to a certain extent comparable to the Eastern concept of *Tao*,¹⁶ and thus, fundamentally paradoxical. The Spirit is “neither this, nor that”. This principle of unpredictable creativity, the inspiration that cannot be grasped by our reason, the non-static *becoming*, has gradually, with the increasing “rationalisation” of our religious experience, and our world view as such, become more uncanny. From scholasticism to modernity, people have exhausted themselves in a struggle to lay down once and for all, this *matrixial* and paradoxical category. With regrettable consequences: a rational, conclusively defined Spirit is dead. Western science has developed a compulsive – i.e., irrational – tendency towards univocal-descriptive definitions. In this process, one can only work with pre-existing and accepted categories and concepts. When one tries to use these to explain the most unfathomable dimensions of our existence, one acts with

13. As rightly explained in: Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, (New York, NY: Seabury, 1983). That is why the Holy Ghost could never appear in Christian art, except in the simplistic, reified form of a white dove. Cf. Louis Goosen, *De Geest gezien – een iconografisch overzicht*, in: *Speling. Tijdschrift voor bezinning*, 50, 1998, no. 3, p. 5-11.

14. John Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972).

15. Lloyd Nave, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, (Tokyo, Japan: Seibunsha, 1972). Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

16. Chang Chung-Yuan, *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art and Poetry*, (New York, NY: Harper, 1970).

tremendous pride, like Hegel, for example, who was convinced that he had arrived at the point that would allow him to make definite and all-embracing claims about human and cultural evolution. Reason failed to see that the Spirit, in its non-recoverable unpredictability, is the most powerful *influx* for reason itself,¹⁷ like the average contemporary scientist thinks that science can do perfectly well without any unreasoned inspiration, the spark or intuition. The Church itself has brought to life – brought into *her* life – that which she pretended to reject.

The debate about the Holy Trinity – for example, in the early Christian East and in Christianised North Africa from the 3rd century until the 8th century – was mainly about the definition of and the view on the Spirit. For those participating in the debate, it was a *theological* issue.¹⁸ But, in those times, essential questions we would now consider to be anthropological issues were categorised under the heading of theology. To the extent that the stakes had to do with other domains, these implications remained out of the discussants' consciousness. For the discussion also involved the issue of inspiration, mediation, the energies in the in-between zones, the “leap” or *borderlink*, to borrow a concept from Bracha Ettinger.

The very recent developments in psychoanalysis, which involve abandoning the “phallogocentric” paradigm and the introduction of a “matrixial” dimension, bears witness to the fact that also in other domains there is a growing awareness of the importance of such a category comparable to the Spirit. For ages, *in* and *along* and *next* to the religious dimension, the paradoxical Spirit has been a metaphor for the intangible dimension of God, and for the functioning of divine inspiration and creative impulses,¹⁹ but also for the least comprehensible dimension of humans. The Spirit is a matrixial category par excellence, co-creative, co-rising, and co-responding; the Spirit is “whom the world cannot receive” (John, 14:17).²⁰

The spirit appears as inspiration, as creation, as comfort. The Spirit, as a fundamental alterity, irreducible, linked with interiority: intimate and *extimate* at once, i.e., characterised by matrixial features. The Spirit exists as an in-between zone, interstice, process, and non-recoverable movement. The Spirit is also the “rear side”, the dimensions that cannot be conceptualised, but that people are forever attempting to force into words and categories.

17. Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of the Simple Souls Who Are Annihilated and Remain Only in Will and Desire of Love*, ca. 1300: “Therefore, let all your sciences that are the gift of Reason, be humble. Put your trust rather in the science that Love can give you.” Marguerite Porete, *Le miroir des âmes simples et anéanties*, ed. Max Huot De Longchamp, (Paris, France: Albin Michel, 1984), p. 49.

18. Howard Watkin-Jones, *The Holy Spirit in the Mediaeval Church. A Study of Christian Teaching Concerning the Holy Spirit and His Place in the Trinity From the Post-Patristic Age to the Counter-Reformation*, (London, England: Epworth, 1922).

19. Michael Lodahl, *Shekinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

20. Whereas both the Eastern and the Western Church remained entangled in the debate about the “nature” of the Spirit, popular movements saw the light in the 13th century, appealing to the Holy Spirit to establish the foundations of a utopian society, and to claim fundamental freedoms. Perhaps the most familiar and notorious was the “Sect of the Free Spirit” (*Secta spiritus libertatis*). [See the literature mentioned in: Paul Vandebroek, *Utopia's Doom. The 'Graal' as Paradise of Lust, the Sect of the Free Spirit and Jheronimus Bosch's So-Called Garden of Earthly Delights*, ed. Barbara Baert, (*Art and Religion*, 8), (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2017), Chapter II]. The Trinity was also “read” in a chronological order, i.e., the history of the world was divided in three movements: the time of the Father (the Old Testament), the time of the Son (which started with Jesus) and the time of the Holy Spirit (from now on, i.e., the 13th century), which inaugurated a thousand years of high-minded inspiration, spiritualisation and freedom. This idea was put forward around 1180 by the monk Joachim of Fiore. For centuries to come, this interpretation would be

successful among the common people in various “millenarian” guises. Especially, though not solely, among slaves and the poor, the Spirit also appeared as possession and trance [Paul Vandebroek, *De kleuren van de geest. Dance en Trance in Afro-Europese Tradities*, (Antwerp, Belgium: Royal Museums of Fine Arts, 1997), with an extensive bibliography]. The Church, as such, did not condone “the cults of possession”, though the original manifestation of the Spirit among the Apostles had very much in common with being “possessed” by the Spirit. The cult of the Holy Spirit, as it developed for example on the Azores in the 15th and 16th centuries, where it's still very lively [José Augusto Mourão & José Eduardo Franco, *A Influência de Joaquim de Flora em Portugal e na Europa. Escritos de Natália Correia sobre a utopia da Idade Feminina do Espírito Santo*, (Lisbon, Portugal: Roma Editora, 2005); Paulo Ramalho, *As Festas do Espírito Santo na Ilha de Santa Maria*, (Vila do Porto, Portugal: Câmara Municipal de Vila do Porto, 2011)], claims that the highest spiritual principle is present in our social reality, which thus is linked by a bridge to the “higher” level.

C. *The In-Between Space of the Barzakh and the Creative Imagination in Islam*

The Holy Spirit has traditionally been the intangible, in-between force of the godhead, but in Islam, too, mystics have explored an interstitial zone that is fundamental to every creative moment. Perhaps the most important scholar to do so, was Ibn ‘Arabi (Murcia, 1165 – Damascus, 1240),²¹ a quintessential and gifted writer who departed from an experience-oriented, mystical (experiential) and theoretical approach to express that which cannot be expressed in language. Essential in Ibn ‘Arabi’s work is the concept of “creative imagination”, an incredibly complex idea. In first instance, I should point out that Ibn ‘Arabi’s concept of creative imagination is entirely different from what we understand from it through Western culture. The latter sees imagination as “fantasy”, a creation of the mind without any value with regard to reality. This reduction is a consequence of the laicised society, in which there is a dichotomy between the (scientific and rationally knowable) reality, and a fantasy that produces imaginary and unreal ideas. For Ibn ‘Arabi, the imagination involves participating in the absolute theophanic imagination (*takhayyul mut-laq*). The human imagination is valuable, because it opens a door to unknown worlds, and because it partakes of the divine imaginative power. The absolute imagination was what God used to create everything, departing from his own infinite potential. Between the pure spirit and the sensory world, there is the *barzakh* of the “extrasensory sensitivity”, of the “subtle body”, of the world “in which spirits become matter and matter is spiritualised.”²² The imagination can transform the *imaginating* subject. The imagination is a liminal reality: it relates to the border between the material and the immaterial worlds. The Creation is essentially a theophany, a “manifestation of God” (*tajalli*). In Ibn ‘Arabi’s texts the imagination has a “psycho-cosmic”²³ function: *cosmogonic* and *theogonic*. It is a process of increasing enlightenment: that which was eternally latent in the godhead is transported to a state of luminescence.

Ibn el ‘Arabi devised the image of the Cosmic Tree (*Shajjara el Kawwn*) to represent the relationship between humans, the cosmos, and God.²⁴ The tree has numerous semantic layers and provides a variety of “perspectives”. One of these is the image of the bark as the world of *mulk*, the sensory perceptible realities, or the core as *malakut*, spiritual realities, or still its flowering as *jabarut*, the

21. It’s no coincidence that he was dubbed, *el sheikh el akbar*, the Supreme Sage (*Doctor Maximus*). He cannot be called a philosopher in the traditional Western sense. He was a mystic, *theosopher*, poet, and the interpreter of an experience. His writings move constantly back and forth between philosophies, a report of his experiences, poetry, theosophy/theology, attempts to elucidate the mystic path and to write down that which makes language powerless. For Muslims, too, his work is an almost impenetrable forest, and Islamic scholars (the ‘*ulama*) frequently rejected his often unexpected, bold, and poetical free train of thoughts. But

Ibn ‘Arabi is not only relevant for Islam; he can be a source of inspiration and a touchstone for the contemporary West as well. See the website of the *Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, as well as: Ibn ‘Arabi, *What the Seeker Needs: Essays on Spiritual Practice, Oneness, Majesty and Beauty, with Ibn ‘Arabi’s Glossary of 199 Sufi Technical Terms*, ed. Tosun Bayrak, (originally published by University of Virginia, Threshold Books, 1992); Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York [SUNY] Press, 1999).

22. Corbin, 1969, p. 182.

23. There is also a psychological aspect involved, but this is entirely unrelated to what we understand today by psychology. However, within the scope of text, this is not relevant. See Corbin, 1969, p. 216.

24. On the cosmic tree: Viviana Pâques, *L’arbre cosmique*, (Paris, France: L’Harmattan, 1995). Specifically on Ibn ‘Arabi: Arthur Jeffery, *Ibn al-Arabi’s Shajarat al Kawwn*, in: *Studia islamica*, 10, 1959, p. 43-77. *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi’s Universal Tree and the Four Birds*, ed. Angela Jaffray, (Oxford, England: Anqa Publishing, 2006).

Divinity that was not created.²⁵ The tree-down-there is separated from the tree-up-there by a *barzakh*.²⁶ The latter is a key concept in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought. *Barzakh* means “transitional zone” or liminal zone. The *barzakh* separates the knowable from the unknowable, the intelligible from the intangible.

At the highest level, there is God’s Hidden Essence (*essentia abscondita*); at the “bottom” there is the world of manifold forms. The *barzakh* in-between is the *haba*, the Primal Cloud of the divine Sigh of Com-compassion. The Primal Cloud is also the universe as theophany, the manifestation of God. It is not subject to any condition. God, in his absolute unicity, suffered from loneliness and the longing to be known. “I was the hidden treasure, I longed to be known. Therefore I created the universe.”²⁷ The divine sadness, including the sadness of the divine names that suffered from not being known, and the melancholy because of the creatures that did not exist yet, descended as the divine breath (*tanaffus*), which is compassion (*rahma*) and causing-to-exist (*ijad*). This com-compassion involved love (*habb*),²⁸ and a passionate longing (*haraka shawqiya*), which was calmed down by the Divine Sigh.²⁹ The divine sadness prompted God to create – not “from nothingness”, but from his own endless potential. The Creation is therefore a divine self-revelation.

The divine breath of compassion creates the infinite, subtle mass of primordial existence, which can be called Cloud (*‘ama*). This “cloud” receives all forms and lends the creatures their form. It is active and passive at once. It is the origin of the differentiation within God’s primal reality. As such, it is the only Absolute Imagination (*khayal mutlaq*). Primal Cloud, absolute or theophanic imagination and creative Com-compassion are equivalent. The Cloud is the Creator, or the Sigh, from and hidden in God. As such, the Cloud is the invisible, the “esoteric” or “that which remains outside” (*batin*). But, at the same time it represents the creatures divulged (*zahir*). The Divine Essence is the Hidden *and* the Revealed, the first and the last (comparable to the Christian Alpha and Omega).³⁰ In the Cloud, all entities appear that are different from God’s pure essence, from the highest among the “archangels” to inorganic matter. They have “appeared” from a state of latency.

In the next level, the Divine Laws Revealed appear; they determine the ‘modalisation’ of the divine being in the *qibla*. The *qibla* is, as it were, the *barzakh* between God and the worshippers. God, created in religion, belongs to the imagination that is subject-specific. But the

25. Jeffery, 1959, p. 67-68.

26. Salman Bashier, *Ibn al Arabi’s Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship Between God and the World*, (New York, NY: State University of New York [SUNY] Press, 2004).

27. Corbin, 1969, p. 184.

28. Here Ibn ‘Arabi plays with the meanings of the Arab root *h-bb*, which can refer to *hubb* (“love”) and *habb* (“seed”, “core”), from which the cosmic tree grows. Both words have the same root.

29. Ibn ‘Arabi, *El futuhat el mekkiya*, II, p. 310.

30. Corbin, 1969, p. 186.

divine com-passion makes it possible that this imagination partakes of the *modes* of the absolute Imagination. The image of God that humans create is therefore not a delusion: no matter how imperfect it is, it more or less accommodates with Reality.

Between the world of the divine *essentia abscondita*, or “inaccessible essence”, and the visible world, there is the *barzakh* of the Primal Cloud and the Sigh of Compassion; between the purely spiritual realities (the World of the Mystery) and the sensory perceptible world, there is the *barzakh* of the world of Ideas-Images, i.e., the world of forms and bodies that appear in their *subtle* state (*‘alam el mithal*); between the mystical alertness and the everyday being awake, there is the dream that reveals.³¹

It is the already mentioned Primal Cloud – the primeval in-between zone – that is the precondition of all sorts of imagination that are linked to a subject.

The Imagination is fundamentally double: it reveals the Hidden by incessantly veiling it. This veil can become opaque, but also increasingly translucent. The veil moves back and forth between these two opposites.³² This paradox is inherent to the creation: the creation is God and not-God (*hurwa la hurwa*). “The God who appears in forms is at once Himself and different-from-Himself, and to the extent that He is God Revealed, He is limited without being limited, visible without being visible.”³³ However, this

manifestation can only be perceived with the actualised imagination (*hadhra el khayyal*), not with the senses, in moments that it opens human perception to it (= the said manifestation), and that this perception becomes something mystical (*dharwq*). Thus, the imagination is a mediator between the worlds of the mystery (*‘alam el ghayb*) and the sensory world (*‘alam el shahadat*); the intellect can never become a substitute for the Imagination.³⁴ But there does exist a “science of the imagination”. This science does not study the manifestations of the imagination, but it offers the possibility of attaining knowledge that is not the knowledge of Reason. It calls into existence the Improbable that which Reason rejects. This is the actualised imagination or the present-here-and-now Imagination. It is the “science of the mirrors”³⁵: the Imagination partakes of the sensory and the intelligible, the possible, the necessary, and the impossible.

It is a pillar of knowledge (like Bracha Ettinger states, that in and through the aesthetic form, a non-intellectual knowledge resides, which can sometimes be “translated” through channels into linguistic shapes). It is the “science of the heart” (*hikma el qalb*),³⁶ that is shared by mystics from all sorts of cultures. The term “heart” does not literally refer to

31. Corbin, 1969, p.217.

32. Corbin, 1969, p.187.

33. Corbin, 1969, p.188.

34. Corbin, 1969, p.189.

35. Corbin, 1969, p.218.

36. Corbin, 1969, p.221.

the organ, though there is a partial link: the mystical body is characterised by force fields like the *chakra* body in Indian culture; the “heart” is one of these energy centres. For this science, not only the “heart” is required, but also a faculty that is called *himmā*. *Himmā* is a concept that is particularly hard to translate; perhaps we could render it as “longing energetic focus”. The *himmā* is a tool for knowledge and perception, and it is essentially creative, even in the physical world.

It is this, at a certain moment, actualised imagination or *hadhra el khayyal*, which the impressionist painter Édouard Manet – involuntarily, unconsciously – painted in 1872-73 in his work, *The Railway*.³⁷ A mother and her young daughter are standing near the immense station in Paris. The woman is looking at the public with almost empty eyes. The child has its back to us, and is staring – as if she is *seeing the un-seeable* – at an enormous cloud of steam that an engine is blowing out. Of course, her fascination may also have to do with this mechanical world of squeaking iron and steaming heat, but above all, it is directed at that in which nothing can be seen, at that which blinds her in the physical sense, but makes her see clearly a world that transcends her comprehension. The child is dressed in white, a fact that confirms her link with the cloud.

Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) painted something similar in his work, *In a Shoreham Garden* (ca. 1828-1833). The artist was looking at a garden in spring with a tree full of blossoms, like a white and pink cloud in which nothing is visible but the sublime beauty of life awakening, a cloud full of virtual buds.³⁸ This cloud is “on the feminine side”; in the back of the garden we notice the shape of a woman.

The creative, imagi(n)g principle “partakes of the feminine”. A mystic will only reach the highest theophanic vision by contemplating the image of the feminine essence, for it is in the image of the feminine-creative that we can glimpse the highest manifestation of God, namely the creative dimension.³⁹ For Ibn ‘Arabi, the “feminine” is not the opposite of the “male”, unlike in lots of dualistic worldviews, in which the first is a passive and the latter an active principle. The Feminine comprises both, and the Male only one. The Creator is “feminine”, and the feminine is the Image of the creative God. According to Jalaleddin Rumi: “Woman is a ray of divine light... She is a creator – that must be said. She is not a creature.”⁴⁰ She is the “mirror” (*mashar*) in which humans can see their hidden image, their Selves that must be accessed in order to find an opening to God. Through the feminine – perhaps we should rearticulate this as the *matrixial* – the mystical contemplation can access the theophanic image par excellence.⁴¹ And this

37. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art. Canvas, 93 × 111 cm.

38. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, no. P32-1926. Paper, 28,2 × 22,3 cm.

39. Corbin, 1969, p. 159.

40. Jalaleddin Rumi, *Mathnawi*, I, 2437.

41. Corbin, 1969, p. 162.



fig. 1

Édouard Manet, *The Railway* (1872-1873)



fig. 2

Samuel Palmer, *In a Shoreham Garden*, (ca. 1828-1833)

fig. 1

fig. 2

theophanic image, this apparition “resides” essentially in the Beautiful. The creative-feminine is the epiphany of divine beauty.⁴² Beauty is the most eminent form of the epiphany. For Ibn ‘Arabi, this is not the superficial, pleasant beauty, but a *numinous* beauty that belongs to the category of the sublime.⁴³

Typical of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufism (or of the Sufism of Jalaleddin Rumi, who belongs to the same time frame and who lived in Konya in Anatolia, the Ikonion from classical antiquity) is a sense of the sacred beauty. Beauty is a *theophany*, the perceptible manifestation par excellence of the divine or the absolute.⁴⁴ “The products of art... are cracks in the world that allow our reason to penetrate the deeper layers of existence.”⁴⁵ Beauty, and especially the sublime, is more than something that pleases the senses: it is a sacred area that contains a movement towards “something” that precedes it, and that at the same time, transcends the object in which it manifests itself. God is beauty and longs for beauty. The creative imagination is the most powerful tool to keep in touch with the Absolute. Humans, no matter how limited they are, can partake of this creative-imaginative faculty. “The imagination had shaped the One, who is... intangible and without shape.”⁴⁶ It is no coincidence that in the 12th and 13th centuries, Western art created the *ideal* sublime art of the stained glass window at the same time as it presented Christ as a beautiful human being. “The theophanic concept... involves a Manifestation that is the light of the Godhead; the light becomes visible by assuming the shape through a stained glass window.”⁴⁷

Ibn ‘Arabi’s view on the creative imagination is *mutatis mutandis* also true of the aesthetical creation and perception. For Ibn ‘Arabi, the perception of the beautiful is not a pleasant-light-hearted experience, but a numinous event that instils fear and discomfort, because the object in which beauty manifests itself opens the door to something grand and intangible – that which in the West we have called the category of the Sublime. Who contemplates beauty must therefore combine the sensory and the spiritual faculties. Indeed, a sublime work of art is not perceived as such if the beholder does not bring about this link and opens himself or herself to the Sublime.

The power or the intention from which we can access the theophany of beauty is the “heart” and a faculty that is called *himma*.⁴⁸ It seems that the *himma* is related to an essential concept in Zen Buddhism: the paradoxical switching off of consciousness in order to be able to liberate a specifically goal-oriented power,

42. Corbin, 1969, p.166.

43. For the link beauty – wisdom (as *Sophia aeterna*): Corbin, 1969, p.326-328, note 16, and p.339-340, note 49.

44. Corbin, 1969, p.274.

45. Attila Grandpierre, *On the Fundamental Worldview of the Integral Culture, World Futures*, 59, 2003, p.463-483.

46. Ibn ‘Arabi, ‘The Revelations of Mekka’ (*El futuhat el mekkiya*), chapter 63.

47. Corbin, 1969, p.275.

48. Corbin, 1969, p.222-223.

installing and operating through an intuitive lucidity, be it in the martial arts, in mystic contemplation, or for artistic purposes. This power is entirely intuitive and creative.

II. ‘Non-Acting’ and Creativity in the In-Between Space in Eastern Traditions

Already in Chinese antiquity, scholars attempted to articulate whence art came from and how humans could talk about it. This reflection was not so much a thing of Confucianism, which focused mainly on practical virtues, the devotion to duty, and political wisdom. It was mainly in the mystical Ch’an Buddhism (Japan: Zen), and the so-called Taoism, that fundamental insights in this matter emerged.

Taoism as a concept has been derived of the Chinese Tao (or in its current transcription: Dao),⁴⁹ which is often translated as “the Way”. This school has been documented by numerous texts that date from the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), though it probably originated much earlier, at least in the period of the Warring States. As a tradition, it is different from agnostic Confucianism: it focuses more on the metaphysical, on the intangible character of our existence, and on the mysteries on the border between matter and “soul”. Taoism is not an analytical and descriptive form of metaphysics. In its popular, collective guise, it developed a motley and inextricable pantheon of spiritual beings and deities of all sorts, as well as a particularly complex treasure of rituals. Among its great texts are the famous *Tao Te Ching* ([The Book of] The Way and its Power), the *Chuang-Tzu* ([The Book of] Master Chuang), and the *Lieh-Tzu* ([The Book of] Master Lieh).⁵⁰

“There was something undefined and complete,
coming into existence before Heaven and Earth.
How still it was and formless,
standing alone, and undergoing no change,
It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.
I do not know its name,
and I call it the Way.”
(Lao-Tzu, XXV)

The Way is imperceptible, indistinguishable. It makes possible all forms, essences, and forces of the world. Non-Being (*wu*) and Being (*yu*) are two of its modalities. Non-Being has precedence over Being. The first is the Original Emptiness that carries all possibilities/full potential in itself.⁵¹ Applied to human beings, this more or less corresponds to what the Western mystical tradition called the “annihilation”: the state in which, through self-manifestation, the ego is stripped of all “filling”, i.e., possessions, knowledge,

49. Robert Neville, *The Tao and the Daimon: Segments of a Religious Inquiry*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York [SUNY] Press, 1982).

51. Cf. Ellen Chen, *The Origin and Development of Being (Yu) From Non-Being (Wu) in the Tao Te Ching*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 13, 1973, p. 403-417.

50. In its pure form, Taoism was related to the experiences and the writings of the great 13th century female mystics: “beyond image and word”, towards the direct, psycho-corporal, all-embracing experience of the Absolute. In the Western tradition, a mystical *beguine*, such as Marguerite Porete (died 1310), challenged the laws and rules of the male existing order with her book, *The Mirror of the Simple Souls Who Are Annihilated and Remain Only in Will and Desire of Love*. She wrote about her slow mystical path and the accompanying self-analysis in this absolutely splendid text. Because of the intensive use of existential, experience-oriented paradoxes the clarity of the text is perceived as an *alogical labyrinth-without-exit* for the *phallo-* and *logo-centric* reader. But the significance of the book was subconsciously considered as a threat to the foundations of the existing order – to the extent that Porete was burnt at the stake on the orders of the French king for her

self-willed opinions. All profound mystical aspirations that went beyond “spectacular” visions and forms of an altered consciousness, were for that matter considered as “dangerous to the state” in the monotheistic, centralised cultures – that was true of Marguerite Porete in Paris, but also of Al Hallaj in Baghdad. To date, more than seven centuries after it was written, Porete’s book has still not been included in the programme of Western academic philosophy. In academic circles, she’s not even thought of as a philosopher, despite the fact that, like the other great female mystics, she sensed six centuries before Freud that there is a “subconscious” layer in humans, and like Nietzsche – but six centuries earlier – she “undermined” the prevailing way of thinking, which resulted in her being burnt at the stake. The fact that it was the French king himself and his surroundings that arranged for her death is indicative of how “dangerous to the state” she, or better, her stance was considered.

skills, power, and prestige. The ego must be emptied of everything that blocks the passage towards, and the contact with, God/the Absolute/the Way. The Taoist creates a space within himself or herself that allows him or her to be open to the origin/Nothingness. About the Way/the Origin we cannot speak. Like God is a “hyper-essence” for which our human cognitive categories are insufficient, “the Way about which we can speak is not the Way and the name of it that can be spoken is not the real name” (*Tao Te Ching*). It is impossible to talk about it – from a logocentric point of view all talk about it is meaningless – but that does not mean it is inaccessible. It is inaccessible for our reason, and *almost inaccessible* for the animate body that surrenders entirely to experience. As such, it is related to the *matrix*. The Way is a dynamic field in which all becomes/degenerates according to countless rhythms. Wisdom, as well as creative faculties, can only develop fully when we become, as it were, one with the movements of the Way; expanding and condensing, coming and going.

According to Hsun Tzu Yung in his book, *The Ferry of Painting*: “In the composition of the painting, a spiritual breath must come and go without being interfered with.”⁵² For Su Tung-p’o, the true artist is not so much preoccupied with the literal semblance of the forms, but instead focuses on evoking the *inner rhythm* that pulsates inside them and that is transferred to the beholder.⁵³ In other words: the *energeticon* that “pulsates” in the representation or in the non-representational form the artist creates.

By getting rid of ego-related urges and obsessive thoughts, the obstructions that prevent us from partaking of the Way are cleared. By getting rid of them, it seems as if one “does nothing”. However, this is not passivity, but being in unison with the energy streams of the Way. This apparent doing-nothing (*wu wei*) is illustrated with the image of the stone on the surface of the water: to arrive on the place on the bottom where it wants/must be, it suffices to have it fall in the right place. Without any effort, it reaches its destination. “Not-doing” is not the same as passivity, fatalism or laziness. This happens in a “prepared” body, and departing from this preparation, “it” starts. “The Way does not do anything at all, but does not leave anything undone.” A person capable of acting, thus is “like an infant”, or “like an un-sculpted block of wood” (*tung-p’o*). It is all about the “primordial state”, i.e., before the intervention of smartness, intellectualism, cunning, deliberation, bias, divisive distinctions, and the accompanying mental agitation. “Not-doing” is analogous to “not-knowing”, which is not the same as ignorance. Opening up oneself to the *not-doing* and the *not- (deliberately-) knowing*, is partaking of profound sympathy,

52. Chang Chung-Yuan, *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry*, (New York, NY: Harper, 1970), p. 212.

53. Chung-Yuan, 1970, p. 210.

the com-passion of the “great penetration”. The creative potential requires this opening up. It is in these moments that the great artist joins in the “stream”. The latter should not be understood as some sort of magical world that has been outlined for ages to come. It refers to a very concrete, constantly changing contact – changing because the energetic stream of the “world” changes constantly. This is the “inspiration” (“breathing into”) in a work of art.

According to Kuo Jo-Hsü, in his book, *Experiences of Painting*: “In painting *chi yün* (‘breath-rhythm’, ‘inspiration-rhythm’) finds its origin in the *wandering* spirit, and the *spiritual* colour is created by the brush strokes.”⁵⁴ The brush and “facture” are the vehicle that leads to *chi*.

According to Ching Hao in the 10th century: “*Chi* (‘breath’, ‘inspiration’, ‘energy’) results when the mind/the intellect

54. Chung-Yuan, 1970, p. 213.

of the artist *do not intervene* in the movements of the brush, which as it were by itself creates the painting, without

55. Chung-Yuan, 1970, p. 213.

fear.”⁵⁵ Or, in the words of Chang Huai-Huan in the 8th century: “The mind can not consciously make gifts to the hand and the hand cannot consciously receive from the mind. Mind and hand... will miss the wonder when they seek deliberately... When the [artist’s] intuition becomes one with the unfathomable reality and the brush strokes come near the depths of the subconscious... the creation will be without borders... His thoughtless thought penetrates the tip of his brush... When he enters the space-less and approaches the invisible, it is as if his mind-essence enters and leaves freely. That is beyond that which words and [literal] images... can grasp.”⁵⁶

This is the realm of *ta t’ung*, the “great permeating”, which is without definitions and incoherencies, outside the scope of the intellect. The state of *ta t’ung* is full of paradoxes: it is without thinking, yet very lucid in the here-and-now, without doing, yet reaching its goal. The artist then reaches a state of being-transparent, analogous to what happens in the case of clairvoyance and trance. “It is in the empty room that the light starts to shine” according to Chuang-Tzu.⁵⁷ It is in this non-space that the creative spark jumps over.⁵⁸

56. Chung-Yuan, 1970, p. 237. Also: Rupert Cox, *Zen Arts: An Anthropological Study of the Culture of Aesthetic Form in Japan*, (London, England: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

57. *Chuang-Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*, ed. Herbert Giles, (London, England: George Allen & Unwin, 1961).

58. Arthur Waley, *Zen Buddhism and its Relation to Art*, (London, England: Luzac, 1922). Yasuichi Awakawa, *Zen Paintings*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha, 1970). Shinichi Hisamatsu, *Zen and the Fine Arts*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha, 1971). Sylvan Barnet & William Burto, *Zen Paintings*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha, 1982). Helmut Brinker, *Zen in the Art of Painting, Japanese Monks, 1600-1925*, (New York, NY: Abrams, 1989). Helmut Brinker & Hiroshi Kawazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, (Zürich, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1996). John Stevens, *Zenga: Brushstrokes of Enlightenment*, (New Orleans, LA: Museum of Art, 1990).

[I prefer a non-rhyming translation]:

“Who knows his manhood’s strength,
Yet still his female feebleness maintains;
As to one channel flow the many drains,
All come to him, yea, all beneath the sky.
Thus he the constant excellence retains;
The simple child again, free from all stains.”
(Lao-Tzu, XXVIII)

It should be clear that life in harmony with the Way,⁵⁹ despite its receptive dimension and the principle of “not-doing” does not amount to sheer passivity. It is only an apparent inertia, which, in the end, will result in the birth of something new and valuable. The aesthetic power in the form is not achieved by deliberate action. If the form is the result of a *consciously* working mind, it will be nothing but a “concoction”. It is only when the artist operates from a field that he/she does not *consciously* dominate, but lets himself/herself “descend” into a layer that is hard to reach, that the work of art will have great “depth”.

Paradoxically, the aesthetic act is only possible by entering/reactivating a non- (conscious-) activity, a non- (conscious-) knowing, which both also comprise the acme of lucidity. The artist creates in a paradox of the highest, lucid purposiveness, and a state of sub-conscious acting, which is not rationally-cognitively framed. If reason somehow does penetrate, the work of art will be without soul – it will remain a deliberate product. The lucidity we refer to here has nothing to do with an intellectual or intentional insight/action. Something analogous takes place in – for example – poetry, in visual or in martial arts of the East, as is wonderfully explained in the fable of *The Samurai and the Cat*.

“Ceaseless in its action,
it yet cannot be named,
and then it again returns and becomes nothing.
This is called the Form of the Formless,
and the Semblance of the Invisible;
this is called the Fleeting and Indeterminable.
We meet it and do not see its Front;
we follow it, and do not see its Back.”
(Lao-Tzu, XIV)

The Way should not be considered an essence or an entity. It is rather a creative potential that is intangible and can only be perceived in that which it creates.⁶⁰ The Way has two dimensions, “not-being” or potential (a dynamic principle), and “being” (or actualised potential). “Not-being” and “being” are the complementary “sides” of a single underlying reality. The first has ontological precedence over the latter.⁶¹ This source is inaccessible to human reason. About the Way, it is said that it is “not”, but this nothingness,⁶² this *not-being*, is at the same time an absolute fullness. The Way does not “act”, but lets nothing undone. Working in accordance with the Way, means “not-doing” (*wu wei*). That is not “passivity”, but it means that one lets the necessary things happen

59. The purpose of the Way is not the “nirvana” of a “mystical floating” – quite on the contrary. “Fetching water and chopping wood – this is the mysterious Way.” This is not different from the view of the medieval Christian mystics, who claimed that the deepest mystical experience had to make way if that could help to give a bowl of soup to a poor person.

60. Joseph Bracken, *The Divine Matrix. Creativity As Link between East and West*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 138-139.

61. Bracken, 1995, p. 113.

62. Malcolm Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York [SUNY] Press, 1992); Donald Mitchell, *Spirituality and Emptiness: the Dynamics of Spiritual Life in Buddhism and Christianity*, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1991).

without deliberate reflection, power or will. This attitude is usually considered to belong to the “feminine”⁶³ and the matrixial domain. Relating to and interacting with the Nothingness or the Void or the unthinkable-different, is essential.

“The Way is empty,
It can be used, but its potential is never exhausted.
It is bottomless...
Deep and still, it has apparently always existed.
I do not know whence it was born.
It seems to have existed before the Lord.”⁶⁴

The “great” creative urge only blossoms in the indescribable border zone between the conscious and the unconscious. This zone cannot be reached with willpower. In Eastern traditions it is called Nothingness.⁶⁵ Zen refers to *yugen*, a state in which certain faculties are active – faculties that can be sensed but not described. Setting the door ajar to the Nothingness makes it possible that the source starts to flow. But each *conscious* attempt, every act of the *will*, is doomed to fail. A fable from the Japanese Zen school of Ikkoryu, *The Samurai and the Cat*,⁶⁶ tries to make it clear that only doing-by-not-doing, drawing on this mysterious in-between zone, makes it possible that grand and “inexplicable” things happen. In the East, it was obvious this was prerequisite to achieve sublime results in individual martial arts (such as *ken-do*), in the mystical way (Zen), in painting, in calligraphy (which was not always considered separate from painting),⁶⁷ and in other arts. This tradition continues to the present date.⁶⁸ It could be argued that this art is only possible after/thanks to the “breakthrough” that is also called “enlightenment” (*satoru*).⁶⁹ It does not matter in this whether the artist creates figurative art⁷⁰ or abstract art.⁷¹ This is the non-speaking language.⁷²

The most diverse artists, scientists, and philosophers have already made it clear that their most profound discoveries/creations have, as it were, risen from “nothingness”, far outside everyday consciousness. Take, for example, Einstein: “Tapping from God’s thoughts”;⁷³ Poincaré: “The insight... should be at odds with that which we consciously advocate”;⁷⁴ Bill Viola: “For a long time now, artists have known that interesting things arise from the zones of low and insignificant information, so-called voids in re-cognition. This is the moment of involvement, or, for the public, of participating in the work of art.”⁷⁵

63. Ellen Chen, *Nothingness and the Mother Principle in Early Chinese Taoism*, in: *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 9, 1969, p. 391-405, especially p. 401-405.

64. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 141.

65. Ellen Chen, *The Origin and Development of Being (Yu) from Non-Being (Wu) in the Tao Te Ching*, in: *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 13, 1973, p. 403-417.

66. Daisetz Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, (Bollingen Foundation Culture Series, 64), (Pantheon Books, 1959), appendix IV. According to Suzuki, the text was borrowed “from an old book about swordsmanship, probably written by an early master from the Ittōryū School, which was founded by Itō Kagehisa in the seventeenth century.”

73. Denis Brian, *Einstein: A Life*, (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), p. 129.

74. Rollo May, *Courage to Create*, (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1983).

67. Jan Fontein & Money Hickman, *Zen Paintings and Calligraphy*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1970; Sogen Omori & Terayama Katsujo, *Zen and the Art of Calligraphy*, (London, England: Routledge, 1983).

68. *The Art of Twentieth-Century Zen. Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Masters*, ed. Audrey Seo, & Stephen Addiss, (Boston, MA/London, England: Shambala, 2000).

69. By contrast, the art that accompanies the mystical practice is both particularly complex and based on symmetry: the *mandala*. C.T. Bertling, *Vierzahl, Kreuz und Mandala in Asien*, (Amsterdam, Netherlands: 1954). G. Tucci, *Théorie et pratique du mandala*, (Paris, France:

75. Bill Viola, *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House. Writings 1973-1994*, (London, England: Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 71.

Fayard, 1974). Martin Brauen, *Das Mandala. Der heilige Kreis in tibetischen Buddhismus*, (Cologne, Germany: 1992). *Eros + Cosmos in Mandala. The Mandalas of the Two Worlds At the Kyo Gokoku-ju*, ed. Yasuhiro Ishimoto, (Tokyo, Japan, s.d.).

70. François Jullien, *La grande image n'a pas de forme, ou du non-objet par la peinture*, (Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 2003).

71. Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th-14th Century*, (New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).

72. Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, (Chicago, IL/London, England: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Or, according to Auguste Rodin: “The greatest works of art tell us everything that can be said about humans, and they tell us that there is more that cannot be known.” Giorgio de Chirico said: “To become truly immortal, a work of art must elude all human limitations: reason and intellect will only interfere [indirectly]. Once this limits have been left behind, the [work of art] will reach the zones of the visions or our childhood and dreams.”

The aforementioned paradox of *wu-wei*, reaching an almost impossible aim through not-doing and not-knowing, exists just as much in body-related, performative arts, especially in moments that the sublime is achieved. Belgian dancer and choreographer Pé Vermeersch describes it as follows:

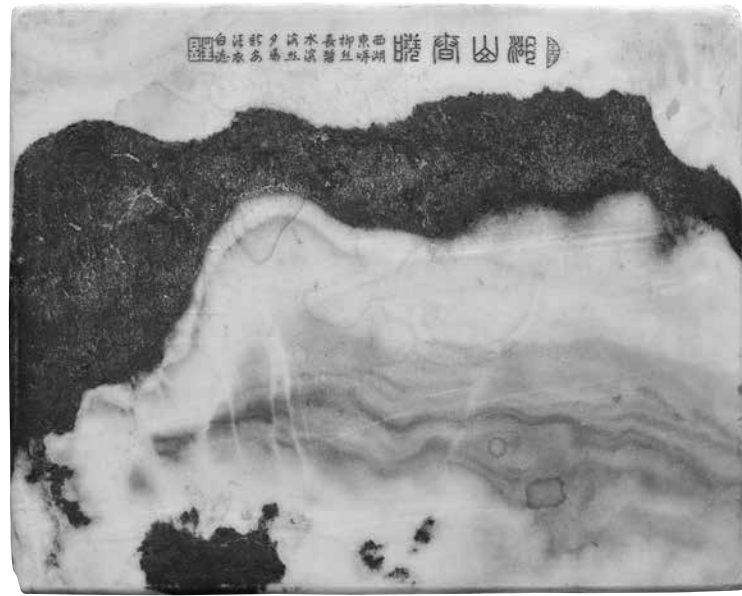
“For me, dancing is an ontological state with certain rules and laws that are different from those that rule everyday life. When I am dancing I find myself between an observable reality and a non-observable one. I feel I am in a transit zone, an in-between zone. My perception is sharper when I am dancing, both actively and passively. Often I liken it to eroticism. My observational faculties are more lucid when I am dancing. Space becomes more three-dimensional, because I cleave it with the movement of copulating molecules that fly around and split with every dance movement. Dancing is active, but also passive in the sense that you surrender to the “now moment”. It is subjectifying and objectifying at once. For me, dancing also involves a merging of bodily matter and non-material principles.”⁷⁶

Reason or the intellect are not the way to the work of art, but works of art themselves create or facilitate a form of thinking that is different from and follows different paths from the so-called cognitive intelligence. The latter concept resulted anyway from Western-scientific thinking, which has proclaimed its logo-centrism to be *the* criterion of knowledge.

76. “It has also to do with the fact that ‘physical’ time or ‘body’ time is not the same as ‘mental’ time. My Japanese dance teacher Min Tanaka has demonstrated that mental time is faster than physical time. Sometimes thinking goes too fast. In order to communicate through the body and become tangible through the body – which is and offers an altogether different experience than through the word – the body must be allowed more time. Surrendering to the body, one is always amazed that times flies

so quickly. When someone focuses on conceptual things, ten minutes may seem an hour... This state of being sensory sharp and open we are often shielded from in daily life continues to be a special experience for me. Dancing is like having a bath in your own body. Dancing opens a world where I’m freer than anywhere else. There are no limits, everything is allowed. It’s not a matter of thoughtlessness – it’s rather hard to be without thoughts when you’re dancing for two hours on end. What you need are mental

issues that are physically developed. Some things that emerge in your mind while dancing you don’t pay attention to, while others you elaborate.” And also: “In Kyoto there’s the monument of the Thousand Buddhas, all of them with this small, blissful smile. They radiate rest. In front of them, there are particularly charged wooden sculptures of grimacing, fierce gods. It’s this sort of thing [= the entirety of Buddhas and gods] I want to dance.” Pé Vermeersch (www.pevermeersch.com)



THINK

November-December 1962



A SPECIAL ISSUE:
Man's Creative Mind

MICHAEL GARDNER

INTUITION 101

This is a work of literary collage, which builds on the research and reading lists developed in the think tanks for *Intuition*, to create a tapestry of text from dozens of authors woven together for the first time. Spanning decades and even centuries, the quotations and aphorisms cited below come from a variety of creative thinkers, including philosophers, poets, scientists, artists, actors, physicists, novelists, designers, musicians, critics, writers, business leaders, and many others. Like the exhibition, their words about intuition give us a window to look through which helps us examine and understand its mystery.

1.

I have a hunch — Is that how it begins?

2.

“In each of our acts, in the least of our gestures, we should be able to grasp the completeness of what is just unfolding: the end in the beginning.”

3.

When was the instant when you knew you should’ve gone left, instead of right? When did you realise the dark alley housed secrets too dark and too dangerous, so you turned back... why? What did you feel in that moment?

4.

“All eternity is in the moment.”

5.

Or maybe my intuition was wrong. Maybe I missed the signs. I was too busy... waiting for illumination.

6.

“The first and most direct outcome of the moment of illumination is belief in the possibility of a way of knowledge which may be called revelation or insight or intuition, as contrasted with sense, reason, and analysis,

In addition to the artists, writers, curators, and entire team behind *Intuition*, this text is inspired by and dedicated to David Shields, for his book *Reality Hunger*, and Maria Popova, for her endlessly interesting work at the essential website, *Brainpickings.org*, which provided the foundation for the research of this text and is like a database for wisdom and digital discovery.

Gaston Bachelard,
Intuition of the Instant
(Evanston, IL: Northwestern
University Press, 2013)

Mary Oliver,
West Wind (Boston, MA:
Houghton Mifflin, 1997)

Bertrand Russell,
Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays
(Lexington, KY: Create Space, 2014)

which are regarded as blind guides leading to the morass of illusion... But the mystic lives in the full light of the vision: what others dimly seek he knows, with a knowledge beside which all other knowledge is ignorance.”

7.

How much of life is knowing what the correct questions are to ask?

8.

“Four questions thus arise in considering the truth or falsehood of mysticism, namely: (1.) Are there two ways of knowing, which may be called respectively reason and intuition? And if so, is either to be preferred to the other? (2.) Is all plurality and division illusory? (3.) Is time unreal? (4.) What kind of reality belongs to good and evil?”

Bertrand Russell

9.

We’re here to study intuition, to name it, to take a journey into its depths.

10.

“Every journey is a question of sorts, and the best journeys for me are the ones in which every answer opens onto deeper and more searching questions.”

Pico Iyer

11.

“What is the biggest number? Is the universe infinite? How did the universe begin? Might every event repeat again and again and again and again... Is the Earth just one of uncountable copies, tumbling through an unending void? Your intuition is no use here... In an infinite universe, there are infinitely many copies of the Earth and infinitely many copies of you.”

BBC - Horizon, 2009-2010,
To Infinity and Beyond
(Directed by Stephen Cooter)

12.

How do I know this is the right idea, the right answer, for right now, for this moment in time?

13.

“At any moment in time, every scientist is working on, or attempting to work on, a well-posed problem, a question with a definite answer. We scientists are taught from an early stage of our apprenticeship not to waste time on questions that do not have clear and definite answers. But artists and humanists often don’t care what the answer is because definite answers don’t exist to all interesting and important questions. Ideas in a novel or emotion in a symphony are complicated with the intrinsic ambiguity

Alan Lightman,
*The Accidental Universe:
The World You Thought You Knew*
(New York City, NY: Pantheon
Books, 2013)

of human nature. ... For many artists and humanists, the question is more important than the answer. As the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote a century ago, ‘We should try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue.’”

14.

What are the unanswered questions in your life? What do you *know*, without knowing exactly *why*?

15.

“There are things we take on faith, without physical proof and even sometimes without any methodology for proof. We cannot clearly show why the ending of a particular novel haunts us. We cannot prove under what conditions we would sacrifice our own life in order to save the life of our child. We cannot prove whether it is right or wrong to steal in order to feed our family, or even agree on a definition of “right” and “wrong.” We cannot prove the meaning of our life, or whether life has any meaning at all.”

Alan Lightman

16.

Intuition is both the beginning and the end – the beginning of discovery... and the end of what?

109

17.

“It is through science that we prove, but through intuition that we discover.”

Henri Poincaré

18.

“Intuition is the key to everything, in painting, filmmaking, business – everything. I think you could have an intellectual ability, but if you can sharpen your intuition, which they say is emotion and intellect joining together, then a knowingness occurs.”

David Lynch

19.

Knowledge is the realm of all humanity. Knowledge is the universal link that binds us, throughout separations of geography and time.

20.

“Knowledge is preeminently the work of time... In its labor of knowledge, the mind manifests itself as a series of discrete instants. It is in writing the history of knowledge that the psychologist, like every historian, artificially introduces the string of duration.”

Gaston Bachelard

21.

“Whether it comes from suffering, or whether it comes from joy, we all experience as human beings this moment of illumination at some point in our lives: a moment when we suddenly understand our own message, a moment when knowledge, by shedding light on passion, detects at once the rules and relentlessness of destiny – a truly synthetic moment when decisive failure, by rendering us conscious of the irrational, becomes the success of thought.”

Gaston Bachelard

22.

Isn't that what knowledge is? Trying to impose a system of order on the (un) ordered world?

23.

“Life cannot be understood in passive contemplation. Understanding life is more than just living it; it is indeed propelling it forward. Life does not flow along a slope on the axis of objective time that would serve as its channel. Although it may be a form imposed upon time's successive instants, life always finds its primary reality in an instant. Hence, if we delve into the heart of psychological evidence, to the point where sensation is no more than the complex reflection or response of a simple act of volition – when intense attention concentrates life's focus upon a single isolated element – then we will become aware that the instant is the truly specific character of time.”

Gaston Bachelard

24.

Again: “All eternity is in the moment.”

Mary Oliver

25.

“We try to impose order, both in our minds and in our conceptions of external reality. We try to connect. We try to find truth. We dream and we hope. And underneath all of these strivings, we are haunted by the suspicion that what we see and understand of the world is only a tiny piece of the whole.”

Alan Lightman

26.

If the moment – the instant – is the whole, then we must live it. Fully.

27.

“Do stuff. Be clenched, curious. Not waiting for inspiration's shove or society's kiss on your forehead. Pay attention. It's all about paying attention. Attention is vitality. It connects you with others. It makes you eager. Stay eager.”

Susan Sontag. *And:* Steve Jobs

And: “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of other people’s opinions drown out your inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become.”

28.

“Our thoughts become our words, our words become our actions, our actions become our character, our character becomes our destiny.”

Mahatma Gandhi

29.

To live in this world is to contemplate the world’s meaning.

30.

“I think, therefore I am.”

René Descartes

31.

“But thinking is to be a corrective in our life – it’s not supposed to be a centre of our life. *Living* is supposed to be the centre of our life, *being* is supposed to be the centre – with correctives around, which hold us like the skin holds our blood and our flesh in. But our skin is not a way of life – the way of living is the blood pumping through our veins, the ability to sense and to feel and to know. And the intellect doesn’t help you very much there – you should get on with the business of living.”

Ray Bradbury

32.

“To *know* more, one must *feel* less, and *vice versa*... Nature, the soul, love, and God, one recognises through the heart, and not through the reason. Were we spirits, we could dwell in that region of ideas over which our souls hover, seeking the solution. But we are earth-born beings, and can only guess at the Idea – not grasp it by all sides at once. The guide for our intelligences through the temporary illusion into the innermost centre of the soul is called *Reason*.”

Fyodor Dostoyevsky,
*Letters of Fyodor Michailovitch
Dostoyevsky to Family and Friends*
(London, England: Peter Owen, 1962)

And: “When human reason... penetrates into the domain of knowledge, it works independently of the *feeling*, and consequently of the *heart*.”

33.

Thus, new words to consider in the study of intuition: knowledge, reason, nature, thoughts, tools, hope, heart, feeling, perception... what else? What not?

34.

“The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know... We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart.”

Blaise Pascal

35.

“The rest of us live in this fog that he could just see through. He followed his intuition like a beacon, distrusting his calculations but not faltering his faith. Where does this kind of knowledge come from? Is it there in his mind? In my mind? Yours? Waiting to be mined? Are all of nature’s greatest secrets encrypted in our own selves? I hope so. I think so.”

Janna Levin,
How the Universe Got Its Spots: Diary of a Finite Time in a Finite Space (New York City, NY: Anchor Books, 2002)

36.

I think, therefore, *who am I?* But... don’t overthink it.

37.

“The intellect is a great danger to creativity... because you begin to rationalise and make up reasons for things, instead of staying with your own basic truth – who you are, what you are, what you want to be. I’ve had a sign over my typewriter for over 25 years now, which reads ‘Don’t think!’ You must never think at the typewriter – you must *feel*. Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway.”

Ray Bradbury

38.

“Most everything I do seems to have as much to do with intuition as with reason... The kind of thinking that makes a distinction between thought and feeling is just one of those forms of demagoguery that causes lots of trouble for people by making them suspicious of things that they shouldn’t be suspicious or complacent of. For people to understand themselves in this way seems to be very destructive, and also very culpabilising.”

Susan Sontag,
The Complete Rolling Stone Interviews
by Jonathan Cott
(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014)

39.

“There is no sharp line between intuition and perception... Perception is predictive... If you want to understand intuition, it is very useful to understand perception, because so many of the rules that apply to perception apply as well to intuitive thinking. Intuitive thinking is quite different from perception. Intuitive thinking has language. Intuitive thinking has a lot of word knowledge organised in different ways more than mere perception. But some very basic characteristics [of] perception are extended almost directly to intuitive thinking.”

Daniel Kahneman,
Thinking, Fast and Slow
(New York City, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015)

40.

Let perception guide you. Let feeling guide you. Let thought be your guide. Forget it: let intuition be your guide.

41.

“He feels it, that’s all, and that’s how he finds it. He instantly separates the things of the highest importance from the unimportant ones, leaving everything extraneous or illusory to be what it will. He can gather his thoughts in a flash, his mind lucid, his consciousness alert... He doesn’t see his path clearly, but also doesn’t consider this absolutely necessary; he strikes out in some direction or other, and one thing leads to the next. All paths lead to lives of some sort, and that’s all he requires, for every life promises a great deal and is replete with possibilities enchantingly fulfilled.”

Robert Walser,
Looking at Pictures
(New York City, NY:
Christine Burgin [etc.], 2015)

42.

In short: “If there is no feeling, there cannot be great art.”

Ray Bradbury

43.

“There is no logical way to the discovery of these elemental laws. There is only the way of intuition, which is helped by a feeling for the order lying behind the appearance.”

Albert Einstein

44.

Let’s get to the gist of it: “The most characteristic circumstances of an intuition are a period of intense work on the problem accompanied by a desire for its solution, abandonment of the work perhaps with attention to something else, then the appearance of the idea with dramatic suddenness and often a sense of certainty. Often there is a feeling of exhilaration and perhaps surprise that the idea had not been thought of previously.”

W.I.B Beveridge,
The Art of Scientific Investigation
(London, England: Mercury Books,
1961)

45.

“Ideas spring straight into the conscious mind without our having deliberately formed them. Evidently they originate from the subconscious activities of the mind which, when directed at a problem, immediately brings together various ideas which have been associated with that particular subject before. When a possibly significant combination is found it is presented to the conscious mind for appraisal. Intuitions coming when we are consciously thinking about a problem are merely ideas that are more startling than usual.”

W.I.B Beveridge

46.

More words to consider: Science and spirituality. Religion and reason.

Feeling and thought. Intuition and instinct. Art and everything else. Isn't that what this is about?

47.

Again: How much of life is knowing what the correct questions are to ask?

48.

“Ask yourself what is your understanding of the influences acting upon us – of the universal laws in nature? What are your thoughts about that? And the teachings of religion – the idea of faith, obedience to the higher, responsibility for others and oneself, the deceptions and revelations of sleep and dreaming, the very idea of man’s place in the living, breathing, sentient cosmos, our place on our planet, the demand for morality, the nature of animal instinct and intuition within us and around us, the function and the meaning of pain and pleasure, the idea and the experience of consciousness and conscience, the subtle nourishment in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the genuine and the fabricated needs and desires of the body, the powerful influences of symbols, the cosmic and intimate force of sex, the inevitability of death, the illusion and the reality of time.”

Jacob Needleman,
I Am Not I (Berkeley, CA:
North Atlantic Books, 2016)

49.

Where do ideas come from? Where does inspiration come from? What process can we thank for the path to discovery?

50.

We may be scientists in studying our own lives, but we are artists for how we live them – and study their histories.

51.

“How often people speak art and science as though they were two entirely different things, with no interconnection. An artist is emotional, they think, and uses only his intuition; he sees all at once and has no reason. A scientist is cold, they think and uses only his reason; he argues carefully step-by-step, and needs no imagination. That is all wrong. The true artist is quite rational as well as imaginative and knows what he is doing; if he does not, his art suffers. The true scientist is quite imaginative as well as rational and sometimes leaps to solutions where reason can follow only slowly; if he does not, his science suffers.”

Isaac Asimov

52.

Isn't that what artists and scientists are doing – getting to the bottom of things? Researching and making discoveries and sharing those with us?

53.

“One of the first things that modern research on intuition has clearly shown is that there is no such thing as an intuitive person *tout court*. Intuition is a domain-specific ability, so that people can be very intuitive about one thing (say, medical practice, or chess playing) and just as clueless as the average person about pretty much everything else. Moreover, intuitions get better with practice – especially with a lot of practice – because at bottom intuition is about the brain’s ability to pick up on certain recurring patterns.”

Massimo Pigliucci,
Answers for Aristotle
(New York City, NY: Basic Books,
2012)

54.

“That which is instinctive in instinct cannot be expressed in terms of intelligence, nor, consequently, can it be analysed.”

Henri Bergson,
Creative Evolution (New York City,
NY: Henry Holt and Company,
tr. Arthur Miller, 1911)

55.

“The artist seeks contact with his intuitive sense of the gods, but in order to create his work, he cannot stay in this seductive and incorporeal realm. He must return to the material world in order to do his work. It’s the artist’s responsibility to balance mystical communication with the labor of creation.”

Patti Smith

56.

The point then, is that intuition takes work, labor, study, hope, practice.

115

57.

“You must train your intuition – you must trust the small voice inside you which tells you exactly what to say, what to decide.”

Ingrid Bergman

58.

“I’m really sorry I didn’t listen to my intuition. From now on, I’m going to trust my gut more. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is say no.”

Natalie Portman

59.

“You get your intuition back when you make space for it, when you stop the chattering of the rational mind. The rational mind doesn’t nourish you. You assume that it gives you the truth, because the rational mind is the golden calf that this culture worships, but this is not true. Rationality squeezes out much that is rich and juicy and fascinating.”

Anne Lamott,
Bird by Bird (New York City, NY:
Pantheon Books, 1994)

60.

“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful

Albert Einstein

servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

61.

We learn from our experience. “Write what you know” is as much a mantra in creative writing classes, as it is for life in general. What can we be, if not an expert in our own lives?

62.

“Intuition is really a sudden immersion of the soul into the universal current of life.”

Paul Coelho,
The Alchemist (New York City,
NY: HarperCollins, 2002)

63.

“Your intuition and your intellect should be working together... making love. That’s how it works best.”

Madeleine L’Engle in
*Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and
Invention* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
(New York City, NY: Harper Perennial
Modern Classics, 2015)

64.

“The people in the Indian countryside don’t use their intellect like we do, they use their intuition instead, and the intuition is far more developed than in the rest of the world... Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion. That’s had a big impact on my work. Western rational thought is not an innate human characteristic, it is learned and it is the great achievement of Western civilisation. In the villages of India, they never learned it. They learned something else, which is in some ways just as valuable but in other ways is not. That’s the power of intuition and experiential wisdom.”

Steve Jobs from Walter Isaacson’s
biography, *Steve Jobs*
(London, England: Abacus, 2015)

65.

“A good traveler has no fixed plans and is not intent upon arriving. A good artist lets his intuition lead him wherever he wants. A good scientist has freed himself of concepts and keeps his mind open to what it is. Thus the Master is available to all people and doesn’t reject anyone. He is ready to use all situations and doesn’t waste anything. This is called embodying the light.”

Lao Tzu,
Tao Te Ching (with Gia-fu Feng,
Jane English; New York City, NY:
Vintage Books, 1997)

66.

“Some people believe that there is no distinction between the spiritual and physical universes, no distinction between the inner and the outer, between the subjective and the objective, between the miraculous and the rational. I need such distinctions to make sense of my spiritual and scientific lives. For me, there is room for both a spiritual universe and a physical universe, just as there is room for both religion and

Alan Lightman

science. Each universe has its own power. Each has its own beauty, and mystery.”

67.

“What inconceivable vastness and magnificence of power does such a frame unfold! Suns crowding upon Suns, to our weak sense, indefinitely distant from each other; and myriads of myriads of mansions, like our own, peopling infinity, all subject to the same Creator’s will; a universe of worlds, all decked with mountains, lakes, and seas, herbs, animals, and rivers, rocks, caves, and trees... Now, thanks to the sciences, the scene begins to open to us on all sides, and truths scarce to have been dreamt of before persons of observation had proved them possible, invade our senses with a subject too deep for the human understanding, and where our very reason is lost in infinite wonders.”

Michael Benson,
Cosmographics: Picturing Space Through Time (New York City, NY: Abrams, 2014)

68.

“The sense of unity with the ‘All’ is not, however, a nebulous state of mind, a sort of trance, in which all form and distinction is abolished, as if man and the universe merged into a luminous mist of pale mauve. Just as process and form, energy and matter, myself and experience, are names for, and ways of looking at, the same thing – so one and many, unity and multiplicity, identity and difference, are not mutually exclusive opposites: they are each other, much as the body is its various organs.”

Alan W. Watts,
The Wisdom of Insecurity
(New York City, NY: Vintage Books, 1951)

69.

“The future, present, and past of every material object is subject to the laws of physics. The orbit of every celestial body, the fall of every drop of rain. His own body a collection of molecules. His desire a cauldron of hormones whose chemistry has just been scientifically documented. His brain a case of matter, blood, and bone. But he feels direct experience of his own soul, his spirit. He cannot accept that as an aggregate of flesh, a clump of matter, that his future, past, and present are already determined by the laws of physics. He cannot crush out the intuition that he makes choices, influences the world with his mind and spirit.”

Janna Levin,
A Mad Man Dreams of Turing Machines
(London, England: Phoenix, 2009)

70.

“When I look up at the night sky and I know that, yes, we are part of this Universe, we are in this Universe, but perhaps more important than most of those facts is that the Universe is in us. When I reflect on that fact, I look up – many people feel small, because they’re small, the Universe is big – but I feel big, because my atoms came from those stars. There’s a level of connectivity – that’s really what you want in life.”

Neil deGrasse Tyson,
“How Neil deGrasse Tyson Would Save the World: 10 Questions”,
(*TIME Magazine*, posted on YouTube. Online video clip, published on June 27, 2008)

71.

Is intuition connectedness? Is that what we are talking about here? “All of reality is interaction” and we are a net of interactions with the world around us. Intuition is the air, the space between the threads of the net, the story within.

Quotation is from Dr. Carlo Rovelli, and what follows is a creative variation on statements made between Rovelli and Krista Tippett in the episode of her podcast, *On Being*.

72.

“Creativity is just connecting things.”

Steve Jobs

73.

“We can only connect the dots that we collect, which makes everything you write about you... Your connections are the thread that you weave into the cloth that becomes the story that only you can tell.”

Amanda Palmer

74.

“It’s the oldest story ever told. The story of belief – of the basic, irresistible, universal human need to believe in something that gives life meaning, something that reaffirms our view of ourselves, the world, and our place in it... For our minds are built for stories. We crave them, and, when there aren’t ready ones available, we create them. Stories about our origins. Our purpose. The reasons the world is the way it is. Human beings don’t like to exist in a state of uncertainty or ambiguity.”

Maria Konnikova,
The Confidence Game: Why We Fall For It... Every Time
(New York City, NY: Penguin Books, 2017)

75.

“We are having experiences all the time which may on occasion render some sense of this, a little intuition of where your bliss is. Grab it. No one can tell you what it is going to be. You have to learn to recognise your own depth.”

Joseph Campbell,
The Power of Myth (New York City, NY: Anchor, 1991)

76.

“We are not transparent to ourselves. We have intuitions, suspicions, hunches, vague musings, and strangely mixed emotions, all of which resist simple definition. We have moods, but we don’t really know them. Then, from time to time, we encounter works of art that seem to latch on to something we have felt but never recognised clearly before.”

Alain de Botton and John Armstrong,
Art as Therapy (London, England: Phaidon Press Limited, 2016)

77.

“Our intuitions are based on our minds, our minds are based on our neural structures, our neural structures evolved on a planet, under a sun, with very specific conditions. We reflect the physical world that we evolved from. It’s not a miracle.”

Janna Levin

78.

“Intuition enlightens and so links up with pure thought. They together become an intelligence which is not simply of the brain, which does not calculate, but feels and thinks.”

79.

“I am always thinking in the back of my mind, there’s something always going on back there. I am always working, even if it’s sort of unconsciously, even though I’m carrying on conversations with people and doing other things, somewhere in the back of my mind I’m writing, mulling over. And another part of my mind is reviewing what I’ve done.”

80.

“There’s a certain amount of intuitive thinking that goes into everything. It’s so hard to describe how things happen intuitively. I can describe it as a computer and a slot machine. I have a pile of stuff in my brain, a pile of stuff from all the books I’ve read and all the movies I’ve seen. Every piece of artwork I’ve ever looked at. Every conversation that’s inspired me, every piece of street art I’ve seen along the way. Anything I’ve purchased, rejected, loved, hated. It’s all in there. It’s all on one side of the brain. And on the other side of the brain is a specific brief that comes from my understanding of the project and says, okay, this solution is made up of A, B, C, and D. And if you pull the handle on the slot machine, they sort of run around in a circle, and what you hope is that those three cherries line up, and the cash comes out.”

81.

“The role of the imagination is to create new meanings and to discover connections that, even if obvious, seem to escape detection. Imagination begins with intuition, not intellect.”

82.

“You may have heard this anecdote. Picasso is sitting in the park, sketching. A woman walks by, recognises him, runs up to him and pleads with him to draw her portrait. He’s in a good mood, so he agrees and starts sketching. A few minutes later, he hands her the portrait. The lady is ecstatic, she gushes about how wonderfully it captures the very essence of her character, what beautiful, beautiful work it is, and asks how much she owes him. “\$5,000, madam,” says Picasso. The lady is taken aback, outraged, and asks how that’s even possible given it only took him 5 minutes. Picasso looks up and, without missing a beat, says: “No, madam, it took me my whole life.”

Piet Mondrian

Mark Strand in *Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (New York City, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2015)

Paula Scher

Paul Rand,
From Lascaux to Brooklyn
(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996)

Maria Popova,
Brainpickings.org, transcript of
“Networked Knowledge and Combinatorial Creativity” speech
for Creative Mornings” lecture series
(05/2011)

83.

“...these stories capture[s] something we all understand on a deep intuitive level, but our creative egos sort of don’t really want to accept: And that is the idea that creativity is combinatorial, that nothing is entirely original, that everything builds on what came before, and that we create by taking existing pieces of inspiration, knowledge, skill and insight that we gather over the course of our lives and recombining them into incredible new creations.”

Maria Popova

84.

Isn’t that what art is – new creations? Storytelling. The expression of inner life. The shape and materialisation of the spirit. All creation is an act of pure will.

85.

“Every work of art expresses, more or less purely, more or less subtly, not feelings and emotions which the artist *has*, but feelings and emotions which the artist *knows*; his *insight* into the nature of sentience, his pictures of vital experience, physical and emotive and fantastic.”

Susanne K. Langer,
Problems of Art (London, England:
Macmillan, 1957)

86.

“Artists have no choice but to express their lives”

Ann Truitt

87.

“Art allows us to explore the universe through a filter of human perceptions and emotions. It examines how our senses access the world and what we can learn from this interaction – highlighting how people participate in and observe the universe around us. Art is very much a function of human beings, giving us a clearer view of our intuitions and how we as people perceive the world. Unlike science, it is not seeking objective truths that transcend human interactions. Art has to do with our physical and emotional responses to the external world, bearing directly on internal experiences, needs, and capacities that science might never reach.”

Lisa Randall,
*Knocking on Heaven’s Door: How Physics
and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the
Universe and the Modern World* (New
York, NY: Ecco, HarperCollins, 2012)

88.

“Art is the articulation, not the stimulation or catharsis, of feeling; and the height of technique is simply the highest power of this sensuous revelation and wordless abstraction.”

Susanne K. Langer

89.

“Only art penetrates what pride, passion, intelligence and habit erect on all sides – the seeming realities of this world. There is another

Saul Bellow,
*Nobel Lectures in Literature, 1968-
1980* (Singapore: World Scientific
Publishing Co., Inc., 1993)

reality, the genuine one, which we lose sight of. This other reality is always sending us hints, which without art, we can't receive. Proust calls these hints our 'true impressions.' The true impressions, our persistent intuitions, will, without art, be hidden from us and we will be left with nothing but a 'terminology for practical ends which we falsely call life.'"

90.

"All works of art are commissioned in the sense that no artist can create one by a simple act of will but must wait until what he believes to be a good idea for a work 'comes' to him."

W. H. Auden,
The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York City, NY: Vintage Books, 1989)

91.

"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

Michelangelo (Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni)

92.

"From pure sensation to the intuition of beauty, from pleasure and pain to love and the mystical ecstasy and death – all the things that are fundamental, all the things that, to the human spirit, are most profoundly significant, can only be experienced, not expressed. The rest is always and everywhere silence."

Aldous Huxley,
The Rest is Silence in Music at Night and Other Essays (London, England: Chatto & Windus, 1931)

93.

"Intuition is seeing with the soul."

Dean Koontz

121

94.

"I believe in intuition and inspiration. Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."

Albert Einstein

95.

"When the body functions spontaneously, that is called instinct. When the soul functions spontaneously, that is called intuition. They are alike and yet far away from each other. Instinct is of the body – the gross; and intuition is of the soul – the subtle. And between the two is the mind, the expert, which never functions spontaneously. Mind means knowledge. Knowledge can never be spontaneous. Instinct is deeper than intellect and intuition is higher than intellect. Both are beyond the intellect and both are good."

Osho (Shree Rajneesh)

96.

"Real ideas open the mind to the heart, to the heart of the mind, to another level of reality within ourselves... This is the taste, the beginning, of inner freedom. Only fools imagine that freedom means getting what

Jacob Needleman

one happens to desire. Real freedom begins with obedience to a higher influence – a higher, finer energy within oneself. [...] What is higher in yourself? That way of thinking about the question is the beginning of the answer – because it involves a real idea which has been handed down to humanity over thousands of years...”

97.

“The world is full of signs and wonders that come, and go, and if you are lucky you might be alive to see them.”

But don't forget: “Here is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Helen Macdonald,
H is for Hawk (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2014).

Antoine de Saint-Exupery,
The Little Prince (New York City, NY: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943)

98.

I have a hunch — is that how it ends? “Listen to your hunches; hear them out. While intuitions may not always be right, they are more often than not – a fact alone that warrants their consideration.”

David DeSteno,
The Truth About Trust (New York City, NY: Penguin Random House, 2015)

99.

This is where this quest leads us, the study of intuition, the search for knowledge, for answers, for gateways into the understanding of the heart and mind. “Here in the vanguard, beyond the borders of knowledge, science becomes even more beautiful. Incandescent in the forage of nascent ideas, of intuitions, of attempts, of roads taken then abandoned, of enthusiasms. And the effort to imagine what has not yet been imagined.” *And:* “Here, on the edge of what we know, in contrast with the ocean of the unknown, shines the mystery and the beauty of the world. And it's breathtaking.”

Dr. Carlo Rovelli,
Seven Brief Lessons on Physics
(New York City, NY: Penguin Books, 2014)

100.

“Your intuition knows what to write, so get out the way.”

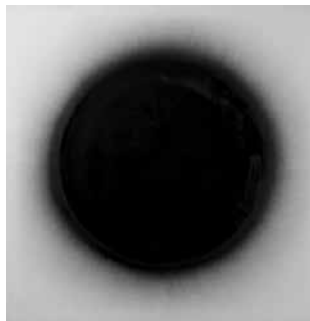
Ray Bradbury

101.

“My own way of writing is very meditated and, despite my reputation, rather slow-moving. So I do spend a good deal of time contemplating endings. The final ending is usually arrived at simply by intuition.”

Joyce Carol Oates

ANNOTATED ILLUSTRATIONS



Otto Piene
(Laasphe, 1928 – Berlin, 2014)
Schwarze Sonne, 1962–63

Smoke and charcoal on canvas, 151 × 151 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
Photo Jan Liégeois

'One glance at the sky, at the sun, at the sea is enough to show that the world outside man is bigger than that inside him, that it is so immense that man needs a medium to transform the power of the sun into an illumination that is suitable to him, into a stream whose waves are like the beating of his heart. Pictures are no longer dungeons, where mind and body are shackled together, but mirrors whose powers affect man, streams freely pouring forth into space, not ebbing but flooding.

[...] I have something real to offer. Instead of narrowing the field of vision, instead of absorption, a view of something giving, flowing, pulsating. Not the shrinking of the world in the cells of human imagination, but expansion on every side, the shooting of the viewer into space, where he can breathe deeply of fresh air. In this heaven is paradise on earth'.
(Otto Piene, 'Paths to Paradise', in: *ZERO 3*, Düsseldorf, 1958)

Otto Piene, one of the founders of the Group Zero in the 1960s, experimented with multimedia combinations, fire, happenings, kinetics, and technology-based art. *Schwarze Sonne* is one of his well-known *Rauchbilder* (smoke pictures), in which the

touches of fire and smoke are important elements. These pictures were created by combining grids of solvent with fire that resulted in traces of smoke, the remaining dust, and burnt pigments. Piene continued to practice this technique up until his death in 2014.



Statue-Menhir of a Male Figure
Aveyron, Southern France
late 4th – early 3rd millennium BC

Sandstone, 209 × 73 × 25 cm
Musée Fenaille, Rodez
Collection Société des lettres de l'Aveyron
Photo © Pierre Soisson

A series of monumental stone figures dotted the late Neolithic landscape of Rouergue in southern France. Set upright on the earth at important points of passage, such as mountain passes, river crossings, and valleys, the 'statues-menhirs' are carved or sculpted to represent female or male characters. These menhirs were positioned along travel-routes and the territorial limits of farm or grazing lands, indicating that they were erected by the very first farming peoples to settle in the region, sometime between the late fourth and early third millennium BC.



Statue-Menhir of a Male Figure
Rosseironne, Southern France
Chalcolithic period, 3rd millennium BC

Limestone, 125 × 89 × 15 cm
Musée d'histoire naturelle et de préhistoire Ville de Nîmes

The late Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods in Western Europe were characterized by a competition between communities that adopted strong symbols to mark their territory and assert their authority. While there is a consensus that the statues-menhir served a funerary or commemorative function in honour of certain privileged personages, and participated in the ancestor cult within the more universal phenomenon of megalithism, it remains unclear who exactly they depict. A systematic identification of each stone with a particular (once) living person may not be possible, as the statues-menhir may be a representation of fabled ancestors, a concept that employs cultural attributes that may belong to existing communities or to a mythical people.



‘Dame de Saint-Sernin’
Statue-Menhir of a Female Figure
Saint-Sernin, Aveyron, Southern France
late 4th – early 3rd millennium BC

Sandstone, 130 x 56 x 20 cm
Musée Fenaille, Rodez
Collection Société des lettres de l’Aveyron
Photo © Pierre Soisson

‘When I saw the engraved steles of the Musée Fenaille for the first time, I was astounded. These stones that came from a distant time broadened my mind. In them I saw a will to do whatever was necessary to tear a human presence from an inert block of stone. But more than that, I felt close to the man who had engraved them, sculpted them in that way, closer than to that other whose ambition was the beauty of Antiquity. What I sensed drove me brusquely away from the Apollo Belvedere, from the Greek and classical ideal... These statues-menhir move us without regard of the age and place of their creation. It is not the significance they bore for their makers that concerns us. We do not share the same religion, nor the same myths, we live in different societies – and yet these stones have the power to provoke and answer to all that we invest of ourselves in them, in our own time.’ (Pierre Soulages)

This is why Soulages has always claimed to its distance from action painting and abstract expressionism. The observer is not called to appreciate the expressiveness of the gesture but the power of the image in its completeness. This is why Soulages has always insisted on the distance between his work an action painting and Abstract Expressionism. The observer is not asked to appreciate the expressiveness of the gesture, but the power of the image in its completeness.

These ‘Brou de Noix’ works were created in the precarious post-war climate, a period in which the artists describes his feelings as : *‘there were incoherent forces that I could not balance. It is with these brou de noix in 1947 that I could gather myself again and obey to an inner imperative. In truth I felt limited by oil painting. Exasperated, one day, I threw myself instinctively with paintbrushes, paint and walnut stain on paper.’* (Pierre Encreves: *Soulages l’oeuvre complet: peintures I: 1946-1959*, Seuil, Paris, 1994)



Statue-Menhir of a Female Figure
Treschietto, Italy, Chalcolithic period
3rd millennium BC

Sandstone, sculpted with a stone chisel, 135 x 39 x 17 cm
Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli
Su concessione della Soprintendenza Archeologica, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Provincie di Lucca e Massa Carrara



Statue-Menhir of a Male Figure
Taponecco, northern Italy, Late Neolithic
3rd millennium BC

Sandstone, H: 140 cm
Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli
Su concessione della Soprintendenza Archeologica, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Provincie di Lucca e Massa Carrara



Alberto Giacometti
(Switzerland, 1901–1966)
Femme debout, bras le long du corps, 1952

Plaster, 22,5 x 6,5 x 8 cm
Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

The sculpture of a standing figure, facing forward with her arms beside her body and her face expressionless, is a fine example of Giacometti’s research, between 1945 and 1965, of the space of representation: the figures were either set on pedestals, which isolated them from the ground, or placed in ‘cages’ to form a virtual space. Jean Genet noted that, for Giacometti, women were goddesses and men priests who *‘belong to a very senior clergy’*; each very different statue *‘still belongs to the same proud and sombre family. Familiar and very close. Inaccessible’*.



Small Statuette of Mother Goddess
Halaf Culture, Northern Mesopotamia
6000–5000 BC

Terracotta, H: 5 cm
Private Collection, Italy
Photo Rinaldo Capra



Pierre Soulages
(Rodez, 1919)
Brou de Noix, 1948

Walnut stain on paper, 63,8 x 48,5 cm
Donation Pierre and Colette Soulages
Musée Soulages, Rodez
Photo C. Bousquet © Musée Soulages, Rodez

The series of *Brou de Noix* (started in the Summer of 1947) evokes the shock of the young artist in front of the statues-menhir: the iconic power and the frontality are the same. It’s the same willingness to ‘go to the essential’ by using a foreign pigment to the artistic tradition, by looking at the primordial image.



Jean-Michel Basquiat
(New York, 1960–1988)
Versus Medici, 1982

Acrylic and oil stick on paper, laid down on canvas
213 × 136 cm
Private Collection, Brussels

The sheer physicality of this monumental work draws the viewer into Basquiat's rich and complex universe. Jean-Michel Basquiat employed colour in a way that serves narration, using a saturated and bright palette of strong, unmixed hues, both light and dark. He painted in linear strokes, adding scribbles in vibrant colours, displaying a great spontaneity and a confident use of materials while creating a barrage of images, text, and symbols that became part of his own unique pictorial syntax, instantly recognizable by the viewer.

Basquiat's paintings are characterized by a sense of mystery within familiarity. From his early work as a graffiti artist on, Basquiat liked to bring the spectator into a state of semi-knowledge, where he is able to read the superficial message of the painting effortlessly through the familiar use of images, colours, and words, yet remains unaware of the true significance invested in the work, as the deeper levels of meaning are obscured. This layered quality of his work reflects the way Basquiat saw human life. Near the core, with the layers of imposed meaning stripped away, is where life is at its most intense and graphic, but also unstable and macabre.



Anthropomorphic Idol
6th – 5th millennium BC

Calcitic metamorphic marble of the Val Venosta,
40 × 18 × 14 cm
Restoration laboratory of the Soprintendenza per i Beni
Archeologici of Trento
Photo Elena Munerati, Trento

This small head staring at us from a pluri-millennial distance makes us wonder about the identity

and motivations of the ones who produced it, their vision of the world and their self-awareness, their technical ability, the efficacy of the physiognomic representation they used, and the formal perfection of the artefact they left for us. It was found by chance in 2003 in a building that most likely dates back to the fifteenth century in Manzano (in the province of Trento). The piece of marble of the Val Venosta happened to be an exceptional find: the stone, approximately cylindrical, was worked in order to represent a human face stylized through what archaeologists usually call T-scheme. This enigmatic artefact probably had a funerary purpose. It shows some characteristics of Neolithic art that dates back to the 6th – 5th millennium BC.



Kazuo Shiraga
(Amagasaki, 1924–2008)
Chiyosei Mochakuten, 1960

Oil on canvas, 130 × 194,5 cm
Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Gallery and Lévy Gorvy Gallery

Central to Shiraga's work is the connection of art with *shishitsu*, a term that mainly designates 'innate characteristics and abilities'. It refers to a psycho-corporeal essence within ourselves that over time defines and shapes us as individual human beings. For Shiraga, creating was a way of fully connecting with one's own *shishitsu* by making it resonate through paint:

'Each of us possesses a natural characteristic that arises and develops through the simultaneous influence of our temperament and the influence of what we perceive from outside with our senses. [...] It tries to come out and to be put into reality in [...] matter. [...] Our efforts consist only in lifting this material to the point at which it accepts this same natural characteristics and in this sense it becomes the expression of our ego and will never become a declaration of our thoughts or our feelings.'

In his quest to transport the essence of human energy into matter, and to feel one with the empty canvas, he invented his own form of action painting and live art happenings. Shiraga's performance-based technique involved the violent spreading around of a lump of paint on a huge canvas with his feet. The artist suspended himself from ropes to use his body as a tool. He wanted to present 'traces of action carried out with speed'. This method resulted in heavily textured and thick swirls of paint, left by the violent movements of a massive beast.



Anish Kapoor
(Bombay, 1954)
White Dark VIII, 2000

Fibreglass and paint, Ø 160 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

The work of Anish Kapoor triggers the experience of the void and activates a charged nothingness in the mind of the viewer, who, upon contemplating and experiencing his art, can feel part of a larger whole. The voids and the colours are usually dense and deep in Kapoor's sculptures. They attract us towards the inside, towards the unknown. *White Dark VIII* is a void that is no longer a dark hole, but a bright surface playing with the natural light. The crucial point lies precisely there where the flat white surface turns into a sculpture and vice versa, revealing Kapoor's truly artistic conception: *'I am a painter who is a sculptor'*, he says. White sums up all the colours. It is towards this luminous totality that Kapoor oriented his research for this *White Darks* series, which originated in the mid-1990s. The curved structure of the painted fibreglass dramatically shifts our perception of space and form by implying an inner location of calm reflective distance, and emptiness.

'The idea is to make an object which is not an object, to make a hole in the space, to make something which actually does not exist. Even more, the extraordinary appearance, loved and feared, of a piece of void, at once finite and infinite, reactivates the symbolic contact between inside and outside, earth and heaven, male and female, active and passive, conceptual and physical, thus renewing the process of knowing.' (Anish Kapoor)



Thierry De Cordier
(Oudenaarde, 1954)
Grand Nada, 2007–2012

Oil and enamel on canvas, 320 × 205 cm
Private collection. Courtesy of the artist
and Xavier Hufkens Gallery

Thierry De Cordier once said: *'When I produced my first black picture, the only idea I had in my head was to do away with the image. So, a few months later, when I was engrossed in a book on mysticism, my eye was caught by a particular passage, which awoke in me a vision that would broaden the sense of this anti-painting. [...] Starting out from the negation of a given image, what results is not, however, a painting of negation, but a painting which triumphs fairly and squarely through the negation it makes use of. An empty painting, in the sense that there is visibly no longer anything in it. Being totally indifferent to all content, while supporting any kind of content. This almost abstract and hard painting, which nevertheless puts itself out of reach of any conviction, wants above all to be metaphysics painted. In the best case scenario, it leads to a frozen silence...'*

If there has ever been an intuitive painter, it is Thierry De Cordier. From of a great sensitivity for human emotions developed in dialogue with existentialism, and a deep understanding of *Weltschmerz* – a concept that points to the human experience of sadness, melancholy, and pessimism in the face of our imperfect world – he derives artworks with a dark, sombre timbre and sometimes with a hint of humour, works that never let go of a certain romantic heaviness. The *Grand Nada* is, as the artist calls it himself, a 'Negative Painting'. It shows nothingness through a disturbing black abstraction. Alluding to classic depictions of the cross, the work's intriguing black appearance only reveals its depth when seen from certain angles. The expressive power comes forth through the emptiness itself. Because the image is hardly there, it invites the viewer to look more thoroughly, and to reflect on the theological dimensions it critically flirts with.



'St. Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read'
Normandy, France, ca. 1500

Painted limestone, H: 84 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation.
Photo Jan Liégeois

'The wise mother will give great attention to the upbringing and instruction of her daughters.'
(Christine de Pizan, 1450)

St. Anne is seated on a throne while teaching her daughter, the Virgin Mary, to read. The young, crowned Mary is standing next to her mother and leaning against her lap. Anne's right arm embraces Mary, holding her close in a tender, maternal pose. With the index finger of her left hand, she points to a passage on the page, directing her daughter's gaze to the words in the book. The composition of the two women indicates the role St. Anne played in the upbringing of the Virgin Mary: that of a protectress and educator.

The scene of St. Anne teaching her daughter from a book was quite popular in the art of Northern Europe from the early fourteenth until the early sixteenth century. It refers to more than the pure matter of literacy; the imagery further humanized the Christian story, commended the education of girls in religion and morals, and perhaps celebrated spiritual parenthood, such as might be represented in the parental home or in the convent.

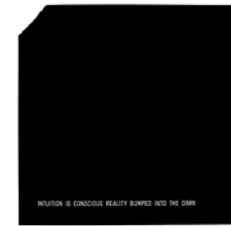


El Anatsui
(Anyako, 1944)
The Beginning and The End, 2015

Bottle caps, aluminium roofing sheets, and copper wire
Consists of 3 pieces (different sizes)
Total length between 14 and 18 metres
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Kristien Daem, © Wiels, Brussels

Being a child of the hopeful 1960s, El Anatsui grew up in Ghana in a period typified by the profound search for social and personal identity, a search that

has become a central theme of his art. He investigates the erosion of tradition as well as its survival and transmission into the future. Anatsui refers to a traditional African graphical system used to form patterns on African textile, where each symbol has a particular meaning. They often refer to abstract concepts of faith or courage, or are a reference to proverbs and aphorisms. The artist communicates with memories and tradition to define his place as an individual in the here and now. Most of El Anatsui's sculptures are made out of materials once intended for other purposes. Although individually humble, the discarded materials he uses become collectively monumental, in much the same as our individual actions as consumers and communicators allow us to participate in a global community. The presented monumental work can be read from right to left. The artist integrates chaotic patterns on the right side that become more and more structured and ordered towards the left. For El Anatsui, this represents 'the beginning and the end'.



Vincenzo Agnetti
(Milan, 1926 – 1981)
Axiom, 1972

Black Bakelite with cracked angle, carved and painted with white nitro paint, 80 × 80 cm
Vincenzo Agnetti Archive, Milan

'Images and words are part of the same thought. Sometimes the pause, the punctuation, is made by images, and sometimes by the writing itself.'

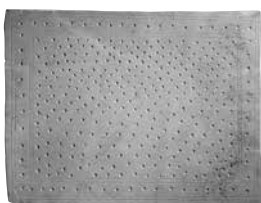
(Vincenzo Agnetti, August 1976 in: *archivio 01*, Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milan, 2016, p. 3)

In the art of Vincenzo Agnetti, who started his career as a poet, images and words are made to act simultaneously: on the Bakelite's black surface, the carved white aphorism becomes a spark in the dark, lighting up the intuition. A paradoxical atmosphere often pervades the *Axioms* because of the scientific or philosophical tone of tautological assertiveness, and because the black surface alludes to a school blackboard. The artist says about the *Axioms*: *'Some of these works are axioms. In others, the terms of the work are instead related to the use of paradox, which can now appear tautological, and now contradictory'*. (Cited in *Vincenzo Agnetti* – Catalogue of the show at the Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto – edited by Achille Bonito Oliva and Giorgio Verzotti, Milan, Skira, 2008, p. 29.)



Ryuji Tanaka
(Hyogo, 1927–2014)
Untitled, ca. 1993

Mineral pigments and mixed media on canvas
225 x 180,5 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
Photo Jan Liègeois



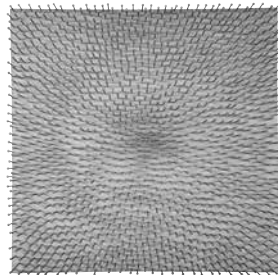
Double-sided 'Cosmogram' Stele
Ecuador, Valdivia Culture
2nd millennium BC

Limestone, 37,40 x 49 x 3 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
Photo Jan Liègeois

Both sides of this enigmatic stele are suffused with a complex assemblage of incised lines and punctate motifs. The lines seem to delineate zones, which are filled with regularly interspaced rows of circular hollows. On one side the central zone contains two arrows resembling curled up snakes, one pointing upward, the other down.

Several possible hypotheses have been suggested as to what the purpose of these objects was. Most plausible is the theory put forth by Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, who suggests that this type of stele was used to represent celestial phenomena – hence the name 'cosmogram' – and as an instrument for divination.

According to Guillot-Muñoz's interpretation of these plaques, Valdivia artists used square or rectangular forms to indicate the earth, since they associated circular forms with the sky. Arrows are thought to express the movement of the universe or symbolize opposing forces. It is worth considering that Neanderthal sites in Central and South America have yielded evidence for the development of symbols similar to those on the Valdivia stele: the cup mark, cross, and parallel lines that were associated with the veneration of one's ancestor and the lunar cycle.



Günther Uecker
(Wendorf, 1930)
Struktur, 1966

Nails, oil on canvas over a wooden panel, 53 x 53 x 7 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation. Photo Jan Liègeois

'The progress of the shadow that forms is also connected with the feeling that as each day passes one yields to the embrace of night until the next morning and that terrible moment when I, as an individual, cast a shadow of my own and find myself alone in the universe. It was that same existential terror that prompted me to make works that render visible the never-ending movement that is only halted for the short moment when a nail is hit'.

Although it is an everyday object that is usually kept hidden, the nail became an important element in the work of German artist Günther Uecker. Through nails, he evoked a play with light and shadow, creating an optical illusion of movement. His first nail pictures were created towards the end of the 1950s, and stemmed from an earlier trauma. During the War, Uecker boarded up the windows of his family home with wooden planks to protect them from possible attacks. The aggressive act of hammering nails into planks to keep the inside of the house sheltered inspired Uecker to tell the story of his – and the world's – trauma. In this, the nail symbolizes the paradox of 'healing by hurting'. The spatial reality created by the nails is meant to overcome the personal gesture and to generate the necessary conditions for freedom. Later in his oeuvre, the nail became more of a meditative object, a focal point to concentrate on.

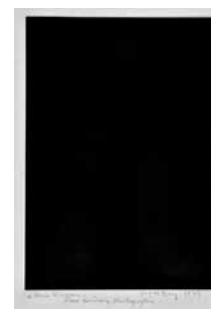


Masaomi Raku
(Kyoto, 1983)
Transmigration 'Thunderbolt', 2016

Zimbabwe granite, 183 x 22 x 13 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

Masaomi Raku started this series, which is based on the principle of the cycle of life in nature, the symbiosis between life, earth, and wind, when he was in his twenties. This theme, even if it was vague, was the object of his research in his youth. The concept of the greatness nature, its beauty, its durability, and its aging, is at the heart of this series, which explores the divine and sublime process by which nature transforms itself.

The sculpture series *Transmigration* is formed by a natural cleaved face on one side and a carved one on the other. *'I first cut the stone and then, preserving the rough face, I carved the rest of the surface using tools. The intuition that emerges from the cleft face, raw and beautiful, is central to this work. The final form is decided by the same: there is no end in itself, only the intuition that guides me to sculpt and complete the work'.*



Man Ray
(Philadelphia, 1890 – Paris, 1976)
Ma dernière photographie, 1929

Rayograph, 20 x 13,7 cm
Collection Natalie Seroussi, Paris

'An original is a creation motivated by desire. Any reproduction of an original is motivated by necessity. The original is the result of an automatic process, the reproduction of a mechanical process. In other words: inspiration then information; each validates the other. All other considerations are beyond the scope of these statements. It is marvellous that we are the only species that creates gratuitous forms. To create is divine, to reproduce is human'. (Man Ray)



Léon Spilliaert
(Ostend, 1881 – Brussels, 1946)
Plage au clair de lune, 1908

Watercolour and colour pencil on paper, 50 x 65 cm
Private collection Patrick Derom, Brussels

Léon Spilliaert was an important Belgian painter and known as one of the pioneers of Symbolism. Following only his own ideas about creation, he always listened to his intuition, and was constantly looking for new images with which to express himself. His paintings are never conceived as a strict representation of reality, but rather sublimated images with psychological depth. Spilliaert confronted us with his personal representation of the world. Often using an almost monochrome colour palette with grey tones and expressive blacks – though with pops of colour – his work is moody, spherical, and sometimes tormented. In depicting seascapes, embankments, people on and around the beach, dunes, trees, still-lives, fishermen, the harbour, and daily life in general, the artist explored light and dark contrasts, without caring much about traditional form. Because of his urge for exploration, he worked with different techniques like watercolour, gouache, pastel, charcoal, pencil, and ink. His extraordinary self-portraits show a tormented picture, one of melancholy, silence, and loneliness. His empty sceneries and dark seascapes with sultry light, low in contrast, and the absence of human figures, show a similar atmosphere. The beach by night seen on this *Plage au clair de lune* oozes isolation and solitude in a simplified manner, with a clean yet ethereal style.



Paul Jenkins

(Kansas City, 1923 – Manhattan, 2012)
Phenomena Lucifer Hump, 1962

Acrylic on canvas, 96,5 × 129,5 cm
Courtesy Estate of Paul Jenkins

With his abstract, nonrepresentational paintings, Paul Jenkins shows his urgency for the metaphysical. The smoke-like image – a veiled mist carved into life with the artist's ivory knife – has a certain mysticism about it. Jenkins searches for a spiritual life that is found beyond the reach of words, and has to be understood by silent intuition. The senses are difficult to visualize, yet the composition of this grisaille is guided by synaesthesia – a phenomenon where the specific characteristics of one sense overflow into another. Jenkins' pictures are a powerful mediator to convey what cannot be heard or seen, and challenge us to see with more than our eyes only. He recognized that the individual human being feels unstable when confronted with a perception that leads beyond the senses. To overcome this issue, he felt that one needs the skills provided by repeated meditation. Therefore, the artist took upon himself the task of creating pictures that are neither normative nor expressionist in the usual manner. Rather, they present an expansive view of life and art.



Man Ray

(Philadelphia, 1890 – Paris, 1976)
*André Breton devant un tableau de
Giorgio De Chirico*, 1922

Gelatin silver print, 22 × 16,5 cm
Collection Natalie Seroussi, Paris

*'I would photograph an idea rather than an object,
a dream rather than an idea.'*

Though mainly known for his photography, artist Man Ray experimented with a great variety of art forms: painting, sculpture, collage, drawing, readymades, film ... he was open to anything, as long as it served the purpose he intended. Being a key figure of both the Dada and Surrealism movements, his work was innovative, experimental, and bold. He produced both dreamlike images that speak to the imagination, and impossible or quirky objects. For Man Ray, photography often operated in the gap between art and life. He used it to document some of his sculptures or objects, which he never presented outside the photograph, to make an image of what he could not paint, and to capture the life of his avant-garde friends.



Alberto Giacometti

(Switzerland, 1901–1966)
Head, ca. 1950

Pencil on paper, 50 × 33 cm
Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

The defining characteristic of Giacometti's portraits is maximum concentration. Very important in this context are the artist's descriptions of how he dealt with the problem of representing a human face, whether it be Annette's portrait, or that of his brother Diego's, or that of Japanese professor Yanaihara. This frenzied and unfulfilled research

also emerges with great strength in the drawing. Jean Genet's words are especially incisive: *'He draws only in pen or hard pencil – the paper is often pierced, torn. The curves are hard, they have no softness, nothing gentle about them. It seems that for him a line is like a man: he treats it as an equal. The broken lines are sharp and give his drawings – a result, too, of the pencil's granitic and paradoxically muted substance – a sparkling aspect. Diamonds'* (Jean Genet, *L'Atelier di Alberto Giacometti*, in Alberto Giacometti, *Parigi senza fine* Morcelliana, Brescia 2016, pp. 21–22)



Gustave Courbet

(Ornans, 1819 – La Tour-de-Peilz, 1877)
La Vague, 1872–73

Oil on canvas, 55 × 65 cm
Collection Mr. De Bueil and Mr. Ract-Madoux, Paris

Gustave Courbet, a realist 19th century French painter, was not interested in academic convention or in Romanticism. He painted people in their daily life – peasants, nudes, portraits, animals, landscapes, and seascapes – without intentionally making anything look prettier than it was. His approach challenged the ruling conventions of the time. Courbet insisted on staying with what was actually visible around him, so he let go of the idealization of life. The artist is noted to have said that: *'Painting is the representation of visible forms. The essence of realism is its negation of the ideal'*. By painting subjects that in the eyes of his contemporaries were seen as vulgar – like the working class and the poor – on large canvasses that were usually reserved solely for important historical or religious subjects, he clearly made a bold social statement. To Courbet, with realism also came a spontaneous and rough control of paint, which implied an impulsive, intuitive, and direct application of the impression of nature.



Gaspare Diziani
(Belluno, 1689 – Venice, 1767)
*A Vision from the Book of Revelation –
The Apocalypse*

Pen and grey ink, 44 × 29,1 cm
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Correr Museum
Photo Claudio Franzini

Gaspare Diziani trained in Venice, in the workshop of Sebastiano Ricci, and quickly developed an appreciative following that led his services to be required also outside the Venice area: among other places, he worked in Monaco, Dresden, Bergamo, Padua, and many other locations around the Veneto. The Correr Museum has a large collection of drawings by the artist, praised by historians for their extensive use of quick and expressive lines and of different drawing techniques. The drawing here is thought to date from the artist's mature period.



Cleo Fariselli
(Cesenatico, 1982)
Me as a Star, 2008

Video HDV, 6' 45"
Courtesy of the artist and Clima Gallery

Wearing a costume made of reflecting materials, Cleo Fariselli uses her body to stage a dancing star camouflaged in the horizon of a mountain landscape. *Me as a Star* can be considered both the record and the translation of this performing ritual. Indeed, a favoured point of view is needed for Fariselli's dance to gain meaning. By dancing far away, in the distance, Fariselli reflects solar light with her body, making the outlines of her person disappear. The artist is transformed into a point of light that, unceasing as a star, shines in order to warn us that the night is coming. Fariselli becomes part of this mountain landscape, deleting that separation that we have learned to build between shape and background and between human and non-human space.



Hiroshi Sugimoto
(Tokyo, 1948)
Polarized Colour 032, 2010

Polarized photograph in glass, 20 × 20 × 4 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation

Hiroshi Sugimoto is an intellectual artist who is influenced by styles like Minimalism and Conceptual Art. The conceptual side of his work invites the viewer to reflect. Central to Sugimoto's work is the idea that photography is a time capsule, a method of preserving and picturing memory and time. This theme provides the defining principle of his ongoing series, including, among others, *Dioramas*, *Theatres*, and *Seascapes*. He prefers to use classic photographic procedures instead of digital techniques, and places extraordinary value on the technical aspects of photography. The artist prints his work with meticulous attention and a keen understanding of the nuances of silver-print making and its potential for tonal richness in his seemingly infinite palette of blacks, whites, and greys. The images are extremely beautiful, and offer a space to think and wonder about memory, perception, illusion, and representation.



Raku Kichizaemon XV
(Kyoto, 1949)
Black Raku Yakinuki type tea bowl
April 2016

12,1 × 16,1 × 10 cm
Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Takashi Hatakeyama

'Accidental happenings or effects caused by nature often achieve an improvised beauty beyond human artifice and consciousness. The so-called "intuition" in our mind is a flash of light that miraculously connects our consciousness with the opposite shore beyond normal circuits of our awareness or logics. "Intuition" is a kind of bridge that crosses over the extreme poles – unconsciousness and consciousness, the accidental and the destined, logic and chaos – and allows human beings and nature to be united in the execution of an act.

In this piece, an accidental happening that broke the order intended by my conscious mind caused a dynamic crack. The result is nothing but a manifestation of "accidental beauty", or "beauty beyond human artifice", almost untouchably sacred. Certainly, the act of filling this crack with silver lacquer is also a logical conclusion of my human mind. This "restored beauty" is no less than an exposure of the reality that man and nature or consciousness and unconsciousness could remain inevitably separated. "Intuition" operates on this circuit that runs between two poles and touches on the connection between the two. A shocking act of cutting the area beautifully restored with silver lacquer into yet another split is there as if to connect two opposites. A naturally caused beauty moves one step forward towards us, leaving its unmistakable trace on its own'. (Kichizaemon Raku)



Alis/Fillioli
Alien, 2011

Plaster, 35 × 25 × 17 cm
Private Collection. Courtesy of the artists
and Pinksummer, Genova

In the series *Alien* (2011), the two Italian artists, Alis/Fillioli, focused on creating figures and faces, using their hands to shape empty spaces into a form-work filled with dirt and then pouring chalk into those spaces, thus generating unexpected shapes. Unlike traditional sculpture, the two artists started with a negative shape, letting touch be the principal agent of their anthropomorphic representations. These blind figures result from the negotiation between imagining their own bodies and the imagination of matter itself. This method allows for the creation of alien shapes that, although inconceivable a priori, are quasi-human, and that materialize as a direct cast of the artists' bodies. *'Our research is focused on the possibility of generating a presence, shaped by sculpture, in relation to its matter and to our gestural art, which we only partially control. Our works result from a process composed by multiple steps of micro-intuitions, and it leads to paradoxical shapes that become places and surfaces condensed into shapes that exist independently in space'. (Alis/Fillioli)*



Óscar Domínguez
(La Laguna, Tenerife, 1906 – Paris, 1957)
Untitled (Decalcomania), 1936

Gouache on paper, 38 × 28,3 cm
Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon

'In order to open wide our own window onto the most beautiful views, of the world and elsewhere.'

(Óscar Domínguez)

'Using a broad brush, spread some black gouache, more or less diluted in places, on a sheet of white glazed paper, and then cover this immediately with a similar sheet of paper and press down lightly with the back of your hand. Take this upper sheet by one edge and peel it off slowly, just as if you were removing decal, and then continue to reapply and lift away again until the colour is almost completely dry. What you have in your hands now is perhaps nothing more than Leonardo's paranoiac ancient wall, but it is this wall brought to perfection. All you will need to do now is study the resulting image long enough for you to find a title that conveys the reality you have discovered in it, and you can be quite sure of having expressed yourself in the most completely personal and valid manner.' (André Breton, 'Óscar Domínguez: Concerning a Decalcomania without Preconceived Object (Decalcomania of Desire)', in *Surrealism in Painting*, Boston, MFA Publications, p. 129)



Ana Mendieta
(Havana, 1948 – New York City, 1985)
Untitled (Silueta Series), 1978

Black and white photograph, 25,4 × 20,3 cm
Enea Rigbi Collection
Courtesy Ana Mendieta Collection
Photo © Antonio Maniscalco © Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection

'My art is grounded in the belief of one Universal Energy that runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plat to galaxy. My works are the irrigation veins of the Universal fluid.'

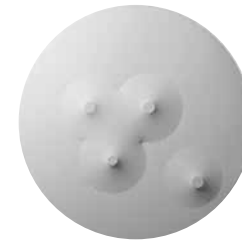
Through them ascend the ancestral sap, the original beliefs, the primordial accumulations, the unconscious thoughts that animate the world. There is no original past to redeem: there is the void, the orphanhood, the unbaptized earth of the beginning, the time that from within the earth looks upon us. There is above all the search for origin'. (Ana Mendieta, 1983 in: Ana Mendieta, Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporânea, Santiago de Compostela, 1996, p. 216)



Leoncillo Leonardi
(Spoleto, 1915 – Rome, 1968)
Red Cut, 1963

Polished slipware terra cotta, 82 × 50 × 20 cm
Galleria d'Arte Maggiore Bologna

Leoncillo Leonardi comes to Informalism after a painful and intense inner turmoil that he documented in his diary: *'I spent all night without being able to fall asleep because of innumerable, vague pains. With daylight, my awareness became sharper and, with it, the thought of my obligation to go down to my study and work became precise. [...] To do what, though? And, in the deep disappointment at the thought that no preordained subject could possibly express my thoughts, this burden oppressed me and this urge to do always pushed me: to do something, to rise from bed, to do. Abruptly, I felt like an old spider needing to spin its web, drawing out from inside me this saliva produced by my present body, exhausting myself in this secure act, secure as the elementary acts of life are. [...] Therefore, what I want, what I must do, will be created as a new natural object, [...] deeply true because of its deep naturalness, like a stone from the earth, like a leaf from the tree, like this hand that is mine'*. The final result is nothing but the product of intellectual will, shaped from outside. *'We become ourselves through stratifications, in much the same way as a work is accomplished through a series of intuitions, regrets, new decisions. By the realization that it is not the execution of an idea. It is the idea'*. (Leoncillo Leonardi, 1957; passages from the *Piccolo diario*, in Germano Celant, *L'Inferno dell'arte italiana: Materiali, 1946-1964*, Genova, Costa & Nolan, 1990, pp. 193-195.)



Norio Imai
(Osaka, 1946)
Work – Circle B, 1964

Acrylic, cotton cloth, metal mould, nails
Diameter 160 cm, depth 9 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Norio Imai joined the Gutai Art Association in 1965. He and other young Gutai artists formed a new generation of Gutai that continued Jiro Yoshihara's commitment to originality through their works, which experimented with technology and cutting-edge industrial materials. Imai incorporates the concepts of inventiveness and creativity by using pure whiteness. He considers white to be the ultimate colour, a non-colour combining all colours in perfect harmony. For him, white is a landscape made out of nothingness, a full emptiness that generates a monumental monochrome silence. By placing material underneath the surface, Imai pushes the work to become something between object and painting while allowing the intuitive to rise from within the canvas. This work explores the possibilities of the pregnant void, presenting concentric elements that grow from within.

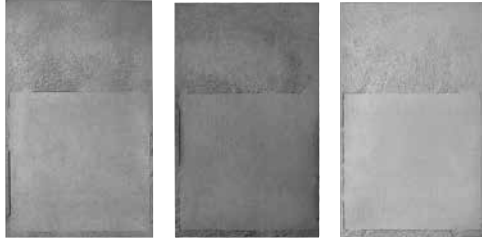


Antony Gormley
(1950, London)
GUT X, 2013

Hollow plaster blocks made from 10 mm wall thickness of Crystacal R Plaster (resin based) re-enforced with wire mesh and hessian scrim, 313 × 73,5 × 69,5 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Thaddaeus Ropac Galerie and Axel Vervoordt Gallery. Photo © Stephen White, London

Throughout his oeuvre, Antony Gormley has revitalized the human image in sculpture through a radical investigation of the body as a place of memory and transformation, using his own body as a subject, tool, and material. Whereas his earlier sculptures and installations were moulded after a cast of his own body, his more recent works focus on decomposing the human body in a more abstract way. With these

sculptures, the artist explores the human condition and the collective body, figuring out the relationship between self and other.



Chung Chang-Sup
(Cheongju 1927 – Seoul, 2011)
Meditation 9601, 9604, 9602, 1996

Korean *tak* paper (mulberry fibre) on canvas,
260 × 160 cm (each)
Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Chung Chang-Sup was a prominent member of the Korean art movement Dansaekhwa. He developed a highly personal technique of using Korean *tak* fibre, made from the inner bark of the paper. *'I scoop up the pulp, spread it on a canvas, tap and knead it, and my conversation with the paper mulberry begins. I abandon my own will and instead await its spontaneous response'*. This reflects Chung's Taoist belief that an artist balances material and nature in a unified act of making: *'In battering and kneading tak, I unknowingly put my breath, odour and finally my soul into the process, thus becoming a part of the process itself'*. This technique, which he pursued for forty years, reached its culmination in the artist's final series, *Meditation*. For this series, Chung introduced other natural pigments, mostly out of tobacco leaves and charcoal, yet subtly faded and blurred into the yellowish tint from the sap of the paper mulberry. In *Meditation*, Chung also introduced geometric form. By using a wooden stick, he opened up the thick pulp and shaped a large square, a window to the outside. When he was still very young, Chung had a shaping experience when he saw sunlight filtering through a window screen, made of Korean *tak* paper: *'When I was young, the first thing I would see when waking up was soft sunlight penetrating through a tak paper window. (...) Through the screen of tak paper, one can distinctively sense the wind, light, and the flow of time outside his or her room, and this allowed us to experience simultaneously the feeling of being inside and outside. This is the realm of creation with no intention of creating'*.



Vittore Carpaccio
(Venice, 1465 – Capodistria, 1520)
Visitation, 1504–1508

Oil on canvas, 130 × 140 cm
Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro, Venice
Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e
delle attività Culturali

'At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!' (Luke 1: 39–42)



Yves Klein
(Nice, 1928 – Cannes, 1962)
Monochrome bleu (IKB 249), 1959

Pure pigments and synthetic resin on canvas
mounted on wood, 32 × 24 cm
Private collection

'Blue has no dimension. It stands outside the dimensions that the other colours have. They are pre-psychological spaces. (...) All colours bring associations of concrete ideas (...), while blue refers at most to the sea and the sky, which are, after all, abstract in both a tangible and a visible sense'. (Yves Klein)

French artist Yves Klein bridged the gap between abstraction and conceptual art with his monochrome works in 'International Klein Blue' – a pigment he patented in 1960. This colour, which he created himself, is a deep, intense, and vibrating blue with an extraordinarily captivating effect that he wanted to spread to all corners of the globe. The use of only one specific primary colour for all of his monochromes gave Klein the freedom to go beyond the natural association and expectation that other colours might evoke, and thus leave the pictorial tradition behind completely. By applying this rich, electric blue all over the

canvas without leaving any trace of a paintbrush, he created an infinite universe of living and tangible colour for the viewer to be absorbed by. The lack of any interruption – be it by colour, texture, brushstrokes, or any other lines – gives way to space, purity, and freedom.



Vittore Carpaccio
(Venice, 1465 – Capodistria, 1504)
Annunciation

Oil on canvas, 130 × 140 cm
Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro, Venice
Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e
delle attività Culturali

Bernard Berenson in *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* writes: *'[...] the better Venetian paintings present such harmony of intention and execution as distinguishes the highest achievements of genuine poets. [...] Their colouring not only gives direct pleasure to the eye, but acts like music upon the moods, stimulating thought and memory in much the same way as a work by a great composer'*.

With his love for homely scenes, his gaiety of humour, and his skilful rendering of light and shadow, Vittore Carpaccio is considered the earliest Italian genre painter. After enjoying peace for several generations, the Venetians of the late fifteenth century were concerned with love of comfort, refinement of manner, and humaneness of feeling. Carpaccio's connection to the mood of his time is embodied in his religious scenes, which are no longer mere objects of devotion, but also of enjoyment. The figures in his paintings, be they angels, saints or mortals, are depicted with appeal: they wear their splendid robes with dignity and lead a worthy life.



Gotthard Graubner
(Erlbach, 1930 – Insel Hombroich, 2013)
Untitled, 1989 – 1990

Mixed media and synthetic cotton-wool on canvas
205 x 207 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Volume, space, and colour are at the heart of Gotthard Graubner's body of work. The artist, who saw his pictorial concept through the notion of *Farbraumkörper* ('colour-space body'), produced colour formations of indefinite depth, comparable to the work of Mark Rothko. Not linked to shape, he allows pure colour to appear immaterial. It became the medium of the artwork itself, oozing out a meditative atmosphere. Graubner's paintings are not exactly monochrome, since there are multiple colours used to create the fogginess of the surface. To enhance the spatial effects, Graubner started mounting synthetic cushions under his canvas in the 1960s, turning the painting into a three-dimensional body. These cushion paintings evoke tranquillity in our vision, and open up a safe path for inner reflection. The viewer steps into a state of meditation and reaches the highest possible achievement of the mind: to think of 'nothing'. Graubner preferred to not get lost in endless philosophies and theories about his work. Had he been able to express his emotions and intuitions through words, he would have. But he chose to paint.



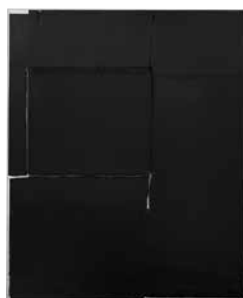
Joan Miró
(Barcelona, 1893 – Palma de Mallorca, 1983)
Planche à repasser, 1953

Oil paint on wood, 157 x 30 x 3 cm
Collection Isabelle Maeght, Paris

'Is the essential thing not this mysterious radiance that emanates from a hidden source, where the work develops and ends up becoming something very human? True

reality lies there. A deeper, ironic reality, which mocks the one that's right in front of our eyes, and yet is one and the same. It needs only to be lit up from below, by a beam of starlight. Thus everything becomes strange and unstable, clear and yet at the same time confused, with new forms issuing forth as others become transformed. They interact with each other, and thereby create the reality of a universe of signs and symbols, where the figures pass from one realm to another, with one foot always touching the roots, where they are themselves roots, and where they lose themselves in the tangled net of the stars. It is like a kind of secret language, composed of magic formulas, a language that comes before words, from a time that men imagined, or sensed, was more true, more real, than what they saw. It was the only reality'.

(Joan Miró, cited in Pierre Voldboudt, *XXème siècle, nouvelle série no. 9*, June 1957, p. 24)



Jaromír Novotný
(Český Brod, 1974)
Untitled, 2017

Acrylic on canvas and synthetic organza, 180 x 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Geukens & De Vil,
and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'The theme of intuition is something very private and personal, but it works on many levels. One of these can be the overall evolution of one's work. [...] [T]here is intuition at work in decisions at every single step of a work, of a painting. Before positioning every line in a composition, intuition is involved. I use elements, which some people would describe or experience as being strictly geometrical, and therefore assume to be produced by a rational mind. But I feel, in quite an intense way, that there is no conflict, no opposition: intuition works fluidly with – and within – these forms. [...] I do not plan, do not sketch. It is more a live process'. (Jaromir Novotný)



Michaël Borremans
(Geraardsbergen, 1963)
The Bread, 2012

Framed 19" LCD screen – HD video, 4 minutes, 46 x 38 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Zeno X Gallery

'I combine elements, in an image, that are anachronistic or contradictory. That way you get some kind of ideological failure, and exactly that failure is the essence of the work'. (Michaël Borremans)

At the core of Michaël Borremans' works are solemn-looking characters, unusual close-ups, and unsettling still-lives that have a theatrical dimension. His arrangements are staged, ambiguous, and related to literature, photography, and film. He overwhelms the viewer with unfamiliar compositions, a veil of stylistic perfection, and deliberate stillness. A dialogue with previous art historical epochs refers to painters like Velázquez, Goya, and Manet, giving Borremans' style a universal character. The unconventional perspectives and strange narratives, however, defy expectations and vastly distinguish the images from that of their predecessors. *The Bread* is one of the artist's 'video-paintings'. In an ongoing loop, we see an angelic looking girl eating pieces of bread, quite slowly. This ordinary activity is portrayed in such a way that a sacred and mysterious dimension oozes out of it. Typical of Borremans, she is set in a neutral, unrecognizable environment that holds no sense of time.



Yuko Nasaka
(Osaka, 1938)
Untitled, ca. 1975

Plaster and pigment on wooden panel, 60 x 60 cm
Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

A sizeable part of Yuko Nasaka's body of work consists of images of concentric circles painted in

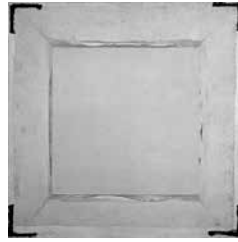
relief on square wooden panels. After coating the panels with a thin layer of glue, plaster, and clay, she would place them on a homemade mechanical turntable. As the panel rotated, she used a palette knife to carve patterns into the material, a gesture she compared to working on a potter's wheel. She then displayed the paintings in grids, some as large as the mural she created for her solo show at the Gutai Pinacotheca in 1964. The meaning generated by Nasaka's circles is infinite and open to every possible interpretation, an essential feature of every true Gutai artwork. Openness of meaning can only be attained if an artist is able to set aside the ego and thus allow the interaction with matter itself to guide the process of creation. Pure chance and the behaviour of the used materials are what must guide and decide the end result. Nasaka does not have a preconceived idea of how exactly a work is going to look or what meaning has to be ascribed to it. Being guided by the essential qualities of the materials she uses and by any number of small coincidences that cross her path, she considers herself to be nothing more than the medium that can allow matter to express itself further.



Lucia Bru
(Brussels, 1970)
(aérocubes), 2017

Opaline sculpture: H: 26 x L: 25 x D: 41 cm
Crystal and cement sculpture: H: 20 x L: 20 x D: 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery.
Photo Tazio © Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

The work of Belgian artist Lucia Bru presents a delicate dialogue between the vulnerability of the naked object and the surrounding space in which it tries to find its place. She creates her own unique form language, based on geometrical laws, yet distorted by the reality of her own body. Bru consciously adds human insecurity and imperfection to geometrical structures. She acts upon matter with instinctive gestures that accept the beauty of the unpredictable and twisted form, making failure non-existent in her work. The 'flaws' in her work are symptoms of the intimate relation between the artist and the matter she moulds. Bru works with several series that are still ongoing. In *(aérocubes)*, three objects are laying vulnerable on the floor: made of opaline, crystal, and cement, these pieces are not only fragile, but also sensual. They show a human sensitiveness that is open to the uncertainty of form.



Antoni Tàpies
(Barcelona, 1923 – 2012)
Carré sur carré, 1976

Assembly and oil on canvas on wood, 162 x 162 cm
Collection Jules Maeght, Paris

'As far as my work is concerned, I felt at that time [the 1970s] the need to start from the "nadir" (nothingness); not a zero, but I had to go back to my roots and finally reacquire and make my own many approaches that I had once vaguely internalized in my early years through Surrealism. Many of the techniques that validate the anarchic impulses of the imagination and the subconscious became important again, as for example the conscious inclusion of chance, of failure, and of error.'

(Antoni Tàpies)

Antoni Tàpies' work underwent a radical change between 1953 and 1956. He abandoned surreal iconography and illusionist space and adapted an abstract expressionist language mixed with symbolism and a certain influence of calligraphy. By using a material that had the appearance of a wall – on which we could perceive scrawls, incisions, marks, traces, degradations, perforations, and so on – he altered the traditional conception of the pictorial surface. An interest in rough matter led him to use many different materials on his paintings, like clay, marble dust, waste paper, string, rags, or earth. These mixed media assemblages attest to the artist's urge for artistic expression, and for experimentation with new techniques. Tàpies' matter paintings show the typical features of a real wall etched by the passing of time, the impact of natural elements, heat and damp, wind and sun, and the transformation of the material itself. In these works, we can strongly see an aesthetic of meditative emptiness.



Cycladic Head
Greece, Early Cycladic II, ca. 2500 BC

Marble, H: 6 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jan Liégeois

The ovoid head of this Cycladic figure displays an abstract rendering of the human head. The chin is rounded, while the top of the head is flattened.

The nose, the only feature to be brought out, is well-centred, creating the classical Cycladic look. The long and slender neck is flaring slightly. The striking abstract nature of this small head has a strangely contemporary familiarity, its elegance and simple lines reflected in the work of modern artists such as Brancusi and Modigliani. The most prominent craft of the Cycladic civilization (ca. 3000 – 2000 BC) was stone-cutting, especially the carving of marble sculpture, thanks to the abundance of white, good-quality marble on most of the islands. The highly abstracted idols mostly represent naked female figures in a standing position. Different theories exist about the meaning of these idols. Their abstract, strongly refined figure may have been the idealized portrayal of a great 'Mother Goddess', harbinger of fertility and rejuvenation. Because they were commonly used as grave offerings, some archaeologists believe them to have been buried with the deceased to serve him in the afterlife, in the same manner as the Egyptian *Shabti* figures. Another theory suggests that they were amulets or statuettes of goddesses or nymphs.



Ivan Kliun
(Bolshie Gorki, 1873 – Moscow, 1943)
Spherical Construction, ca. 1921–25

Oil on paper relined on canvas, 72,5 x 44,3 cm
State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki

After he met Kazimir Malevich in 1907, Russian avant-garde artist Ivan Kliun joined the theoretical and creative search for new ways of art-making, leading him to practice Suprematism and Constructivism. The reflex to renew the approach and execution of creation made way for refreshing and radically modern images. Within his oeuvre, Kliun mostly used geometrical figures like the square, the circle, and the triangle. Subjective expression was eliminated completely. Focused on stepping away from figurative elements as a result of objectively studying and thoroughly simplifying painterly tools and conventions, the artist reached complete abstraction



Hans Hartung
(Leipzig, 1904 – Antibes, 1989)
T 1966 H, 1966

Oil on canvas, 100 x 30 cm
Private collection

Hartung started making his first, almost informalist, drawings and watercolours in the 1920s. Around 1938, following a fauve and cubistic phase, he started working on his paintings, which are characterized by dark coats and acts of marking of a great, and free, abstract expressivity. His later paintings, from the 1970s on, are surfaces, also of big dimensions, with backgrounds enlivened by engravings that create atmospheres of suspended spatiality endowed with extraordinary effects of poetic abstraction. These compositions derive, on the one hand, from oriental graphic resonances and, on the other, from vibrant perceptive suggestions. In the last phase, he opted for more material processes, using brooms or bush branches saturated with colour in order to violently ‘whip’ the canvases.



Alberto Giacometti
(Switzerland, 1901–1966)
Femme debout, s.d.

Plaster, 24 x 7 x 10 cm
Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence



Giovanni Giaretta
(Padua, 1983)
A Thing among Things, 2015

Video, full HD, 7'13"
Courtesy of the artist

Crystals in Giovanni Giaretta's video frames can be interpreted as a metaphor for cinema, since they are objects whose shape and image exist exclusively in the refraction of the light and reality that surrounds them. The artist investigates such mineral camouflage by observing closely the structure of these transparent stones. These pictures, produced in this way, lack both scale and spatial reference marks, and thus become suitable screens for projecting the silent tales of the blind. Interviewed individuals, all of whom lost their sight while still young, try to restore and describe their last visual memories, which have been rendered blurry and unclear by time – much as the frames of crystals in the video are vague and open to the paths of our imagination.



Marina Abramović
(Belgrade, 1946)
Standing Structure for Human Use
from the series *Transitory Objects*
for *Human Use*, 2017

Dark wood, crystal quartz stones
Courtesy of Marina Abramović. Archives
and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photos: *The Abramović Method*, in *Terra Comunal*,
Marina Abramović, + MAI SESC, São Paulo, 2015
Photo © Hick Duarte, Courtesy Flag CX
Film still © *The Space in Between*, Courtesy Casa Redonda

'Intuition is the key to the centre of the soul, where the idea nests. How to activate intuition is the mystery. Sometimes, it is just about living life, and it comes unexpectedly, like a surprise, carrying on its wings ideas and solutions to problems. For my work, intuition is very important to me. If I don't feel what I call the "gut feeling" for something to do, I will not do it. Everybody has trauma, everybody has loneliness, everybody has fear of death, everybody has pain. I'm giving part of myself, and they give me part of themselves. The only way to understand on a much more profound level what performance is, is for them to make their own personal journey.' (Marina Abramović)

In her performances, Marina Abramović pushes her physical and mental boundaries while simultaneously confronting her viewers with their own emotional limits. Many of her performances over the past thirty years have been brutal and unnerving. While the artist's body is her main tool for creation, the intuitive mind is never far away in exploring the fine line between art, ritual, consciousness, and the physical. By asking the viewer to come along, the public becomes her mirror and she the mirror of the public. Abramović sees art as a tool to build bridges between different people, and as a means of communication between the physical and the spiritual world. The work presented here invites the public to step away from just being a viewer, and to become a participant. The artist sees that we need art in cities where people have no time, where there is too much noise, where there is pollution. Taking inspiration from nature, she takes us on a mental departure, radically highlighting the spectator's own sense of the moment. By interacting with the crystals, people will open their mind and let their intuition unfold and so experience their own self.

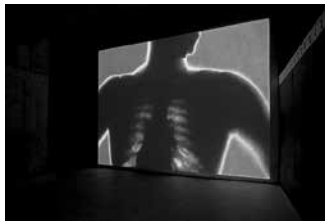


Guido Cadorin
(Venice, 1892 – 1976)
Canal in Venice, 1960

Oil on canvas, 149 x 98 cm
Private Collection, Venice
Photo © Archivio Cadorin – Barbarigo – Music

Guido Cadorin came from a family of several generations of artists: he was the eleventh son of the sculptor Vincenzo Cadorin and the father of the painter Ida Barbarigo. Jean Clair says that he is *'one of the long-forgotten representatives of the Novecento, whose importance is only recently being rediscovered. He was also one of the key figures in the rebirth of the fresco in Italy'*. Indeed, in the years between the two World Wars, he worked making frescoes in churches and private residences in the Venetian hinterland, and also for Gabriele D'Annunzio's Vittoriale. The architect Marcello Piacentini called him to Rome to decorate the Albergo Ambasciatori's banquet hall (1926) and to Milan for the Palazzo di Giustizia (1939). As a teacher at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice, he exhibited his work in several international shows: the Venice Biennale, the International Expositions in Barcelona (1929) and Brussels (1935), and in the Rome Quadriennale.

In 1957, his city dedicated a retrospective show to him at the Correr Museum. Guido Cadarin's wife, Livia Cardorin, born Tivoli, was herself a talented artist, but abandoned her artistic career to take care of the family.



Barbara Hammer
(Hollywood, 1939)
Sanctus, 1990

Video with sound, 20'
Based on the shoot of Dr. James Sibley Watson
Sound: Neil B. Rolnick
Courtesy of the artist and KOW gallery

'In making Sanctus, I was concerned about the contradictory qualities of beauty and danger of the images that were made by radiation. I delighted in the imagery and at the same time I imagined the deleterious effects of the image-making on the subjects. This was my dilemma in making the film, and it continues until today. I thought about putting a "radiation marker" at the bottom of the frame so that the audience would be aware of the danger of this image gathering. Then I thought this was too direct and would make an overstatement and disallow people to find themselves in the same situation as me. It's so beautiful. It's so dangerous. This is where "intuition" came into play. Viewers would be like me, they would be overwhelmed with the majestic beauty of the interior body, of the fluid and skeletal structures, but they would feel a foreboding. This is intuition, a foreboding, a sense of ambivalence, an unsteady, non-homogenous emotive state, a not-knowing. Should they celebrate or should they scorn? My intuition as an artist is to draw forth the intuition of the audience, to reassure them that a non-fixed position is quite O.K., not something to be feared, but, in fact, honoured. To intuit multiple feelings at the same time is to be alive in this complex and scary but wonderful world!'
(Barbara Hammer)



Pablo Picasso
(Malaga, 1881 – Mougins, 1973)
Composition, 1909

Ink on paper, 26,5 × 28,5 cm
Private collection

'I don't have a clue. Ideas are simply starting points. I can rarely set them down as they come to my mind. As soon as I start to work, others well up in my pen. To know what you're going to draw, you have to begin drawing. [...] When I find myself facing a blank page, that's always going through my head. What I capture in spite of myself interests me more than my own ideas.'
(Pablo Picasso)

This drawing dates to the earliest phase of Cubism, usually known as the 'analytic Cubism' period. What is as evident here as in the vision of dazzling *Damoiselles* (influenced by African art) is a new language, formed also thanks to the memory of the spatiality characteristic of Cézanne: the pen investigates the volumes, unfolding and interpenetrating the space. The drawing was published in the Italian magazine *La Voce* (no. 47, 21 November 1912). The year before, Ardengo Soffici had introduced Cubism to the Italian public on the pages of the same magazine by reproducing works from its two most important representatives: Picasso and Braque. According to Soffici, Picasso saw drawing 'as a tool of free and bold deformation'. For Picasso, drawing has the value of a hieroglyph with which he writes; for those who can read it, it is a lyrically intuited truth.



'Kuro Karazu' Japanese Tea Bowl
Momoyama period (1573–1615)

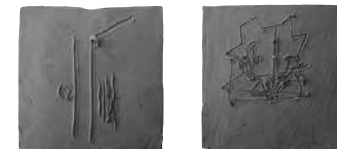
Black earthenware, 7 × 13,5 × 7,5 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jan Liégeois



Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
(Alexandria, 1876 – Bellagio, Como, 1944)
Premier Record, 1914

Ink on paper, 35 × 26,5 cm
Private collection

This is an example of the *parole in libertà* (words-in-freedom) style of poetry theorized in several of the manifestoes by Marinetti, the leader and founder of Futurism. In his 'Supplement to the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' (1912), he explains his *hatred of intelligence* in these words: *'When I speak about intuition and intelligence, of course, it is not my intention to talk about two domains that are entirely distinct and cut-off from each other. All creative spirits have noticed, in the course of their creative work, that the intuitive features blend with elements of logical intelligence. It is thus impossible to know exactly the moment at which unconscious inspiration ends and clear-sightedness begins. [...] The hand that writes seems detached from the body and continues for a long time freed from the brain, which also, somehow detached from the body, having taken flight, looks down from on high, with an awesome clarity of vision, upon the unexpected expression coming from the pen'*. Another meaningful aspect is the prophetic choice of the automobile as a symbol of the new perception, already present in the new Futurist *Manifesto*, published by Marinetti himself in *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909: *'a roaring motorcar, which seems to race on like machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace'*.



Marcos Lutyens
(London, 1964)
Ambideliou, 2017

Hypnotic induction, chairs, clay, wood, bronze
Variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris/Venice
Photo © Marcos Lutyens, *Doors of Perception*, 2013

'The pristine surface of clay rests there under each hand, an ice rink that no one has yet jumped onto, to gouge'

*a trail of her own. No trench or abyss to catch an edge.
Just a blank, infinite, soft, silent emptiness.*

My minds are in an inward dérive.

*For a while now, my corpus callosum presents a hard wall
of separation, a barrier between worlds and words so that
no utterance may ever jump across.*

*The other side permeates through though, as the soft
midnight thud of neighbours across thin apartment walls,
or the bass notes of an argument in the other room.*

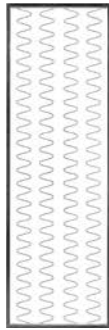
But the actual messages are blocked.

*Instead, thin lines issue forth through my fingertips:
On the one side, from the direction of the mute prisoner,
as jagged aqua threads with sweet points along their slopes.*

*From the other side, a jumble of cascading tangerine
Incisions, marinated in the sweaty tang of copper.*

*Paroptic, parauditory, parolfactory: my fingertips branch
out through all my feeling strands. The woven threads
hover in front of the chair, finally crafting a fabric of
heightened sense, of sensibility. The weft gathers, warps
and deflects out over the tiled rooftops, away, between
the liquid roads of Venice'.*

(Marcos Luytens)



Henri Foucault

(Versailles, 1954)

Deep Blue (Version A), 2014

Swarovski crystals on paper with silver salts
130 × 42 × 5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

Henri Foucault's work *Deep Blue* is an almost abstract interpretation of the undulations of the water-lily pond in Claude Monet's water garden. Sparkling blue Swarovski crystals, drawn on large sheets of paper with silver salts, represent the movement of the plants and views of the pond. Between sculpture and photography, this work strips the concept of the water garden to its essence. For the creation of *Deep Blue*, Foucault walked around the Japanese-style garden countless times, photographing all its elements and sights, and making several notebooks full of drawings and sketches. His aim was to translate the landscape into a 'photographic sculpture' through the play of light. By reinventing a visual and luminous vocabulary out of photographs, drawings, and sketches, Foucault manages to visualize in his work the quivering of light, water, and air.



Ann Veronica Janssens

(Folkestone, 1956)

volute, 2006–2017

Installation, water mist, 220 × 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Blaise Adilon, courtesy IAC Villeurbanne

'I am interested in what escapes me, not in order to arrest it but, on the contrary, in order to experiment with the "ungraspable".' (Ann Veronica Janssens)

Ann Veronica Janssens is best known for her use of ephemeral materials such as colours, artificial fog, water, and light. Objects themselves are not very prevalent in her work, but properties of matter (gloss, lightness, transparency, fluidity) and physical phenomena (reflection, refraction, perspective, balance, waves) are rigorously investigated for their ability to destabilize the very concept of materiality. The implementation of those elements lends itself to the excavation of the balance between the defined and the undefined. Her work evolves around cognition, reflexes, meanings, and the human mind, and serves to explore perception by unbalancing both perceptive and sensory experiences. By using different means of presentation – installations, projections, immersive environments, mist rooms, urban interventions, sculptures – Janssens invites the viewer to cross into a new sensory space, a space that finds itself on the borderline of dizziness and bedazzlement. A loss of orientation and control becomes linked to questions of perceptual psychology.



Gong-Shi, or 'Dream Stone'
China, 19th century

Marble, 29 × 36 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
Photo Jan Liégeois

The subtle and ambiguous patterns of the *Gong-Shi* were believed to be a source of knowledge and insight for the scholar or sage who studied them patiently. Collectors ruined themselves to possess these stones, which were thought to embody an almost menacing perfection. As Roger Caillois writes

in *The Writing of Stones*: 'Such objects ... reduce space, they condense time. They are the object of prolonged reverie, meditation, and self-hypnosis, a path to ecstasy and a means of communication with the Real World. The sage contemplates them, ventures into them, and is lost. Legend has it that he never returns to the world of mankind: he has entered the realm of the Immortals, and become an Immortal himself'.



Lucio Fontana

(Rosario de Santa Fé, 1899 – Varese, 1968)

Concetto Spaziale, 1963

Oil and pencil on canvas, 63 × 70 cm
Merlini Collection, Busto Arsizio

'This idea did not just appear to me. For ten, twenty years I studied and searched for a new conception of space and dimension on the canvas. One day ... It is something that comes from inside, it is a study, and then one day I found it: the perforation! [...] I started doing the perforations and then I did the cuts. It is a new dimension, wider, but it is always the same principle'.
(Lucio Fontana, in an interview, 1962)



Gerhard Richter

(Dresden, 1932)

Untitled, 16. Nov. 1995

Oil on paper, 42 × 29,7 cm
Collection Mr. De Bueil and Mr. Ract-Madoux, Paris

'I don't have a specific picture in my mind's eye. I want to end up with a picture that I haven't planned. This method of arbitrary choice, chance, inspiration, and destruction may produce a specific type of picture, but it never produces a predetermined picture. Each picture has to evolve out of a painterly or visual logic: it has to emerge as if inevitably. And by not planning the outcome, I hope to achieve the same coherence and objectivity'.

that a random slice of nature (or a readymade) always possesses. Of course, this is also a method of bringing in unconscious processes, as far as possible. I just want to get something more interesting out of it than those things that I can think out for myself.

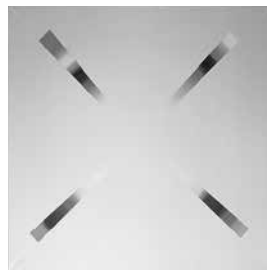
I started doing "figures", then, one day, all of a sudden, I started doing abstraction. And then I started doing both. But it was never really a conscious decision. It was simply a question of desire. In fact, I really prefer making figurative work, but the figure is difficult. So to work around the difficulty I take a break and paint abstractly. Which I really like, by the way, because it allows me to make beautiful paintings'. (Gerhard Richter)



Jean Degottex
(Santhony, 1918 – Paris, 1988)
Bleed Page no. 8, 1975

Papiers collés engraved on Vélín d'Arches paper,
76 × 56,5 cm
Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Degottex's abstract painting, deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism, stands out as a very sensitive research directed at an impersonal dimension of the void, suspended somewhere between space and time. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, he developed his research through experiments involving automatic writing and calligraphy, and as a result of that research he wound up using lines as elements capable of activating the picture's space. Later on, he experimented with new support media (also concave or convex), and with a variety of different methods (engraving, print, décollage, tears, burns, cracks, cuts), exploring thus the very limits of the monochrome and invisibility. In his final years, his actions became so reduced as to allow the work to emerge all by itself.



Jef Verheyen
(Itegem, 1932 – Apt, 1984)
Arkturus IV, 1972

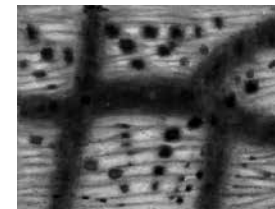
Acrylic on canvas, 180 × 180 cm
Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégois

Jef Verheyen became known as the painter of light. For him, seeing was feeling with the eyes. He experimented not only with light, but also with movement and the invisible as means to evoke natural mechanisms and to reveal universal interrelationships between human beings and the surrounding world. He used geometric principles – his passion for geometry was born out of his interest in mathematics and philosophy – as the basis for harmony. Verheyen never gave up on traditional mediums such as the canvas, paint, and brushes to search for the essence of the world. This work is part of a series known as *Eon*, a misspelling of the word 'ion'. *Eons are phenomena, maybe components of light, moving at tremendous speed through the universe. Sometimes they appear to be light itself, i.e., they possess all the colours, and sometimes they seem to reverberate all colours that the sunshine reflects on their trajectory. To me, Eons are like beings that tell something about the immensity of the universe. Maybe it is they who communicate ideas to mankind. Maybe they release energy in people, some kind of contact in the brain, which allows people to perceive more clearly, to see more clearly the structure of many things. The infinity and continuity of these phenomena gets clarified by the meaning the pre-Socratic ascribed to the notion of Eon.* (Jef Verheyen)



Fra Giovanni Angelico da Fiesole,
called 'Fra Angelico'
(Vicchio, 1395 – Rome, 1455)
Annunciation, ca. 1450–1475

Painted parchment, pigments and gold leaf
28,2 × 18,7 cm (miniature: 15,7 × 16 cm)
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini



Zoran Mušič
(Gorizia, 1909 – Venice, 2005)
Dalmatian Lands, 1958

Oil on canvas, 89 × 116 cm
Private collection, Venice
Photo © Archivio Cadorn – Barbarigo – Music

'Music or the voice of silence. What can be said after a concentration camp? What words would not sound indecent? Music had painted the camp with dark, yellow, and red ochre colours that are the colours of dirt and resurrection. No bright colours. No artifices. The silence of the landscapes prolonged the astonishment of the concentration camp's universe – the silence of the animals, of the little horses, the silence of the water flowing in the channels, the silence of the deadened steps in the calli of Venice...'

Returning from Dachau with a collection of dramatic drawings made in the camp during his detention, Zoran Music settled in Venice, where he was reunited with Ida Barbarigo, whom he had met before being deported. In the following years, the two artists lived between Paris and Venice. The ecstatic, stunned landscapes of the following years were described as visions from an 'idyllic' world that stand as a 'reply to the tragic experience of death': timeless backgrounds where the stratifications of history are perceptible. Landscapes that are at the same time Byzantine, Mediterranean, Central European stand 'in precarious balance between West and East, an evanescent world where meanings overlie each other in a dense mixture of subtle allusions and distant ambiguity'. (Giuseppe Mazzariol, 1974)



Stephen Lichty
(Kansas City, 1983)
Headrest, 2015

Wood and Tung oil, 21 × 7,6 × 17,1 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Foxy Production, New York

A wooden shape attracts our imagination because of the simplicity of its profile, at once polished and smooth, and also precise and symmetric. Blunted edges prolong the inner movement of the wooden fibres, and the entire object is refined with Tung oil in order to darken and polish its surface. With an elegant and precise style, Stephen Lichty joins the American Minimalist sculptural tradition with

recovered shapes of headrests, ancient objects that were very common in many cultures, from Africa to the East. They have been used since ancient times to hold in place elaborate hairstyles during rest, and to sustain the head of the dead during funeral ceremonies. Lichty appropriates and develops the traditional shape of an Egyptian headrest, which in its turn had been modelled on the hieroglyph called *akhet* ('where the sun rises or sets', or, more simply, 'horizon'). This hieroglyph derives its shape from the mountain that 'sustains' the sun when it 'wakes up' or goes to 'rest', just as the headrest sustains our head while we sleep and dream. Lichty's sculpture reverentially crosses these different formal, cultural, and symbolic dimensions, which impregnate its wood with multiple silent stories.

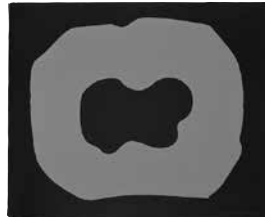


Giorgio De Chirico
(Volos, 1888 – Rome, 1978)
Piazza d'Italia, inscribed 1916

Oil on canvas, 55 × 65 cm
Private collection
Photo Claudio Franzini

According to the artist's own account, metaphysical painting arose from a kind of illumination during an autumn afternoon in 1910 in the Florentine piazza of Santa Croce (Francesco Poli's 'Wandering in the Land of Intuition', in the first part of this volume, recounts that event in detail). The theme of the *Piazza d'Italia* depends also on another piazza: Piazza Carlo Alberto in Turin, which is evoked here by the 'black silhouette' of Charles Albert's equestrian statue in the centre of the picture. This citation is also a tribute to Nietzsche's madness and genius. As a matter of fact, one of the results of the psychological disease of the German philosopher, who saw that statue from his window every day during the time he resided in Turin, is that he came to believe himself 'to be Charles Albert's son, that is, Victor Emmanuel II, and on 6 January 1889, he wrote to Jacob Burckhardt: "I rented a small student room in front of the Palazzo Carignano, in which I was born as Victor Emmanuel"...' (Paolo Baldacci, *De Chirico 1888–1919 La Metafisica*, Milano, Leonardo Arte, 1997 p. 95). The philosophy of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer initiated metaphysical poetics: putting together elements in an enigmatic way, breaking logical connections between things and giving birth to new, deep revelations. The same repetition of the theme was reinterpreted in the following years in the light of Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence of the same.

'Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were the first to teach me life's nonsense and how such nonsense could be transmuted into art or, rather, how it could become the internal skeleton of a truly new, free, and deep art. Good artists today are philosophers who have overcome philosophy. They have come back here. New painters stop at the rectangles of their canvases and walls because they overcame the contemplation of the infinite. The horrifying void they discovered is the utterly senseless and calm beauty of matter.' (Giorgio De Chirico, *Noi Metafisici*, 1919)



Jiro Yoshihara
(Osaka, 1905 – Ashiya, 1972)
Untitled, 1968

Acrylic on canvas, 50 × 60,8 cm
Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

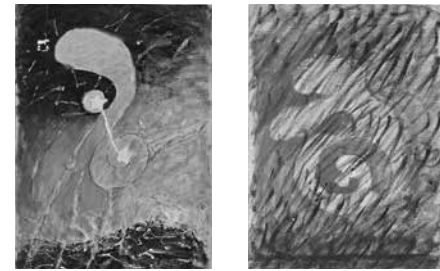
In 1954, artist Jiro Yoshihara founded the Gutai Art Association, a Japanese post-War avant-garde movement that existed until 1972. Gutai was as much about process as it was about product. *Gu* means tool, measures, or a way of doing something, while *tai* means body. The Gutai considered it to mean 'embodiment' and 'concreteness', which can be read like an abstraction, but actually suggests an embrace of art as a physical activity. The core idea was to 'do what no one has done before', and to make art that did not represent anything, but presented instead the intensity of the creative act itself. This led to groundbreaking approaches in art making. In *The Gutai Manifesto* (1956), Yoshihara writes:

'In those days we thought, and indeed still do think today, that the most important merits of abstract art lie in the fact that it has opened up the possibility to create a new, subjective shape of space, one that really deserves the name creation.'

'We have decided to pursue the possibilities of pure and creative activity with great energy. We tried to combine human creative ability with the characteristics of the material in order to concretize the abstract space.'

'When the abilities of the individual were united with the chosen material in the melting pot of psychic automatism, we were overwhelmed by the shape of space still unknown to us and never before seen or experienced. Automatism naturally made an image that did not occur to us. Instead of relying on our own image, we have struggled to find an original method of creating that space.'

Yoshihara himself turned during his final years to the repeated depiction of circles in the spirit of *satori*, the Buddhist concept of sudden enlightenment. The *Enso*, or Zen circle, is one of the most appealing themes in Zen art. It is a universal symbol of wholeness and completion, and of the cyclical nature of existence.



Hilma af Klint
(Stockholm, 1862 – Djursholm, 1944)
Ur-Chaos 1-2, 1906–1907

Oil on canvas, 50 × 38 cm
Courtesy of the Hilma af Klint Foundation.
Photo © Albin Dahlström/Moderna Museet

'Amaliel signs a draft, then lets H paint. The idea is to produce a nucleus from which the evolution is based on rain and storm, lightning and storms. Then come leaden clouds above.' (Hilma af Klint)

In her work, Hilma af Klint entered into uncharted territory, breaking the rules on how the artwork was created and conquering a world that had not yet been shaped. Her paintings are an attempt to understand the world that surrounds us. Beyond our polarized world of perceived opposites – male/female, human/nature – she believed exists a world in which all things correspond to each other, a world in which everything is as one.

Ur-Chaos, or primordial chaos, is reportedly the first painting series the artist made under the guidance of what she called the 'High Masters'. These masters first came to her during a number of séances and she would eventually serve as their medium, both during the séances and while painting. The *Ur-Chaos* series formed a preparatory group for Af Klint's most well-known body of work, also painted with the aid of the 'High Masters': *The Paintings for the Temple*. The title refers to the original chaos or the state of unpredictability.



Umberto Boccioni
(Reggio Calabria, 1882 – Verona, 1916)
Forse (Maybe), 1911

Indian ink on paper, 16 × 12,3 cm
Private collection

The artist scribbled the word 'forse' (maybe) on the margin of a preparatory sketch. Doubt as an opening into the future, an aptitude toward new expressive possibilities in drawing. Some years later,

in 1914, Boccioni wrote about overcoming painting by imagining, 'maybe', a dematerialized art directly aimed at the spectator's sensibility. 'Maybe a time will come when a painting will not be enough. [...] The human eye will not perceive colours as an emotion per se. Multiplied colours will not need shapes to be understood and the shapes will live by themselves out of the objects that express them. Maybe painting will be vertiginous auditory and olfactory architectures of enormous coloured gas that, against an open horizon, will electrify the complex soul of new beings impossible for us to imagine. Are we maybe escaping from traditionally conceived painting and sculpture, which have been dominant since the beginning of world history? Are we striking the final blow to the destruction of art as it has been conceived until now? Maybe!'



Medardo Rosso
(Turin, 1858 – Milan, 1928)
Interior with Figures at the Window, 1920s

Pencil on paper, 11 × 18 cm
Private collection



Franco Guerzoni
(Modena, 1948)
Frescos, 1972

Photographic label and chalk, 45 × 33 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Monitor, Roma

'Intuition. This troubled and meaningful word brings me back, paradoxically, to the confused emotions of my past rather than to present ones. [...] I clearly remember [...] those subjects that had this special syntony. They were, and are, construction sites or, on the contrary, demolition sites. The time I am referring to corresponds to the years between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, a time when I entertained close friendships with the artists of my city, particularly with Luigi Ghirri. [...] At that time, Luigi was a surveyor in this city-in-construction, a profession that he integrated into his photographic research, and he generously shared the fruits of his labour with his artist friends [...], and so he often came with me when I, inexperienced, made my test shoots of abandoned spaces or,

indeed, of sumptuous architecture. [...] Scaffoldings, stacks of bricks and planks, bent irons, anything, in fact, could have been used during these opposite creative times. These visions allowed me to follow and grasp an uncertain result, and because of that they needed to be fixed by photography, onto which, later, I would have added some slightly coloured chalk marks. The profession of surveyor was holding him back. And so, not long after those shoots, he left his secure position for the uncertainty of photography, not, however, without the change causing severe problems. Since then, the subject [...] of my work has continued to be the theatre of working areas, but I do not shoot them anymore, I keep them all in mind, along with that air of the temporary and of movement that things in progress have. [...] I see Luigi disappearing in those creative spaces, shooting without paying too much attention to my requests, shooting and then taking care of only one image, like a movie that has been fast-forwarded until it brakes on just one frame'. (Franco Guerzoni, August 2016)



Umberto Boccioni
(Reggio Calabria, 1882 – Verona, 1916)
Gli uomini, 1910

Oil and tempera on paper, 14 × 20 cm
Private collection

This is the first of the intuitive oil sketches Boccioni made as a study for his famous painting, *The City Rises*, now at MoMA in New York. That painting is considered as one of Boccioni's first truly Futurist works, even though it is not markedly different from his earlier work focused on suburbs. In *The City Rises*, the naturalistic vision of the earlier work is partly abandoned and replaced by a more dynamic vision. Most of the space is occupied by men and horses, fused together in a dynamic effort. In this sketch, the fusing strokes are even more dynamic and impulsive, producing an almost abstract work.



Julian Beck
(Heights 1925 – New York 1985)
Eleanor d'Aquitaine, 1956

Mixed media and collage on canvas, 80 × 110 cm
Private Collection, Modena

Painter, poet, actor and theater director, Julian Beck founded in 1947 with his wife Judith Malina the experimental theatre company 'the Living Theatre'. With its international activity, which lasted for decades, Beck has contributed significantly to a radical libertarian revolution of stage events. In the 1940s, before devoting himself entirely to theatre, Beck studied art and developed his remarkable pictorial research close to the New York abstract expressionist art scene. In this refined and gestural painting, the tension between art and life, which will explode in the subsequent performances, is already present.



Michail Larionov
(Tiraspol, 1881 – Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1964)
La Mer, 1912–1913

Watercolour on cardboard, 20,5 × 30,6 cm
Private collection



Kusura Idol
Anatolia, Early Bronze Age
ca. 2700 – 2100 BC

Marble, H: 12,5 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jan Liégeois

This thin, delicate marble figurine or 'idol' is an abstract rendering of the female figure. A circular head rests on a long, graceful neck. The rest of the body is stylized in a shovel-like shape, the shoulders rising up a little, while the waist and hips form one curved line. Although there is no indication of the sex or other anatomical details, this is known to be a fertility figure.

In Anatolia, the tradition of making fertility figurines was originally characterized by fully plastic, naturalistic works of art (Neolithic Age, ca. 8500 – 4500 BC). During the Copper Age (ca. 4500 – 3000 BC), a process of abstraction, the reasons of which remain unclear, created flattened schematic idols, in which shoulders, waist, and hips are represented sketchily as curves in the contour. Idols made in the third millennium BC took this tendency even further, to the point where only the essential features of the human figure remain.



Robert Morris
(Kansas City, 1931)
Self-Portrait (EEG), 1963

Electroencephalography on paper and lead label
194,6 × 57,2 cm
D. Daskalopoulos Collection, Halandri

A methodology of chance and a focus on the working process itself are at the heart of Robert Morris' research. *Self-Portrait (EEG)* is one of the first experiments Morris conducted as young artist, shortly after he moved to New York, in the early 1960s, by which time he had abandoned painting and was devoting himself to his first experiments with sculpture and performance. The main work he produced during this period is certainly *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), in which a simple wooden box contains the carpentry sounds made during its creation. Following from this first idea, Morris started to devote himself to works that he describes as 'contemplative'. In particular, he applied the same method to listen to his own body and, using an electroencephalogram as a drawing tool, he recorded on paper his brain's electrical activity while it was concentrated on imagining itself. The artist considers these automatic drawings as pictures of his own self made by a mind free to transcribe spontaneously its own thinking process.



Anthropomorphic rectangular Stele
Sabaeen Kingdom, Ancient South Arabia
ca. 100 BC – 100 AD

Limestone, 21 × 12 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jean Liégeois

The geometric execution of this human face is characterized by a strong T-shape indicating the brow and the nose, with two small, crude eyes in the corners of the T. A circular mouth in low relief

gives the face a somewhat perplexed expression. Underneath the V-shaped chin is an inscription, most likely the name of the deceased in whose memory the stele was erected.

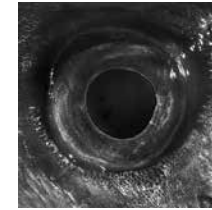
The presence of a personal name on these steles – which have been discovered at ancient necropolises in the Qatabân, Sabaeen and Minean regions of South Arabia – indicates that they were meant to represent the deceased and to preserve his or her memory. It is clear that ancient South Arabians believed in an afterlife and the existence of an inner essential self that we call a 'soul'. No explicit references are made to an underworld-like realm of the dead or a god of death. However, the dead were accompanied by objects that suggested death was regarded only as a transformation, a passing into a different state of being, but with the same needs as this life.



Yasmine Hugonnet
(Montreux, 1979)
The Ring / Quatuor, 2016

Choreography
Courtesy of the artist. Photo © Anne-Laure Lechat

Four bodies, moving in circles, create a continuous and silent dialogue based on exchanging gestures and positions. The variation of gestures transferred among the four dancers gradually generates an evolving drawing, a continuous frieze, as the author Mathieu Bouvier once described this piece. This delicate sign, created by the mutual exchange of postures, finds the place of intuition directly in the dancers' limbs, conceived both as the speaking subject and the spoken alphabet. The rhythm of this composition is balanced by the dancers' breathing, which, with composure and regularity, guides the shared time of the performance.



Bruna Esposito
(Rome, 1960)
Occhi (Eyes), 2017

Series of Lambda prints on plexiglass, various dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Federico Luger (FL Gallery)

Photographic reproductions of fish eyes are enlarged and arranged across the multiple levels of the Palazzo. The eyes form a vertical straight line that cuts through the floors of the museum and meet at the southern corner of the main room of each floor; in so doing, they create an axis between the earth and the sky that functions also as a guideline for orientation through the labyrinthine spaces of the Palazzo Fortuny. On the one hand, the fish eye refers to the primordial element where the organ took shape 500 million years ago; on the other, it enchants us with its nearly-mineral textures and iridescence, and with the gleams that revolve around a nucleus of darkness. The artist explains her work as follows: *'Everywhere in the Palazzo one can perceive the aura of the people who lived, worked, and created, in that building, the most incredible innovations of their era. One can sense the voices, faces, and activities everywhere, and, along with them, perceive as well a host of genial and sensorial intuitions. How could a contemporary work respond to that, how could it touch every room in its magical experience? Perceiving the entire Palazzo as a whole historic entity regardless of its labyrinthine structure – similar to the calli and campi of Venice – how could the work be placed in such a way as to elude sensorial hierarchies? The intuition that grew on me was to trust a compass in order to deduce a specific and corresponding point between earth and sky on every floor of the Palazzo, where the same work – mute, speechless, attentive – was to be placed.'*



Fernand Léger
(Argentan, 1881 – Gif-sur-Yvette, 1955)
Self-Portrait, 1906

Oil on canvas
31 × 26 cm
Collection Galerie Maeght, Paris

Painted with a limited colour palette, this captivating self-portrait allows the viewer a rare insight into the young artist Fernand Léger. This is one of his earliest works: it dates from 1906, the year when Léger earnestly started to devote himself to his artistic career. An individual style is already discerned in it, notably in the way he incorporates the influence of French Impressionism, already so visible in the 1905 painting *Le Jardin de ma mère*, and makes it his own.

There is a sense of abstraction in this work that so successfully conveys a mood, a personality, and that seems to open a window to the soul of the artist. A veil of darkness obscures the eyes and part of the face, giving it a rough, determined aspect. As Robert L. Herbert writes: *'line and colour have the ability to communicate certain emotions to the observer, independently of natural form'*.



Medardo Rosso
(Turin 1858 – Milan 1928)
Jewish Child, 1915

Wax and chalk, 31 × 16,5 × 22 cm
FMCV, Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venice. Photo © Claudio Franzini

Medardo Rosso is possibly the only true representative of the impressionistic vision in sculpture. Struggling to capture the ephemeral magic of the luminous atmosphere in faces and figures, he was the first to use wax as the final material in multiple, innovative sculptures (and not only as material for *bozzetti* [studies], or for lost-wax casting). In many respects, the result is the transformation of human figures into diaphanous sculptural entities permeated by the surrounding atmosphere. Thus, the wax becomes, so to speak, a 'spiritualized' matter that manages to preserve its specific physical identity, highlighted by traces of direct and immediate modelling by the artist's hands



Odilon Redon
(Bordeaux, 1840 – Paris, 1916)
Lumière, 1893

Lithograph, 39,9 × 27,3 cm
FMCV, Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venice. Photo © Claudio Franzini

"Would that I had wings, a carapace, a shell, – that I could breathe out smoke, wield a trunk, – make my body writhe, – divide myself everywhere, – be in everything, – emanate with all the odours, – develop myself like the plants, – flow like water, – vibrate like sound – shine like light, – assume all forms- penetrate each atom – descend to the very bottom of matter, – be matter itself!"
(Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1874, illustrated by Odilon Redon, trans. Lafcadio Hearn, p. 190)

Odilon Redon was a French Symbolist whose cryptic and enigmatic work was dominated by the interplay between tradition and innovation. It was also marked by breaks and contrasts, and shows a stylistic evolution that leads from the contrasting black and whites of his early charcoal drawings and lithographs to the explosion of colour in his later pastels and oil paintings. In his early graphic works, Redon immerses us in his imaginary cosmos of bizarre monsters, haunting heavenly creatures, flaming eyeballs, fishlike ghosts, and giant spiders. These strange visions and eerie hallucinations are at first based on his own imagination, where dream meets nightmare and nature meets fantasy. But they appeal to literature, art history, music, philosophy, religion, and the natural sciences of his time. *Lumière* is such an exploration in darkness and light, and represents the illumination or light an individual thinker can cast upon society. Here, Redon has the vision of a giant man pondering outside a window while two small figures gesture towards him. The viewer thus becomes a double voyeur, left to contemplate the two small men as well as the large pensive head. Linked to dreams and imagination, Redon's subject here illustrates his shared interest in the symbolist's exploration of forces – mystical, occult, and spiritual.



Rik Wouters
(Mechelen, 1882 – Amsterdam, 1916)
Études de Nel lisante (double face), s.d.

Chinese ink, 25 × 36 cm
Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Central to the work of Rik Wouters are authentic, intimate, daily scenes. His favourite model was his wife Nel, and he depicted her in many guises, as a housewife or sleeping beauty, reading in bed or doing the ironing. Wouters was the only Belgian artist to combine post-impressionist techniques with simple domestic scenes in such a successful manner. His expressive style and the unfinished nature of his tableaux, as well as a skilled interplay between light and shadow, add to his work a sense of vivaciousness and dynamism.

Although Rik Wouters' short life was fraught with adversity, including his service in the Belgian Army during the First World War and a serious illness that would result in his untimely death, his oeuvre is centred around the generosity and benevolence of life. Wouters' love for his wife Nel was a strong impetus for his work, her energy and *joie de vivre* invariably encouraging and invigorating the artist.



Antonio Canova
(Possagno, 1757 – Venice, 1822)
Bozzetto for 'Amor and Psyche',
1787–1793

Unfired clay, 25 × 42 × 28 cm
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Museo Correr
Foto Fotoflash 2001 © Archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

Antonio Canova is the most important neo-classicist sculptor. His works, made from Carrara marble, are a symbol of the cold and greatly refined sculptural

perfection of idealized human figures: balanced harmony, absolute control over volumetric development, meticulous attention to details, transformation of the physical reality of matter into a pure, weightless shape. In order to discover the very essential vital flame of his creative intuitions, we must observe his marvellous clay *bozzetti* (studies), which are characterized by the lively immediacy of the invention, which is further empowered by the speed of execution and the lack of concern for refinement. The confrontation and observation of the dialogue between the *bozzetti* and the finished works in the museum of Possagno are the best way to understand the multifaceted complexity of this Canovian genius.



Anthropomorphic Figure
Indus Culture, India, Bronze Age
ca. 1500 BC

Bronze, 16 x 20 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jean Liégeois

This anthropomorphic figure originates from the Bronze Age Indus Civilization (3300 – 1300 BC) and its purpose remains shrouded in mystery. Figures like these were often deposited in hoards with other bronzes and figural sculptures, possibly as a reflection of the status of their owner. They may have been emblems of fertility – regardless of whether male or female – which were used in magical, religious, or political practices.



Alberto Martini
(Oderzo, 1876 – Milan, 1954)
Mouvement du regard – peinture ectoplastique,
1930

Oil on cardboard, 72 x 60 cm
Private collection.

This work's subtitle, '*ectoplastic painting*,' refers to Martini's interest in spiritism and states of trance that make it possible to investigate the deepest and most hidden parts of the id. The eye is the organ

that represents the opening to knowledge, both of the external world and of inner reality. In this regard, the reference to the 'double', represented by a clear division of the face into two halves coloured with different tones, is remarkable. The artist explained the origin of these works as follows: *'In 1929, in Paris, I started to paint, with growing enthusiasm, a great number of paintings, different from those I had been painting "in dark style", and I called these new canvases "paintings with sky colours", paintings with eternal colours, with every shade of the infinite. These are the fragments I discovered here and there within the folds of these strange paintings. I paint in a sort of trance. The imprimaturas on my palette change in the same way as the sky changes in the course of the day. The sunset, night. They are the discovery of new shapes and new colours within the shapes of reality, and they are capable of representing the ever-changing human expression as a sculptural element ... The composition of these paintings is the result of a long and intense formal process, regardless of my state of clairvoyance and creative spontaneity ...'* (Alberto Martini, cited in Marco Lorandi, *Alberto Martini*, Milan, Electa, 1985.)



Mariano Sardon
(Bahia Blanca, Argentina, 1968)
and **Mariano Sigman**
(Buenos Aires, 1973)

Two Hundred Gazes Looking at Them, 2011

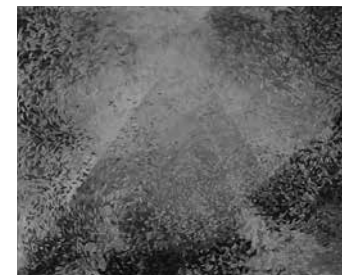
Full HD Video
Courtesy of the artists and Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero Arte y Ciencia

The way we look at portraits is quite complex. To figure out the journey our eyes take when they confront another face, artist Mariano Sardon and a team of neuroscientists at the Laboratory for Integrative Neuroscience at the University of Buenos Aires tracked the eye movements of nearly 200 people as they looked at portraits for eight seconds.

'The gaze is our most trustworthy way to apprehend and construct our idea of the world. At the same time, we really don't take into account the complete world by means of our eyes: gazing is more like spying into the world through a small hole, discarding much of it.'

The way we look at other persons and their faces in an example, as is the way we read books and, indeed, any experience where visual perception and the relation between eye and mind is involved.

The emerging faces were generated by means of an eye-tracking device. Eye-trackers allow us to see through the gaze of others. It is an instrument widely used for positioning the eyes on images, movies, texts, and more, so as to detect the characteristics of the movements and the points of fixation of the eyes. At these fixation points, our eyes gather information that is relevant for the process of cognition. Still, many parts of the portrait remain unseen, and maybe those could be the space and time for intuition. The movement of the eyes could be likened to dancing, writing or to any other movement of the body considered as a gesture. This work captures the gestures made by the eyes in a kind of performative situation, where the conscious and unconscious processes of the gaze are put on stage.



Mikhail Matyushin
(Nizhny Novgorod, 1861 – Leningrad, 1934)
Painterly Musical Construction, 1918

Water colour and gouache on cardboard,
51,4 x 63,7 cm,
State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki

Matyushin was one of the first to introduce Petr Uspensky's theories about the fourth dimension, cosmic consciousness, and the role of the artist as a clairvoyant, in his 1913 essay about Glezes and Metsinger's *Du Cubisme*. In the early 1920s, Matyushin conceived, with his students, a theory that he often called *Zorved* (see and know), based on the premise that man can attain a higher state of mind and thus be able to perceive the holism of the world. Their program consisted of the observation of nature, scientific work in the laboratory, and the development of the senses and of intuition.



Aldo Grazzi
(Montova, 1954)
Nella Notte, 2016

Oil on canvas, 29,5 x 19,5 cm
Private collection. Photo © Claudio Franzini

‘The image is animated. The created image is mutable and fleeting. The world that exists inside and outside of us, the world that we perceive with our senses, takes form and delineates its contours, distinguishing itself from the indistinct. We intuit creation by approximating the profiles it assumes between the changes, intimate and extreme, that we define as the soul. Intuition touches that form, brings it closer; it seizes the contours of a distance that suddenly reveals itself. Intuition is the appearance of a revealed image placed at the edge of the uncreated, in a suspended time and space that the artist grasps and portrays by remembering and depicting that vision. If the artist intuits the reverberation of the uncreated, if he re-sounds it as he approaches that abyss where co-inhabit all that is light and dark, all the visible and the invisible, all the forms and all meaning, perceptible in a single instance, then what he sees is an image of the soul or, better said, the imprint of the uncreated as it imprints itself on the mutable and transparent consistency of the soul. In a single instant, an image reveals itself and in that image, still unpronounced because still unnamed, is delineated the drawing of a work or of the vocation of a whole life’.
(Aldo Grazzi)



Guido Cadorin
(Venice, 1892–1976)
The Kimono, 1914

Tempera on cardboard, 100 x 70 cm
Private Collection
Photo © Archivio Cadorin – Barbarigo – Music



Anthropomorphic Stele
South Arabia, 1st century BC –
1st century AD

Limestone, 29,5 x 119,5 x 9 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jan Liégeois



Livia Tivoli
(Venice, 1889–1972)
Self-Portrait, s.d.

Charcoal on paper, 48,5 x 33,5 cm
Private Collection.
Photo © Archivio Cadorin – Barbarigo – Music



Eduardo Chillida
(San Sebastián, 1924–2002)
Lurra XXXIX, 1979

Grog (clay), 85 x 68 x 15 cm
Collection Adrien Maeght

‘I have spent my life in my studio – my favourite place – searching for the unknown. There I have found that time exists in my sculpture. It exists in a version that is not the standard temporal one. Rather, this version is time’s brother: space. Space is the twin brother of time. They are two concepts that are absolutely parallel and similar’.
(Eduardo Chillida)

Calling himself the ‘Basque architect of the void’, Spanish sculptor Eduardo Chillida became known for his independent take on the nature of sculpture and the strong spatial sense of both his large- and smaller-scale works. The artist considered the sculptural form as an instrument with which to render

visible the empty space between shapes. These theoretical reflections are for example translated in the essay ‘Art and Space’, which Chillida wrote with Martin Heidegger. Thanks to his meditation on abstract forms and the energies at play in his work, Chillida became one of the biggest contributors to the non-figurative vocabulary of sculpture and to its material innovations in the 20th century. He subjected different materials – whether it be stone, granite, concrete, steel, wood, earthenware, or wrought iron – to a dynamic process until space and form become inseparable. His work affirms solidity and defies gravity at the same time. In the late 1970s, he started working with ceramics. For his series *Lurra* (‘earth’ in Basque), Chillida used grog, also known as firesand and chamotte: a clay mass with a high percentage of silica. In *Lurra XXXIX*, one can rediscover the artist’s desire to ‘move towards the great void with hope’, that is, to move towards a great space in between the shapes.



André Derain
(Chatou, 1880 – Garches, 1954)
Femme aux lèvres épaisses, s.d.

Bronze, 37,5 x 18,5 x 15 cm
Collection Jules Maeght, Paris

‘Fauvism was our trial by fire ... colours became charges of dynamite. They were expected to charge light ... The great merit of this method was to free the picture from all imitative and conventional contact’.

(André Derain)

Together with Henri Matisse and Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain had a major role in the development of the early twentieth-century art movement known as Fauvism. The Fauvists made art that had very unnatural, distinctive colours, and simplified forms, applied with rather wild brush strokes. Derain’s work, too, is awash in bright and unusual colours, with a raw yet joyful and loose composition. Furthermore, he experimented with a variety of different aesthetics, which later led him to take on cubist forms as well, all while remaining true to vibrant colours, simple forms, and abstract composition. His fascination for tribal art from Africa is clearly a source of inspiration for his work. His work, no matter from what period, is bold, intense, and experimental, always looking to express the intuition that drove him away from tradition.



Guido Cadorin
(Venice, 1892–1976)
Self-Portrait, 1961

Oil on canvas, 130 x 54 cm
Private Collection
Photo © Archivio Cadorin – Barbarigo – Music



Joseph Beuys
(Krefeld, 1921 – Düsseldorf, 1986)
Intuition, 1968

Wooden box and pencil, 30 x 22 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jan Liégeois

The multiple *Intuition* takes the form of a shallow, open box, featuring a pencil inscription consisting of the word 'Intuition', beneath which are two horizontal lines that represent, respectively, reason and intuition. The short, standing strokes of the upper line refer to the determinacy of rational thought, while the lower line is open at one end, evoking the more enigmatic paths along which intuition can travel. *Intuition* embodies Joseph Beuys's credo that 'everyone is an artist'. Manufactured in an unlimited edition, with dimensions scaled to those of other household items, and sold for eight Deutschmarks apiece, these works were meant to make art more accessible to the general public. Their undefined purpose would stimulate their owner's imagination. Beuys believed that all forms of creativity, not just those of professional artists, are artistic. As an invitation to think outside the box, *Intuition* expressed Beuys' aspiration to activate the creativity of individuals.



Giancarlo Pincaldi
Joseph Beuys 1971, Capri

Black and white photograph, 214 x 103 cm
Klüser Collection, Munich

This photograph of the artist Joseph Beuys was used for a poster printed on the occasion of the exhibition *Ciclo sull'opera di Joseph Beuys 1946–1971* at Lucio Amelio's Modern Art Agency gallery in Naples, in November 1971. The iconography refers to a famous Italian painting from 1901: Giuseppe Pelizza da Volpedo's *Il quarto stato*, or *The Fourth Estate*. The painting depicts a mass of striking workers (members of the fourth estate), and served as a symbol for awakening social movements in Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the exhibition poster, the advancing group of workers is reduced to the single figure of Beuys. With this photograph, Beuys meant to show that he could initiate the necessary dynamics of social reform himself. He is depicted alone, marching at a brisk pace towards the viewer, eager to include the latter in an evolutionary renewal of society on the basis of creativity.



Arshile Gorky
(Khorgom, 1904 – Sherman, Connecticut, 1948)
Untitled, 1945

Charcoal and gouache on paper, 61 x 48 cm
Galerie 1900–2000, Paris

'I don't like that word "finish". When something is finished, that means it's dead, doesn't it? I believe in everlastingness. I never finish a painting – I just stop working on it for a while. I like painting because it's something I never come to the end of. Sometimes I paint a picture, then I paint it all out. Sometimes I'm working on fifteen or twenty pictures at the same time. I do that because I want to – because I like to change my mind so often. The thing to do is always to keep starting to paint, never finishing painting.' (Arshile Gorky)

Arshile Gorky's work is seen as pivotal for the transition and relation between the early modernist European styles and American Abstract Expressionism, which made him an important figure in the development of the modern American art world. Both Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism show through his new, and distinctive, abstract language, known as 'lyrical abstraction'. This style freed itself by emphasising lyrical colour and personal content. A lot of Gorky's art has its roots in the traumatic experience of the Armenian genocide, which he lived through as a child. In what concerns subject matter, he once said that he has 'no specific scene but many incidents', followed with an illustration of how his work has roots in his childhood: *'The first word I spoke was "Argula" – it has no meaning. I was then five years old. Thus I called a painting "Argula" as I was entering a new period closer to my instincts.'*



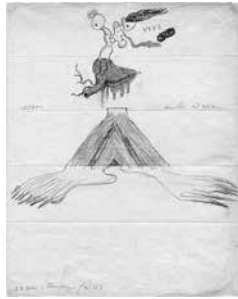
André Masson
(Balagny-sur-Thérain, 1896 – Paris, 1987)
Étude pour le combat légendaire, ca. 1943

Pencil and charcoal on pink paper, 24,1 x 45,7 cm
Galerie 1900–2000, Paris



Óscar Domínguez, Yves and Jeannette Tanguy, Georges and Germaine Hugnet
Cadavre exquis, 1935

Pencil on paper, 26,3 x 20,7 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Yves Tanguy, André Masson and others
Cadavre exquis, 1925

Pencil and crayon on paper, 28 × 22,5 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Valentine Hugo and others
Cadavre exquis (personnage à poil),
1929–1934

Pencil on paper, 26,4 × 18,5 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Violette Hérold, Jacques Herold
and Grégoire Michonze
Cadavre exquis, ca 1937

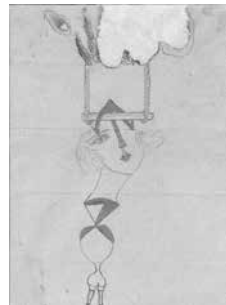
Pencil and colour pencil on paper, 27,2 × 15 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Marcel Duchamp
(Blainville, Rouen, 1887 – Neuilly, 1968)
L'envoers de la peinture, 1955

Pen and collage, 75,5 × 48 cm
Private collection. © Succession Marcel Duchamp by SIAE,
2017, for Marcel Duchamp

In 1919 Marcel Duchamp made his famous ready-made *L.H.O.O.Q.*, by adding a beard and a mustache on a reproduction of Leonardo's Mona Lisa. In 1955, he resumed this theme by making a 'reciprocal ready-made' on an industrially produced kitchen towel with the famous reproduction. He added in the lower right corner a palette and a brush and a dedication to Man Ray's wife, Juliet Browner. In 1961, during a conference at MoMA in New York about the poetics of readymades, Marcel Duchamp suggests the idea that all painting, in fact, is a ready-made: '*Since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and ready made products we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are "readymades aided" and also works of assemblage*'.



Yves and Jeannette Tanguy, Georges and
Germaine Hugnet, Óscar Domínguez
Cadavre exquis, 1953

Pencil on paper, 27 × 21 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris

The 'cadavre exquis' is a Surrealist technique for writing poems developed in 1925 by André Breton, Paul Eluard, and a host of other artists who were their friends. The idea is that multiple people write different pieces of the poem without having read what the other person has written. However, they are informed about the nature of the previous words – whether it is an adjective, a noun, a verb, etc. – in the interest of adhering to a correct

grammar. The result is a rather nonsensical piece of text that challenges the reader's need for logic and comprehension. Like the technique of automatic writing, the *cadavre exquis* also alludes to the subconscious. The term itself refers to the first line of the first poem to have been created this way: *Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau* (The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine). The Surrealists also applied this technique to drawing: each artist draws something and then folds the paper so that only a very small part of the drawing is visible, thus allowing the following artist to continue it knowing at least – indeed only – where to start. At the end, the whole image gets unveiled. The outcome is usually a rather odd and surreal picture.



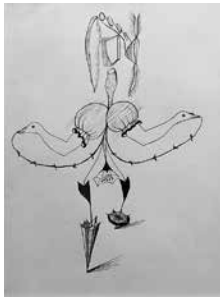
André Breton, Marcel Duhamel,
Max Morise, Yves Tanguy
Cadavre exquis (personnage à poil), 1928

Pencil and colour pencil on paper, 28,2 × 21,5 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Yves Tanguy, André Masson and others,
Cadavre exquis, 1925

Pencil and colour pencil on paper, 28,2 × 21,5 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Nusch Eluard, Valentine Hugo,
André Breton, Yves Tanguy
Cadavre exquis, 1934

Ink on paper, 32,7 × 25 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris



Arturo Martini
(Treviso, 1889 – Milan, 1947)
Head of Jewish Girl, 1931

Terracotta
FMCV, Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte
Moderna, Venice. Photo © Claudio Franzini



Paul Klee
(Münchenbuchsee, 1879 – Muralto, 1940)
Idillio di villaggio, 1913

Gouache and ink on cardboard, 16 × 11 cm
Private collection, at
Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte, Venice



Angelo Savelli
(Pizzo Calabro, 1911 – Brescia, 1995)
Due figure insieme, 1961

Wood and liquitex on canvas, 23,3 × 22 cm
Private collection

Arturo Martini, along with other sculptors, notably Maillol, Bourdelle, and Lembruck, was one of the most important personalities of the 1900s; like them, he was a representative of a non-avant-garde sculpture aimed at reinstating classical and archaizing shapes. Among his personal, radically anti-academic merits, is the understanding of the immediate expressive power of less noble materials, such as stone, wood, and, most of all, terra cotta. His terra cotta sculptures, which are left almost completely unrefined, are characterized by a synthetic sculptural process that is nevertheless imbued with authentic emotions. This can be observed in this simple and pure head of a girl whose candid and dreamy glance toward the sky is endowed with a special poetic tension.

“We construct and construct, and yet intuition is still a good thing. A considerable amount can be done without it, but not all. There is plenty of room for exact research in art, but there is no substitute for intuition.”
(Paul Klee, cited in Will Grohmann *Paul Klee*, 1985, p. 43.)

It is difficult to ascribe one specific style to the body of work of innovative artist Paul Klee. He rigorously put his own stamp on the approach of a variety of movements, such as Expressionism, Cubism, Symbolism, and Abstraction, while also turning to diverse media. His humorous and childlike depictions are rich in fantasy, and usually constructed out of distinctive or sharp lines, geometric shapes, and colour blocks. Colour was one of his key focus elements. When in Tunisia, he wrote in his diary (entry of 16 April 1914): ‘*Colour possesses me. It will always possess me. That is the meaning of this happy hour: colour and I are one. I am a painter.*’. Realizations like this made him concentrate on colour even more, eventually detaching it from form altogether. In 1949, Marcel Duchamp observed: ‘*The first reaction in front of a Klee painting is the very pleasant discovery, what everyone of us could or could have done, to try drawing like in our childhood. Most of his compositions show at the first glance a plain, naive expression, found in children’s drawings. [...] At a second analysis one can discover a technique, which takes as a basis a large maturity in thinking. [...] His extreme productivity never shows evidence of repetition, as is usually the case. He had so much to say, that a Klee never became another Klee.*’ (Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, Elise K. Kenny, *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné*, New Haven and London 1984, p. 376.)



Jean Arp
(Strasbourg, 1886 – Basel, 1966)
Sculpture d'une lettre, 1961

Plaster, 10,5 × 24 × 15,5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Natalie Serroussi

Educated in Rome, Angelo Savelli moved to New York in 1954, where he met Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt. In 1958 he had his first solo show at Leo Castelli, as well as a solo show at Galleria del Cavallino, in Venice. He painted his first completely white frame in 1956, and his research around this colour will occupy him for the rest of his career, such that white became a sort of ‘emblem’. He explained: ‘*White came to me even before I sought it out – it introduced itself to me. I remember I once saw a lake in Pennsylvania in the early morning. The water was evaporating and water and mist came together in a single white-grey painting without thinking of Malevich at all. White stayed with me after that and colours slowly faded from my palette. “White” uplifts me and using it satisfies me more and more.*’



Alexander Calder
(Philadelphia, 1898 – New York, 1976)
Le Jour et la nuit, 1939

Motorized machine, 21,5 × 24 × 20 cm
Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

'It must not be just a fleeting "moment" but a physical bond between the varying events in life./Not extractions/ But abstractions/ Abstractions that are like nothing in life except in their manner of reacting.'

(Alexander Calder, from 'Abstraction-Création', *Art Non Figuratif*, no. 1, 1932.)

Coming from a family of artists, American artist Alexander 'Sandy' Calder turned to the arts in the 1920s, after having studied mechanical engineering. Developing an interest in abstract art, he was seized by the idea that it was important to connect the concept of abstraction with movement. This led him to create abstract moving sculptures. These *mobiles*, brought into movement by nothing more than the flow of the surrounding air, are like delicate drawings twirling through space. He also formed moving sculptures that are actively brought to life by engine power, of which *Le Jour et la nuit* (1939) is an example. Calder aimed to bring material into being, and sometimes he favoured extraordinary constructions using different materials, and the colours that he returns to time and again, like black, white, red, and blue. His work is by no means assembled to represent a form of reality. This means that his constructions do not suggest movement in a static way, as is done traditionally. Rather, by *being* movement instead of *suggesting* it, his mobile structures are the things themselves.



Roberto Sebastian Matta Echaurren
(Santiago, 1911 – Civitavecchia, 2002)
Les Hurlements de l'un dans l'autre
(*the war inside me*), 1954

Oil on canvas, 200 × 300 cm
Private collection

After studying architecture, and after collaborations with Le Corbusier and, later, with Gropius

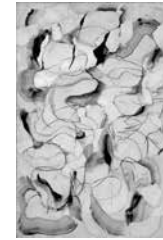
and Moholy-Nagy, Matta eventually settled on painting and established himself among the Surrealists in 1938 with his 'psychological morphologies', which are characterized by more or less anthropomorphic visions that emerge from labyrinthine spaces. In 1940, he exhibited at the *First Papers of Surrealism* show, and his work proved influential on American artists such as Gorky and Pollock. His explosive, 'chaos-cosmic' compositions are a pulsating and expansive entangle of organic figures, simultaneously erotic, primitive, and technological, fluctuating in borderless space-time dimensions loaded with chromatic and linear tensions. According to him, a revolutionary artist must work with the aim of destabilizing society's class structures and rediscovering new emotional relations among people.



Willem de Kooning
(Rotterdam, 1904 – New York, 1997)
Untitled, 1976

Mixed media on paper, 55,3 × 72,4 cm
Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisboa

The abstract impressionist paintings of Willem de Kooning are probably the best known in their genre. Applying paint in a rather impulsive way, De Kooning creates raw abstract images with a thick, dramatic surface. From the 1950s on, inspired by the image of the primeval female as she had been portrayed since prehistoric times, he mostly painted women. These paintings were controversial at first, since the use of figures within Abstract Expressionism was unusual. This piece, from the 1970s, is very vibrant, with bright fields of colour that showcase De Kooning's boldly expressive style. As is commonly the case in his work, the figure and its ground are indistinguishable from each other.



Ida Barbarigo
(Venice, 1920)
Feu ouvert, 1961

Oil on canvas, 146 × 97 cm
Private Collection, Venice
Photo © Archivio Cadorn - Barbarigo - Music

'I always avoided the solid, I am fascinated by the strangeness of how a line can detach itself from the landscape. This point of fracture between a visible thing and one we cannot see. And it is simply the air passing through.'

(Ida Barbarigo)

Feeling the need to forget what had been done before and to unlearn how to paint, Ida Barbarigo strived to develop her own personal style, a language that held no references to prior artists. This search led to a process of removal, and what remained at the end were simplicity and suggestive lines, making her work tumble into abstraction. Her drawings allude to what is depicted with moving lines that are emotionally charged. An important structural element throughout her work is the chair, a motif that she uses as the emblem of a contemporary world, the essence of the modern city. The exploration of Paris' and Venice' outdoors accumulated in a higher interest for *passeggiate* (walks) – the act of ecstatic vagabonding whereby she wandered around areas such as squares, terraces, and cafés, observing the light, colours, the sudden revelations, and the behaviour of the people. The resulting paintings of these *passeggiate* are emotionally and electrically charged spaces that give the impression of an intuitive personal calligraphy, offering a glimpse of that which cannot be seen: the wind, the air, void, time, and energy, all passing through.



Raoul Ubac
(Malmedy, 1909 – Dieudonné, 1985)
The Reverse of the Face, 1939

Brûlage, salt print, 23,9 × 18,1 cm
Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. Grand Palais/ Jacques Fanjour

The *camera obscura* experiments of the Belgian artist Raul Ubac belong entirely to the surrealist programme of emancipation from reality and from the regulatory control of rationality, and are aimed at the free expression of poetic potentiality in its entirety. In his *brûlages* (burnings), he applies heat to the photographic emulsion of the negatives, thus affecting the usual documentary value of photographic images. His experiments offer new interpretative possibilities to that language that is hidden within the chemical reactions of the photographic process. About *The Reverse of the Face*, Ubac says: *'An image, a photographic image in particular, can show only an instant of reality's appearance. Below this thin layer that covers the characteristics of every thing, and within the same image, there are one or more images layered through time that are often revealed, abruptly and by chance'*. (Ubac, cit. in A. Gunther, M. Poivert, *Storia della fotografia*, Mondadori Electa, Milano, 2008, p. 496) For Ubac, *'matter itself acts in order to create a new image by destroying the old one'* (ibid.). The automatic contraction of chance and matter reveals the physical unconscious of photography.



Victor Brauner
(Piatra Neamt, 1903 – Paris, 1966)
Untitled (Dessin médiumnique), 1946

Ink on paper, 22,2 × 14,8 cm
Courtesy Galerie 1900–2000, Paris



André Breton, Valentine Hugo and others
Cadavre exquis, ca. 1930

Pencil and coloured pencil on paper, 32 × 48 cm
Courtesy Galerie 1900–2000, Paris



Adolphe Acker, Georges Mouton,
Benjamin Péret, Remedios Varo,
Flora Acker
Dessins communiqués (5 drawings, *La Table*,
La bougie and *La voiture*), ca. 1937–39

Ink and pencil on paper, 45 × 51,5 cm
Galerie 1900 – 2000, Paris

Surrealist artists had developed several techniques to visually express their ideas, which were rooted in literature. They were intrigued by the concept of the dream and by the theories about the unconscious developed by Sigmund Freud. Looking for suppressed inner personalities and ideas, they looked for ways to stimulate free association and to let go of deliberate creation. One of the methods to avoid conscious intention was the *Jeu de dessin communiqué* (the game of communicated drawing), which resulted in a series of drawings. For this, an initial drawing was shown to someone for a few seconds, and that person then had to try to recreate what he or she had just seen. That second drawing was then presented briefly to the next participant, who likewise had to draw the shown image. This cycle continued with the next drawing and so on. Every illustration ended up being somewhat different, since unintended adjustments due to the imperfect memory unavoidably sneaked in – an effect that added up with every copy. This inevitably resulted in the last drawing always being the most different from the original image.



Marco Del Re
(Rome, 1950)
Double Visage, 1990

Terra cotta, 100 × 47 cm
Courtesy Gallerie Maeght, Paris

'In Pablo Picasso's correspondence with his art dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, he discusses the series of works dedicated to the Women of Algiers, and in that context the maestro complains and is at the same time surprised about the great number of possibilities generated in between conceiving and carrying out a project. He affirms that almost always the final result is rather far away from the initial idea. We must add that artworks are possibly nothing but wild variants of their intuitions'. (Marco del Re)



Sofie Muller
(Sint-Niklaas, 1974)
AL/XIX/16, 2016

Alabaster and cushion
Courtesy of the artist, Geukens & De Vil
and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

Sophie Muller's recent series, *Alabaster Mentalis*, is very moving. Alabaster – softer than marble and slightly transparent, with vein-like patterns – naturally mimics the vulnerable human skin. By choosing imperfect pieces, the artist gives way to the intuition of the stone, turning the 'injured' characteristics of the selected material into cracked and scarred skulls. This means that the head's distorted look is a consequence of the holes, gaps, and dents already naturally present in the material. The lifelike sculptures appear wounded and evoke a certain sadness, leaving a vast emotional effect on the viewer. Muller's work touches a sore spot and shows things – on both a physical and a psychological level – that we would rather not see. Sometimes off-putting, the figures remind us of our own wounds and mortality, but accepting the unavoidable also brings serenity and opens up the possibility to see the beauty within.



Edvard Munch
(Ådalsbruk, 1863 – Oslo, 1944)
The Urn, 1896

Lithograph, 44,8 × 34,6 cm
FMCV, Ca'Pesaro, Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna
Photo Claudio Franzini

'All forms of beauty contain an element of the eternal and an element of the transitory – of the absolute and the particular.' (Charles Baudelaire)

In 1896, Edvard Munch was approached to illustrate a publication of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, but the commissioner died before Munch's work was finished; only a few sketches had been made by the time the project was abandoned, but Munch would return to his research and to the project's themes for many of his later works, one of which is *The Urn*. Munch focused on his emotions and philosophical, psychological, and spiritual ideas to create a very individual art, and he asserted as well that anxiety and illness were central to his work. He found solace in a theory by Ernst Haeckel, called Monism, which says that reality consists of a single element and that all matter is indistinguishable: organic and inorganic, living and dead, matter and energy, body and soul. Abstract, intangible notions such as the soul are as real, and made from the same matter, as any physical object. This theory is often present in Munch's work, where an endlessly repetitive cycle of life, death, and birth is depicted.



Nicola Martini
(Florence, 1984)
Untitled, 2017

Bitumen of Judaea on wall, Variable sizes
Courtesy: the artist and kaufmann repetto Milan / New York.
Photo © Jacopo Menzani

Untitled (2013) is a work capable of nullifying the conventional neutrality of the exhibition space.

When applied to the wall, the bitumen of Judaea slowly and gradually reveals all its hidden marks. Any small trace, erasure, stuccowork is suddenly being visible once more and creates a negative landscape of the past actions that happened on that space. Bitumen is a material whose chemical and physical characteristics are unique. When exposed to light, this photosensitive asphalt hardens, becomes insoluble, and, in addition, easily penetrates into the underlying surfaces. That is why this material had a crucial role in the development of early photography. In the 1820s, Joseph-Nicéphore Niepce used its ability to react to light in order to produce the first photographic positives on pewter, which he called *heliographs*. Martini uses its same features with the intent of making it an activator of the spaces on which it is applied. The architectural supports, no longer considered merely exhibition supports, become subjects able to transform and gradually reveal their subconscious by means of lighting and the artist's imagination.



Gioberto Noro
(Turin, 1952 and 1961)
Views on Circular Time, in Perspective,
2009 – 2017

Projection, chronophotography in loop video,
221 × 393 cm, 3:51 min.
Courtesy of the artists and Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

Gioberto Noro's space-light, in its ecstatic brightness, works as a sympathetic mechanism that resonates and aspires to engage emotionally with the spectator through vision. Artists, with regard to their work, insist on the distinction between watching and seeing. *'Nowadays, hundreds of billions of photos are taken annually, some of which are immediately shared on social networks [...]. If an infinitely great number of pictures taken in the absence of any awareness can cause sight to atrophy, an infinitely small number of 'aware' pictures can reinstate dignity to sight. In the Paleolithic era, humans made pictures to save their lives, and maybe pictures today are needed to save sight. Pictures capable of helping to see, pictures capable of helping to escape the prison of sight. 'Watching' comes from the Franconian 'wardon' (to be on guard), and implies a defensive, cold, and analytic attitude towards existence. Seeing, on the contrary, means our disposition toward listening to what appears around us, to sensing its pathos, to forging a resonance with it – that is, to enter, into its wavelength.'* (Gioberto Noro)



Francis Picabia
(Paris, 1879 – 1953)
La Danseuse Jasmine, 1920

Pencil on paper, 27,5 × 21,5 cm
Private collection

Car collector, dandy, poet, painter, and artist, Francis Picabia is a fascinating figure because of his bizarre artistic and personal life, and because of his often unpredictable changes: from the post-impressionist paintings to the start of Cubism, from the Dadaist provocations (as when he dubs a random inkblot 'the Holy Virgin') to the kitsch paintings of nudes that came to decorate a number of brothels in North Africa, ... The 1920s was *'a year characterized by a production limited in number but extraordinarily varied in kind, including paintings, collages, wire constructions, inkblots, readymades, and drawings which ranged from naturalistic portraits to abstract machines.* *La danseuse Jasmine was a small, intimate sketch, a private memento of a summer evening'* (William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life, and Times*, Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 154). *'Insight into the intimate relationship of Picabia's art and life is provided by this drawing [...]. In July 1920, the Olympia Theatre in Paris opened a play entitled L'Antre des gnomes, with tableaux by George Casella and music by Claude Debussy – both friends of Picabia. The principal dancer, the Danseuse Jasmine, was also a good friend, and her role as an evil enchantress had a natural appeal for Picabia'* (William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, New York, 1970, p. 113)



Raimund Girke
(Heinzendorf, 1930 – Cologne, 2002)
Vertikales Motiv, 1991

Oil on canvas, 220 × 200 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

The colour white – or ‘the Queen of colours’ – has a prominent role in the non-figurative art of artist Raimund Girke. Almost monochrome, the abandonment of colourfulness makes for less competition among different shades. It gives one colour the opportunity to take over and develop its full capacity. Girke also felt that other colours would obstruct one’s feelings towards the calmness of the continuous changes in nature. Or, as he writes in a poem: white demands meditation. During the decades that followed, he remained within the basic paradigm of controlled geometric abstraction, but instead of musing on non-visible, spiritual, or conceptual phenomena, he explored fundamental physical phenomena such as light, motion, rhythm, and vibration. The best art for Girke was the ‘absolute reduction to the essence’. About his work from the 1990s he says: *‘I’m inclined to believe that since the early 1990s I’ve been going through another phase where I’m increasingly referencing my paintings of the early 1960s and 70s, where the paintings are becoming more tranquil again, more cohesive, more open-ended and yet more unified, where the colour or pictorial field is not ploughed up by brushstrokes. [...] I believe that right now my paintings are again imbued with a largesse, a certain tranquillity and peace.’*



William Anastasi
(Philadelphia, 1933)
Abandoned Painting, 2000

Oil and graphite on canvas, 224 x 187,5 cm
Enea Rigbi Collection. Photo © Antonio Maniscalco

William Anastasi’s research has always involved concealing, cancelling out, his own senses – sight but also, and mostly, hearing – in order to let his painting be the result of specific physical limitations. The condition of blindness is the tool Anastasi uses to interact with the painted surface and the materiality of colour, which, in tandem, produce the final composition. In fact, this seeming restriction makes the act of painting a meditative experience for the artist, a dialogue between his own body and the painting medium. In his series *Abandoned Paintings* (which he started in 1995), the layers of dark marks or traces, made out of oil and graphite without using sight, found their way onto the canvas through the rolling of a die. These paintings were ‘abandoned’ to the intervention of chance. Of course, the artist cannot but separate himself in order to step out of this method of work,

which is possibly endless. In accordance with the numerical result yielded by the six-faced die, the canvas, divided into six horizontal and six vertical sections, receives the corresponding color. The rolling of the die adds another limit to the other ones created by the artist: the heuristic of randomness.



Cy Twombly
(Lexington, 1928 – Rome, 2011)
Delian Ode 18, 1961

Pencil, wax crayon, coloured pencil, and ballpoint pen on paper, 33,5 x 35 cm
Courtesy of Lévy Gorvy

Delian Ode 18 is an example of American artist Cy Twombly’s graffiti canvases, in which he both explored the relationships between writing, drawing, graffiti and semiography, and connected the raw expressivity of Abstract Expressionism to the classical Greek tradition. *Delian Ode 18* was drawn a few years after Twombly’s move to Rome, in 1957. The Greek influence on the Eternal City, and classical mythology more generally, influenced him greatly, through these themes are always hidden in the work. Beneath scribbles of automatic mark making, Twombly’s graphic works are based on the artist’s own system of semiotic investigation and systemic indices of history. Here, the numbers 1 to 18 as well as the names of Zeus and Leda are scratched beneath layers of looping scribbles. As the title suggests, this drawing is charged with the Delian history of the Greek island of Delos, which is of great historical significance to both ancient Greece and Rome.

‘To paint involves a certain crisis, or at least a crucial moment of sensation or release; and by crisis it should by no means be limited to a morbid state, but could just as well be one ecstatic impulse or, in the process of a painting, run a gamut of states. Each line is now the actual experience, with its own innate history.’

(Cy Twombly)

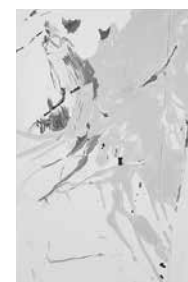


James Ensor
(Ostend, 1860–1949)
The Fall of the Rebellious Angels, 1889

Oil on canvas, 108,8 x 132,8 cm
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen
Art in Flanders vzw.
Photo © www.lukasweb.be – Art in Flanders /
Hugo Maertens

James Ensor thought that art’s purpose was to exalt, to induce an ‘ecstasy’ in both the viewer and the creator. This ecstasy could express feelings of enthusiasm or poetry, but also of unrest, strife, and sorrow – in short, ‘ecstasy’, for Ensor, meant the opposite of ‘banality’. To achieve this, the artist, Ensor felt, had to aspire to a personal artistic vision.

Religious subject matter being ubiquitous in Ensor’s era and environment, Ensor found the exaltation he sought in the Bible. Throughout his oeuvre, he not only repeatedly depicts Christ, but also demons, angels, exorcisms, tribulations, and miracles. Punishment, penitence, and the fall are recurrent themes in the religious work of James Ensor, and his angels fall out of the dazzling Heavens into Chaos, rendered in dense overall brushstrokes that threaten to wholly engulf the world in their tumult. Ensor sought to exalt, not only by the religious content of his paintings, but also through the radiant light and violent colours with which he chose to render his subjects.



Koen van den Broek
(Bree, 1973)
Cut Away #16, 2015

Oil on canvas, 180 x 120 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels

Koen van den Broek’s best-known paintings are based on photographs he took, and his paintings take the viewer on a long road trip through urban spaces, buildings, roads, and car parks. Inspired by unconventional perspectives, combined with sensual abstraction and dynamic composition, Van den Broek

shows us *how* we see rather than *what* we see. *Cut Away #16* is part of a series grounded in the expression, ‘Cut away the Snoopy’, used by sculptor John Chamberlain to designate his notion of the artist’s obligation to remove those recognizable elements or points of association that occur in the composition for the sake of pure form. Stemming from this principle, Van den Broek reworks recurring features of his previous paintings. This leads to a complete detachment from the original image, a reduced feeling of orientation, and the further abstraction of his subjects. What once was a visual summary of a landscape is now transformed into the unrecognizable. In this we can also see the artist’s awoken interest for transcendent meditation. Evolving into something new, the unique style of Van den Broek undergoes severe changes and pushes away all remaining figurative elements. This allows the artist to free his work from the constraints of representation and to follow his own sensitivity.



Tancredi (Parmeggiani)
(Feltre, 1927 – Roma, 1964)
Untitled, ca. 1952–1955

Oil on canvas, 69,5 × 89 cm
Private collection, Venice
Photo Claudio Franzini

Tancredi studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti of Venice. Peggy Guggenheim met him in 1951, and she was the first to believe in the talent of the young, budding artist and to promote him, as she had already done with Jackson Pollock, donating his work to some of the most important international museums, and offering Tancredi a studio space in the Ca’ Venier dei Leoni, in Venice. He joined the Spatialism movement in 1952, and signed some of its manifestoes. In 1964, he spent some time being treated at a psychiatric hospital on the island of San Servolo, on the Venice lagoon. He joined his brother in Rome at the end of the summer, where he committed suicide: his body was pulled out of the Tiber river on the first of October, 1964. *‘I have always thought that, in a real work of art, an instinctive and automatic choice is much truer than an intellectual choice. [...] I think painting has just been born, that matter-colour is newer, fresher, today than ever before, that there are immense possibilities for revelation in its very nature, which is infinitely malleable and wonderful. As it was used in the past, colour reduced natural value. I believe that the way I intend to use it can better reveal that value and its allusion to a variety of universal phenomena ...’* (Tancredi, 1959, cited in Germano Celant, *L’inferno dell’arte italiana: Materiali, 1946–1964*, Genova, Costa & Nolan, 1990, p.252.)



Jef Verheyen
(Itegem, 1932 – Apt, 1984)
Untitled, 1959

Matt lacquer on canvas, 66 × 100 cm
Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

‘My intention as an artist has something to do with what I define as the rhythm of life. I should like to create something that has the same force as the act of breathing. Everything breathes – including nature itself. [...] Someone might observe a sunset and be reminded of my paintings. That’s not my intention. On the contrary, it strikes me as completely crazy. However, it does indicate that human perception is influenced by pictures that people have seen previously’.
(Jef Verheyen)



Yuko Nasaka
(Osaka, 1938)
∞ (Infinity), 1964–69

Synthetic resin paint on canvas, mounted on board,
116 × 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

‘Infinity is something that you can’t put a name on. When you say the word “infinity”, it sounds audacious. There are so many works with titles that seem brazen, and you think: “This one too?” So for me to use it like that was also brazen. [...] Anyway, it was my real hope and desire to use the word “infinity”.
(Yuko Nasaka)
Yuko Nasaka joined the Gutai Art Association and started experimenting with non-art mediums, technology, and cutting-edge industrial materials like drills, car lacquer, and auto-factory air compressors. She tapped into the power and energy of the industrial transformation of 1960s Japan and made art in the here and now. Nasaka was interested in the world of infinity, and explored this concept through drilling holes in her paintings. One day she sprayed-painted over the holes of one of these

works, which of course left a dot on the wall behind the panel. This gave her the idea to start working with dots as well, resulting in compositions like *∞ (Infinity)*.



Emilio Vedova
(Venice, 1919 – 2006)
Per uno spazio (a te Berlin da Venezia) – I,
1987–1988

60 × 40 × 54 cm
Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, Venice

‘Emilio Vedova had been using gesture and sign in his work since 1933 [...]. In its expression, the canvas was the perimeter of the space of the happenings, which were regulated by emotional and energetic impulses and flows: it was the final territory of all his projections. His canvases “seemed to tend towards perfection: turning into monoliths that no longer teemed with tears or rents, they appearing instead to have purified painting, to have taken it to the height of asceticism”.
(Germano Celant, *Emilio Vedova Scultore*, Milano, Skira, 2010 p. 19, p. 29–31)

395



Takis
(Athens, 1925)
Boule électromagnétique, 1962 – 1968

Cork, magnets, iron wire, Plexiglas, copper,
and electrical system, 320 × 55 × 55 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Greek artist Takis (born Vassilikis Takis) has devoted most of his artistic life to researching magnetism. As an intuitive savant, he believes that all communication occurs through magnetic fields. This intangible and invisible magnetic energy became his primary material, which he stages in different ways to make it observable. Though he carefully works with matter, the material aspect is

not the most important dimension of Takis' work, since he believes that the essential does not reside in the visual, but in what cannot be seen. Science and art are closely related for Takis, because he sees that both artists and scientists are looking for answers to universal questions. They both engage in research, which involves venturing into the unknown. The results of their creative processes can reveal the beauty that lies beneath the surface. Takis has consistently translated this poetic approach to science into works that sensitively deploy the forces of nature. With his *Signals*, *Magnetic Walls* and *Musicales*, he makes invisible energies palpable and invites the spectator to enter into a wordless, energetic dialogue with the sculptures.



Étienne-Jules Marey

(Beaune, 1830 – Paris, 1904)

Course: Geometrical Frames and Diagrams,
1880–1890

Black-and-white print, 17 × 23,9 cm
© Etienne-Jules Marey

Marey, French physiologist and physician, dedicated himself to studying alternative methods for recording the 'invisible' movements of our body. The scientist, initially interested in showing the activity of our internal organs, borrowed some instruments used by the physicists of his day in order to transform involuntary movements, the ones the human body performs unconsciously, into linear graphs – an idea that anticipates electrocardiographs. Marey gathered and published these studies in his *La Méthode graphique* of 1885. Inspired by Eadweard Muybridge's photographic sequence of a moving horse, Marey endeavored to transform his method from graphic to photographic. His *chronophotographs* recorded, on the same plate, multiple positions of the same moving object using a special lens with fixed apertures. In this way, once again, Marey succeeded in transforming the movements of our body into a linear graph. In order to highlight the diagrammatic aspect of his photos, the scientist outlined the bodies of his models, completely dressed and hooded in black, with white stripes attached to each limb and to the head. By shooting them against a black background, the bodies disappeared, leaving only a continuous progression of geometric and abstract lines visible. His photos are both scientific and artistic documents, because the aesthetic form helps transmit knowledge in an immediate and intuitive way.



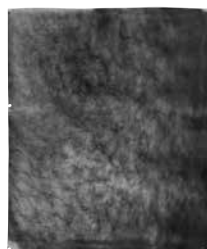
Tomás Saraceno

(San Miguel de Tucumán, 1973)

*Hybrid semi-social musical instrument NGC 2976: built by *Cyrtophora citricola* – three weeks (tidally locked) + *Cyrtophora moluccensis* – four weeks (turned 180 degrees on Z rehearsing towards ISS)*, 2014

Spider silk, carbon fibre, metal light, Plexiglass,
Dedolight 150W, 35 × 25 × 25 cm
Enea Righi Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria
Pinksummer, Geneva. Photo © Studio Saraceno

Tomás Saraceno is an Argentinian architect and performer who developed his research around exacting studies of utopian architecture, engineering, natural science, and astrophysics. His work is characterized mostly by interactive spatial structures and installations, through which he presents utopian and visionary projects about new lifestyles and new ways of perceiving collective spaces. Among his most famous works are *Flying Garden* (Munich, 2007); an immense three-dimensional spider web at the Venice Biennale (2012); and *On Space-Time Foam*, a spectacular, futuristic habitable structure exhibited at the Hangar Bicocca of Milan. The work for *Intuition* is a unique project of a hybrid 'musical instrument' made out of organic (spider web) and artificial materials.



Renato Leotta

(Turin, 1982)

Tempo (Memoria e Materia), 2017

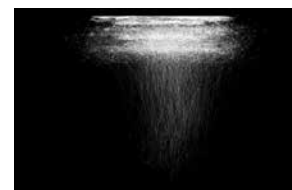
Gelatin silver print, 100 × 120 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Galleria Fonti, Naples and Madragoa,
Lisbon. Photo © Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

'I imagined the sea as a large dark room and the moon as an enlarger whose increasing and decreasing phases determines the flow of light that operates impartially and enlightens us and everything that surrounds us. Light collects on the surface of the paper submerged in the seawater; filtered by wind and by the undulations of the sea,

the light records a picture of the water surface at a given period of time. What we perceive with our naked eyes as a sequence of lines and twines rushing on the sea floor is now secure on the picture plane.

This picture, made by water and time, describes the nocturnal, intimate, look at the understanding of reality, at the classical love for the cosmos, and offers in addition an analysis of the birth of an image. If we think of the ocean as a complex, organic system, and we compare the oceans to the internal organs of a human body, the Mediterranean Sea could resemble the Earth's stomach, able to digest and translate natural elements and to narrate viscerally the story of man and his most intimate events.

Meridian thought.'
(Renato Leotta)



Susan Morris

(Birmingham, 1962)

*Motion Capture Drawing [ERSD]:
View from Above*, 2012

Archival inkjet on Hahnemühle paper, 150 × 250 cm
Collection Frac, Alsace
Courtesy of the artist and Frac, Alsace

'We experience the world, and locate ourselves within it, through a framework of artificial systems that contain and organize the body. These include calendrical and clock time, as well as language systems: all use substitutable signifiers along which meaning slides.

But we move through another space too, guided by a kind of blind intuition; a dark space "of groping, hallucination, and music" into which, as the psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski has suggested, the self dissolves (Lived Time, 1933). Here the body operates outside socio-culturally organized space and time, as evidenced by the unruly traces revealed by automatic recording devices, from Étienne-Jules Marey's Sphygmograph to more contemporary medical or scientific instruments (including the health and fitness applications currently so popular), which track a bodily unconscious that resists incorporation by any system and instead goes its own way.

These devices are the instruments and the recorded traces are the material of my work – for I know, as Roland Barthes once put it, that my body does not have the same ideas I do (The Pleasure of the Text, New York: Hill and Wang, 1975, p. 17).'
(Susan Morris)



Vincenzo Castella

(Naples, 1952)

Castelseprio, Varese, 2009, 2012

Polaroid, 21,3 × 27,4 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Studio La Città, Verona

*'I have always thought that every time we direct our glance at something, a new fact, and not just a modification, is created. This work is a collection of photographic colour prints and one-copy direct Polaroid prints, 20 × 25 cm – 8 × 10. The frame and the same photographic materials are essential objects for researching the view of the plant kingdom as a cultural product. The path created between the objects and the space is the physical matter of the project. The image does not judge or choose but accepts the conflict, and nature is not conceived as a form of representation or an illusory and compensatory dimension, one that neutralizes the opposites by relegating them to a private and privileged level. On the contrary, this work testifies to encountering and crossing over something that cannot be explained but only described'.
(Vincenzo Castella)*



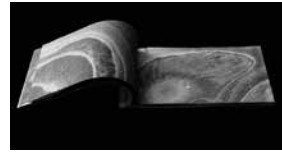
Pedro Cabrita Reis

(Lisbon, 1956)

The Large Self-Portrait #06, 2005

Oil on newsprint laid on on canvas, 180 × 140 cm
Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon

Centered on questions relative to space and memory, Pedro Cabrita Reis' work gains a suggestive power of association that reaches a metaphorical dimension by going beyond the visual. In this portrait series, the artist employed mixed media to achieve layers of material, through which we can see a subtle glimpse of a portrait. The space of the work is to be found in between its layered elements. As Germano Celant states: *'His images address nothing else, except perhaps a feeling that the artist tries to define as belonging to a limbo, an infinity, an intelligible yet undefinable nothingness'*.



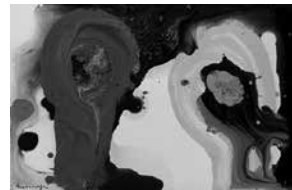
Giorgio Vigna

(Verona, 1955)

Acquatipo, 1985

Ink on paper. 14 pages, 20 × 34 cm
Collection of the artist. Photo © Francesca Moscheni

Giorgio Vigna uses water as an active and poetic support for the construction of images. The artist is interested in highlighting the internal behaviour of the materials he has chosen to work with, letting his composition be the result of the dialogue between ink and water, chance and necessity. By painting the water's surface in his pools with ink, the artist attentively follows this material's movement, which is never inert and, undisturbed, continues to draw complex and unpredictable shapes. Vigna interferes delicately in this liquid dance only with his breath, thus allowing the surface of this matter to be impressed by the encounter of liquids and breaths. Images obtained in this way record with absolute precision every branched line and water bubble, and every breath of the artist: these are basic the elements of these compositions. The unpredictable images that result recall the infinitely small dimension of scientific microphotography and the infinitely wide dimension of astronomic observation. Vigna's represent the mark of a movement that is simultaneously accidental and necessary, willed and discovered, immobile but still in movement.



Sadamasa Motonaga

(Iga, 1922 – Takarazuka, 2011)

Untitled, ca. 1963 – 1964

Oil on paper, 9 × 14 cm
Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Sadamasa Motonaga was renowned for his experimental work with natural materials, in particular smoke and water. He joined the Gutai group in 1955, after he had studied with *yoga* (Western) painter Hamabe Mankichi. From then on he began to experiment with unusual materials, starting his exploration with suspended bags of coloured water. The following year he created the iconic *Work (Water)*, a series of tubes filled with jewel-like fluid and draped from trees. The artist's interest in fluid materials stems

from his particular painting technique, which used the physical qualities of liquid to create the image. Paint was directly poured onto a canvas, and then the painting got tipped around to direct the flow of the colour. After his 1966 stay in New York, Motonaga's style changed dramatically, incorporating a Pop sensibility into his work. He was perhaps the Gutai artist whose work changed the most over the years, challenging audiences throughout his entire career. This untitled work from the early 1960s was made for the Gutai card box to celebrate New Year, 1963–1964. In the Gutai 2013 retrospective exhibition *Gutai: Splendid Playground*, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the original Gutai card box was remade. Visitors were able to buy a Gutai postcard for \$1. The new cards for the box were made by Gutai artists like Horio, Maekawa etc.



Umberto Boccioni

(1882, Reggio Calabria – Verona, 1916)

Bozzetto for the Dream of Paolo and Francesca,

1908–1909

Oil on panel, 20,5 × 20,5 cm
Private collection

397



Jean Arp

(Strasbourg, 1886 – Basel, 1966)

Avant ma naissance, 1914

Collage, 11 × 9 cm
Galerie Seroussi, Paris

This small collage dates back to the years immediately preceding the birth of Dadaism, which took place in Zurich in 1916, by which time Arp had already exhibited with the Blaue Reiter group. The work best expresses the subtle irony and the gentle touch that will distinguish the particular approach to Dadaist poetry that Jean Arp will develop shortly thereafter. Marcel Duchamp explains this well in a short text he wrote 1949 about Arp's work: *'The important element introduced by Arp was "humor" in*

its subtlest form, the kind of whimsical conceptions that gave to the Dada Movement an exuberant liveliness as opposed to the purely intellectual tendencies of Cubism and Expressionism. Arp has shown the importance of the smile in the struggle against sophisticated theories of the time'. (Marcel Duchamp, *Writings*, Abscondita, Milan, 2005, p. 168) Hence Duchamp's famous line: 'For Arp, art is Arp'.



Mario Deluigi
(Treviso, 1901 – Venice, 1978)
Grattage viola-rossa

Mixed media on canvas, 117 × 74 cm
Collection of Filippo Deluigi
Courtesy of Bugno Art Gallery and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'... Venice. What remains of it if the edges are destroyed? The light remains. Sometimes, I am so afraid of taking away everything from the canvas that I leave some shadows [...]. These are the shadows of my fear. Fear that nothing is left over but a desert'.

Mario Deluigi reaches his mature poetics, which is based on the 'grattage' technique he developed around 1954, through a long, meditated, and painful path: the soon-abandoned humanistic studies, the passion for music, the courses at the Academy of Fine Arts along with Carlo Scarpa (a life-long friend), the friendship with the Futurist Severini (1927), and, later, with the great sculptor Arturo Martini (1940), the teaching activity at the IUAV (1948), and the participation in Lucio Fontana's Spatialism (1951). After having spread layers of colour on the surface (board, canvas), the artist then 'digs,' with more or less energy, into the 'shadow' (the first, darkest layer on the surface) in order to let the underlying 'light' emerge and create the pictorial space. Later, examining his own research, he explains the specific meaning of this action: 'I eliminated, little by little, what this physiological representation could be and I realized that I must look for the light [...]. I realized that by destroying edges, I was destroying everything meaningful, and that in this way the light could emerge. I set forth this path and it led me to my present painting style'. (Mario Deluigi, 1975 in: *Mario Deluigi*, exhibition catalogue edited by Luca Massimo Barbero, Venice, 1989.)



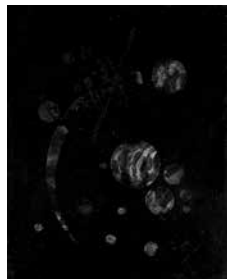
Wassily Kandinsky
(Moscow, 1866 – Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1944)
Là-bas, 1932

Mixed on cardboard, 49 × 33 cm
Collection Jules Maeght, Paris

Wassily Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstract art, left behind a body of work considered to this day as both revolutionary and radical. It is known that his gut feeling suggested to him that letting go of the figurative image was going to be of the utmost importance for the expression of his ideas. Returning home one night, he saw by chance one of his own works from an unusual perspective:

'It was the dawn of dusk. I arrived home [...] when I suddenly saw a picture of an indescribable beauty [...] Surprised, I moved towards this mysterious panel on which I saw nothing but shapes and colours; the subject was thus incomprehensible. [...] it was one of my paintings, leaning against the wall on its side. The next day, in daylight, I tried to find again the impression of the day before ... [but] I only made it halfway: even on the side, I constantly recognized the objects, and it was missing the fine light of twilight. Now I realized: it was the object that was damaging to my paintings'.

Colour was of great significance to Kandinsky, and he held an in interest in how colour influenced the human psyche. The emancipation of colour collided with the setting free of form to express the immaterial. His goal was to express feelings and dreams without having to refer directly to realistic forms. By developing a personal abstract pictorial language, he indeed succeeded in doing so. After studying at Bauhaus in Germany, he adapted a more basic colour palette as well as more simplified forms, with purer lines.



Wassily Kandinsky
(Moscow, 1866 – Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1944)
Agitation sombre, 1926

Oil on cardboard, 41 × 33 cm
Collection Jules Maeght, Paris



André Breton
(Tinchebray, 1896 – Paris, 1966)
Bagueballoncorde...etc., 1966

Ink on paper, 31 × 24 cm
Victoria Combalia Collection

'So strong is the belief in life, in what is most fragile in life – real life, I mean that in the end this belief is lost. Man, that inveterate dreamer, daily more discontent with his destiny, has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use [...].

Why should I not expect from the sign of the dream more than I expect from a degree of consciousness which is daily more acute? Can't the dream also be used in solving the fundamental questions of life? Are these questions the same in one case as in the other and, in the dream, do these questions already exist? Is the dream any less restrictive or punitive than the rest?

[...] I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak'. (André Breton)

Author of the 'Manifeste du surréalisme' ('Surrealist Manifesto') of 1924, André Breton is best known as the founder of Surrealism. The Surrealists were disillusioned by the horrors of World War I, and disappointed by the rational thought and bourgeois values that lay at the roots of it. They found inspiration in the theories of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to explore the unconscious, the dream, fantasy, hypnosis, and to explore techniques like automatic writing. For Breton, Surrealism was a technique in which consciousness is eliminated. Wanting to remove the border between dream and reality, he stated that what he liked most about imagination was its unsparing quality.



Ibo Mask
Nigeria, 19th century

Painted wood, 63 × 32 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini



Shozo Shimamoto
(Osaka, 1928–2013)
Untitled (Shibu), 1954–58

Mixed media and oil paint on newspaper, 197,5 × 148 cm
Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

'Embody the fact that our spirit is free. The thing that is most important to us is that contemporary art acts as a free space providing maximum release for people to survive the trying conditions of contemporary life. It is our deep-seated belief that creativity in a free space will truly contribute to the development of the human race' (1st *Gutai Journal*, January 1955). During the 1950s and 60s, Japanese Gutai painter Shozo Shimamoto explored the boundaries of painting by crashing bottles against large-scale canvases, by applying layers of thick matter on them, and by perforating the paper canvas in what became his *Ana* (Holes) series. The hole works he began prior to his Gutai period are especially vital. At approximately the same time, the Italian artist Lucio Fontana began making holes in the picture plane as a way to restore the plane to the three-dimensionality of space. Entitled *Shibu* (Quietness), Shimamoto first conceived this painting as a hole work by perforating layers of glued newspaper. Four years later, immediately after the encounter with the French art critic Michel Tapié and coinciding with the artist's new interest in *art informel*, Shimamoto picked up this work to transform it into an 'informel' work. Therefore, the yellow painting can be seen as one of Shimamoto's most transitional works: a Tapié-inspired painting style that focuses on the matter and the rough surface that nevertheless still refers back to the early hole experiments with perforated newspapers.



Gaetano Previati
(Ferrara, 1852 – Lavagna, Genoa, 1920)
Chiaro di luna, 1888–1892

Oil on canvas, 120 × 149 cm
Private collection

As a unique representative of Divisionism, Previati played a fundamental role in Futuristic painting.

Boccioni always talked about him with admiration both of his painting and of his theoretical thought, and saw one and the other as aimed at overcoming visual laws – that is what prompted Divisionism to come into being – and at representing the immaterial, such as ideas and states of mind. In *Chiaro di luna*, we can see how Previati's painting is characterized by a 'passion for searching out light' and motivated by the 'desire to transform matter, conceived as a spiritual dynamism, into an ethereal substance' (Enrico Crispolti).



Bernardí Roig
(Palma, Majorca, 1965)
An Illuminated Head for Blinky P., 2010

Polyester resin, marble powder, fluorescent light,
177,8 × 64,8 × 30,5 cm
Courtesy Galerie Kewenig, Berlin, Palma.
Photo © Silvia León

'A building could be the metaphor of a head [...]. Both are depositories for memory, experiences, and emotions. In a building, if the windows are the eyes, the door is the mouth. Through the windows the light comes in and images are created; doors make it possible to move and connect spaces. At the same time, disabling the word, metaphorically annulling the mouth with a fluorescent tube, we obtain the impossibility of the word. This is a place of quiet, silence, muteness, and paralysis. Architecture as invalid body, invalidated by a double denial of its function: movement and communication. [...] This presence, placed halfway at the door with the annulled word, is a shield for our contemplative loneliness, in which the only way to inseminate meaning is through intuition. Because intuition, which always defeats logic, is outside the prison of language or precedes language: it is pre-linguistic and prefigures facts. Intuition could be a great depository of knowledge that we did not organize; it is like an internal voice, multifaceted and multifarious.' (Bernardí Roig)



Susan Kleinberg
(Phoenix, 1949)
BALAFRE, 2016–2017

Developed in collaboration with the scientific team of the Louvre, digital video with sound, variable dimensions, edition of 5
Courtesy of the artist and Endar

'Intuition seems to have to do with everything one knows extended into a non-rational mark. BALAFRE is these marks, expanding from the choice of the original source through each choice of the material. My hope and responsibility as author is to provide opportunities of access into terrain of visceral authenticity, an entry, likely not consciously acknowledged, potent in its access to this curious and all-pervasive subliminal system' (Susan Kleinberg).



Matt Mullican
(Santa Monica, 1951)
Untitled (Models of the Cosmology), 2012

Blown glass, various dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Micheline Szwajzer

Matt Mullican's work seeks to develop a cosmological model that will bring order and structure to the world, in the hopes thereby to derive meaning from it. Models of cosmology date back to before the Middle Ages, but Mullican's concept is deeply personal. He creates a kind of parallel world, which he records in a never-ending cartography. He touches upon essential events where Death walks hand in hand with the Destiny of the fictional Ego, where time and logic are turned in upon themselves. One of Mullican's principal modes of operation is hypnosis. When performing under hypnosis, he gives free rein to the emotions of his subconscious, thus becoming 'That Person'. This state of trance enables him to explore a new definition of 'Reality' that invites the viewer to reflect upon the question of the essence of being.

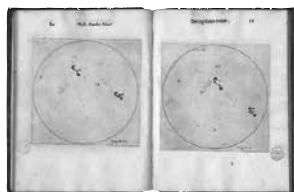


Otto Umbeh, called Umbo
(Düsseldorf, 1902 – Hannover 1980)
Growth of Salts, 1935

Chemigram, silver nitrate print, 15 × 21,7 cm
Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI,
Dist. RMN Grand Palais/Hervé Véronèse

Otto Umbeh, or Umbo, was first a young student at the Bauhaus (1921–1923), then a portraitist in Berlin (1926), and eventually also reporter for

Dephot agency (starting in 1928), where he became a pioneer in photojournalism. During his career, the German artist was time and again able to put to the test and challenge the documentary value of photography: in his work, he was always pushing the borders of reality toward new directions in ways not dissimilar to that of the European avant-garde artists who were his contemporaries. With his 'growth of salts,' Umbo (the pseudonym he started using in 1924) went back to experimenting in the camera obscura. This is not an abstract image, because it shows the real chemical base of the photograph, but neither is it figurative, since it does not reproduce any subject. Indeed, the film, free to express itself, impresses its surface only with its own inner reactions. What we observe is the same silver nitrate that, freed from the obligation of representing an external reality, recovers its repressed subconscious and records its dance steps for posterity.



Galileo Galilei

(Pisa, 1564 – Arcetri, 1642)

History and Demonstrations Concerning Sunspots and their Phenomena, 1613

Published by Giacomo Mascardi, Rome
Printed book with engravings, 22 x 22 cm
Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice. Photo © Servizio Riproduzioni Biblioteca del Museo Correr

Direct observation of the sun causes more or less severe damage to the sight of anyone who studies its phenomena using, without preventive measures, a common telescope. Galileo Galilei used the method invented by Benedetto Castelli (Brescia, 1577/78 – Rome, 1643, scientist, Benedictine monk, and Galileo's close collaborator) in order to observe, indirectly, the movements of the solar globe using the same principle as the camera obscura. By putting a simple sheet of paper a meter away from his telescope's lens, which he had positioned in a darkened room, Galileo was able to see the projected image of our star. It was inverted, of course, but so well defined that it was possible to observe its phenomena in detail. A precise focalization was obtained by superimposing the solar globe's profile on a circle with fixed dimensions, drawn on the paper. This device allowed the Pisan scientist to study, calmly and carefully, sunspots, a phenomenon that periodically affects the sun's surface. Through the observation of their movement, Galileo deduced that the sun was not immutable and static but, quite the contrary, that it was rotating uniformly around its axis. The precision of his drawing is such that even today's astronomers use these tables in order

to verify if the spots have changed their behaviour and position since 1600. The clearness and detail of Galileo's drawings of the sun show once again how the aesthetic form is able to convey knowledge perfectly, since art and science are expressions of the same thirst for knowledge.



Gaspare Diziani

(Belluno, 1689 – Venice, 1767)

San Francesco Receiving the Stigmata

Pen, sepia ink, grey watercolour, and red pencil on paper,
33 x 19,2 cm
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Correr Museum
Photo © Claudio Franzini



Otto Piene

(Laasphe, 1928 – Berlin, 2014)

The Golden Sun, 1963

Gold leaf, tempera and burnt on canvas, 68 x 96 cm
Private collection



Marta Dell'Angelo

(1970, Pavia)

Gust, 2016

Oil on canvas, 200 x 230 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo Davide Dell'Angelo

The body and its silent language is a theme that crosses the entire artistic research of Marta

Dell'Angelo. As she puts it: '*Gust belongs to a group of paintings that were developed, with some variations, around the concept of intuition, and I mean that in terms of the iconographic and the dynamic/compositional aspects, as well as in light of the idea that shape is not necessarily static. Painting allows empty spaces, some white gaps still open to the imagination, stressing an absence, a loss for a rebirth*'. The neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese, talking to the artist, describes the work as follows: '*In Gust, the removal of the body activates limbs that have been freed from the materiality of the body to which they are usually attached and that, despite their static posture, release themselves and create a dance that the spectator intuits through a simulation that is indeed empowered by the removal of the body*'.



Matteo Nasini

(Rome, 1976)

Sparkling Matter, 2017

Porcelain sculpture, audio installation
Courtesy of the artist, Clima Gallery, Milan
and Operativa Arte, Rome. Photo © Ruggero Carlesso

Matteo Nasini transforms the brain waves generated during the REM phase into sculptural solids and automatic audio compositions. Using a technology capable of translating the brain's electric activity into forms and sounds, Nasini expands the confines of the oneiric world, giving it body and noise, as well as making the experience a participative one. '*On the nights when I'm working and I hear the sounds and see the forms generated by the dreams of the participants, I feel as if the hidden universe of dreams was in the process of revealing itself. Dreams become tangible to eye and ear – though, like every "transformation", this experience is a utopia, a lure, a sleight of hand. We observe ourselves from various and inaccessible sites that are, for the duration of one night, joined into an impossible communication, split as it is between sleep and wakefulness. Intuition is present in each of these two dimensions. It manifests itself in the sleep that is about to end and in wakefulness, revealing what is inaudible and intangible in each. Suddenly, like in a dream, intuition brings these two worlds closer together for a span of time that cannot be measured*' (Matteo Nasini).



Elisa Sighicelli
(Turin, 1968)
Untitled, 2013

Archival pigment print with UV seal, 57 × 90 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Elisa Sighicelli's research revolves around photography's physical presence. The artist investigates its substance as a sculptural object, showing the ability of an image to exist outside its dimensions and documentary significance. The subjects pictured by Sighicelli experience a constant tension, half-way between abstraction and *trompe l'œil*. In 2013, Sighicelli made several compositions by photographing objects, either from the Museo Poldi Pezzoli in Milan or from her personal collection. The objects, captured by the artist behind a sheet, opaque and fibrous, of drawing paper are transformed, with the help of light, into a new a new, and blurry, graphic trace. In this way, the photographic paper becomes a symbol of that dividing veil by taking on its physical characteristics. This photography is transparent. It is capable of showing a new world without revealing all the secrets lying under its surface. In *Untitled*, the fragment of a crystal becomes, through this simple visual translation, an infinite landscape onto which we can project our imagination.

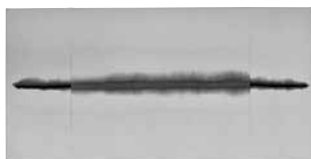


Max Neumann
(Saarbruck, 1949)
Untitled, 1988

Tempera on canvas, 200 × 240 cm
Galerie Maeght, Paris

This untitled work by Max Neumann has an atmosphere that hovers on the verge between the dreamlike and the nightmarish. It shows a central restless figure that is hardly there, seemingly floating, one with its surrounding and background. The person's hands and face are most prominent, though the expression is difficult to read. The artist does not aim to create obvious portraits, for he feels that the more you leave out, the more intense the expression becomes. The all-over foggy blueish-grey

tints are abruptly interrupted by a broad, dark rim at the bottom of the canvas, on which can be seen a pair of scissors. The emptiness created is almost abstract, with rigorous lines and colours, keeping nothing but pure essence. The human figure is alone in a silent time and space that are undefined. The reduced composition of the person illustrates the loss of illusions as a result of a history that has dealt with more than its fair share of suffering. What is left is the almost faceless shadow or silhouette of a rootless human condition, stuck in silent solitude. The emotional power calls on the intuition of the viewer, demanding him or her to add an imagined storyline to the canvas.



Tsuyoshi Maekawa
(Kohama, 1936)
Untitled, 1979

Sewn cotton cloth and acrylic paint, 92 × 183 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liègeois

After the end of the Gutai Art Association and attracted by the texture of burlap, cotton, and hempen fabric, Tsuyoshi Maekawa started working in the 1970s with textile as a material, making abstract relief works or sewing it together into complex waveforms. Maekawa challenged himself to see how finely he could sew a single piece of cloth, or express himself in a work by combining different weaves of fabric.

'I constantly carry a small sketchbook with me and think about my next work. I keep it with me in my studio, my living room, and my bed, and I always walk around with it when I travel. In the course of my incessant thinking, I have sudden flashes of inspiration in which I understand how to combine shapes and materials that have never existed before. These flashes of inspiration help push my work forward later. I consider them to be a fundamental part of my work. Everything I do depends on them. Making art is a totally free realm without any constraints. I think of my job as creating forms in which inspiration and matter successfully meld together. Intuition is nothing less than inspiration. Fusing the unique characteristics and charms of the material with my inspiration gives my works validity. The material also plays a big part in this process. Nothing makes me happier than sharing something captivating, which has never existed before and is interesting and beautiful, with the viewer. I believe that this work – an expression in which the acts of capturing power and beauty in a single line and blurring the matter of tar with a solvent were intuitively fused together – is even more effective. By pursuing a new expression and material, I have arrived at a work that I find satisfying.' (Suyoshi Maekawa)



Asger Jorn
(Verujun, 1914 – Aarhus, 1973)
Burning Problem, 1972

White Carrara marble, 47 × 28 × 25 cm
Private collection

Jorn, an important figure of the CoBrA group and one of the founders of the Situationist International, is a political revolutionary and defender of a materialistic art based on absolute expressive freedom and inspired by the imaginative and immediate creativity of children and outcasts, and by the mythical sparks of Nordic primitivism. His deeply experimental research is characterized by a physical and highly tactile painting derived from a very violent and lively expressionist power. As a sculptor, he works with pottery (in Albisola) and with other materials, such as marble, especially in his last years. He uses a process that involves applying direct cuts to the marble, creating thereby figures of fantastic archaic suggestion.



François Fiedler
(Kassa, Hungary, 1921 – Paris, 2001)
Corrélatif, 1974

Oil on canvas, 195 × 130 cm
Collection Jules Maeght, Paris

Miró discovered this instinctive painter of Hungarian origin and introduced him to Aimé Maeght, with whom he would become close friends. For a few years, Miró invited Fiedler to his studio to 'liberate' the unconscious. The critic Octave Nadal writes:

'The true invention of the informal in painting, the non-form, in so far as the renewal of painting occurred towards the end of the figurative techniques that, through successive exhaustion and destruction, had prepared for the absolute nakedness, the leap into space. Fiedler understood this intuitively. That is the instinct, the sagacity,

that has guided him always in his discoveries. In this he was, he is, a painter, and a great painter. Without worrying about the diverse and multiple ways that were opening then, he followed this technical discovery for two or three decades, alone, with continuity and constancy, in the discontinuous and in the non-figurative'.

(Octave Nadal 'François Fiedler: After silence', (1983)



Gil Joseph Wolman

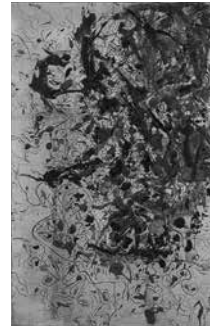
(Paris, 1929 – Paris, 1995)

Sans titre (Pour m'introduire dans le silence de la peinture, j'écris comme je crie), 1961

Oil on canvas, 64,8 x 81 cm
Collection Natalie Seroussi, Paris

'I have no idea / I only have one / and I am looking for it.'
(Gil J. Wolman)

Together with Guy Debord, Gil J. Wolman was a founding member of the Letterist International movement, a collective of radical artists and theorists formed in Paris in the 1950s. A pioneer in researching the intersection and alteration of visual and textual languages, Wolman's oeuvre consists of sound poetry, experimental film-making, painting, collage, and books. After he was excluded from the Letterist International in 1957, the focus in his work shifted from the spoken word and moving image to a more pictorial approach. He started to work with different materials, like plastic, papier-mâché, writings, graffiti, tape, and newspapers. After 1964, he frequently used adhesive tape on newspapers and magazines: after tearing the tape off, fragments of images and text would be imprinted on its adhesive side. He then fixed this 'Scotch Art' on wood, canvas, or another support. The presented work is untitled, though it has a long subtitle, which reads: 'to introduce myself into the silence of painting, I write as I scream'. That same sentence is also inscribed on the painting itself, shedding light on the poetic dimension of the work.



Kimiko Ohara

(Nishinomiya City, 1934)

Untitled, 1958

Oil on canvas, 158 x 104,5 cm
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation

Kimiko Ohara was a member of the Gutai Art Association, which was founded by the respected artist Jiro Yoshihara in 1954 and existed until 1972. Ohara joined the Gutai movement early on, in 1956. In quest of an art that had never existed before, these young artists experimented enthusiastically not only with paintings, but also with a variety of other activities, like open-air or staged events. Ohara was seen as one of the most talented members of the group, and her style developed towards the language of Abstract Expressionism. In this untitled work from 1957, an explosion of vibrant colours has been dynamically splashed over the canvas with loose and vivid brushstrokes, evoking a lively and moving composition of lines and splatters of paint. This work was shown at the 4th Gutai Art exhibition, and seems to have been exhibited upside down. According to Atsuo Matsumoto, connoisseur of Gutai art, this piece of Ohara is 'from her best period, [a] typical early Gutai piece, primitive, but beautiful'.



Pierre Alechinsky

(Brussels, 1927)

Cobra vivant, 1975

Ink and mixed media on paper, relined on canvas,
154 x 252 cm
Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

One of the most active CoBrA members, Pierre Alechinsky participated in all the shows of the group between 1949 and 1951. He developed a new painting style, loaded with spontaneous and primitive expressivity. Later on, he was to direct his language mostly towards the development of a fluid semiotic figuration influenced by oriental

calligraphy. This production is characterized by consistent suggestions that create an imaginative universe of figures, animals, snakes, plants, and geographical shapes of fantastic and ironic poetry. His compositions, made with liquid inks and acrylic colours on paper, can develop also on wide dimensions by a refined play of frames and borders that controls the internal chaos' freedom.



Yu-ichi Inoue

(Tokyo, 1916–1985)

Dango, 1961

Ink on Japanese paper, 166,5 x 97 cm
Courtesy LADS Gallery, Japan, and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'While painting, close your eyes and concentrate your attention on the movement of the brush. Never mind anything and just keep painting. Don't let the form restrict your movement in any way. Your whole body and spirit must be directed by the brush. Try to be totally brave and arrogant in the movement! [...] Get totally absorbed in the act of scratching with the brush! The result, the painting, is the thing that matters to me the least. Suddenly, I found I had scattered enamel all over the room. It was my fault. Well, I can't help it. Forget about what the landlord will say! ... Lines should be neither horizontal nor vertical, neither straight nor crooked. They have to be nothing – above all else. Nothing I can see... My eyes are filled with sweat. What a mess!'

(Excerpts from Yu-ichi Inoue's diary, entries from 15 April and 8 June, 1955.)

Yu-ichi Inoue was a highly praised avant-garde calligrapher and painter whose techniques had roots in action painting and in the radicalization of traditional calligraphy methods. His works are based on Japanese kanji characters, which he applied with expressive but fluent and big brushstrokes on traditional Japanese paper, or splashed using ink-laden brushes. Focusing on just one or a few enlarged characters in each painting, the thick, black lines have a somewhat rough and spontaneous appearance. Script was turned into image. He believed that this different and modern way of writing could convey the meaning of the characters that went beyond the decorative. Yu-ichi's expressive art of writing presents the impulse of his internal state of creativity. The handwritten symbols became a metaphor for communicating an artistic message based on the artist's inner power.



'Gelede' zoomorphic mask
in the form of a snake
Yoruba culture, Nigeria, Africa
18th – 19th century

Painted wood, H: 43 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

The Yoruba, the largest ethnic group in Africa, live in the south-western part of Nigeria and in neighboring Benin. The festivities of *Gelede* companies traditionally took place in the spring when the rains come. They coincide with the period of renewal of vegetation, in fact, the festivities wish fertility and well-being to the community and honor the spirit of mothers. The masks are carved in a realistic way with fine details; the face often has a serene expression and the various details, animals, characters, objects are carved on the head. All it is enriched with pigments.

The *Gelede* mask in question wears on the head the representation of a snake, sacred animal, wrapped in a masterly manner and with traces of black, white and blue.



Karel Appel
(Amsterdam, 1921 – Zurich, 2006)
Composition, 1967

Gouache on paper, 50 × 65 cm
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Ca' Pesaro
Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venezia, Italia.
Photo © Claudio Franzini 2000. © Archivio Fotografico
FMCV

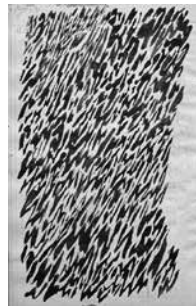


Kuba embroidery
Kuba Kingdom
Democratic Republic of the Congo
19th century

660 × 90 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jean Liégeois

Kuba art can be interpreted as an expression of the subconscious, containing the imagery of life and death. It is the product of a society that was devoted to the visual. Design was everywhere, and it served more than simply a decorative purpose.

Unlike other art forms, such as woodcarvings, embroidery was made without any preliminary guidelines for the design. First the lines were embroidered, then the spaces between them were filled in with cut-pile work as the embroidered figures gradually overlapped. Because this was a slow and laborious process, the (female) artist had time to create subtle elements to animate the image in a way that goes beyond the movement of its linear development. The simultaneous effect of line and surface is exploited by Kuba design to create a third dimension: a false space within the decoration of surfaces inscribed in a structure that is not explicitly delineated.



Dominique Stroobant
(Antwerp, 1947)
Automatic Writing, 1969

Private Collection, Italy
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'Considering the structure of a surface, be it a slab of stone or a sheet of paper, I could ignore neither the crystalline composition of the first nor the interwoven fibres of the second, since there is mimicry between the traces of a point or a brush leave on the surfaces they go across. At the time (1969) I was a relatively disciplined art

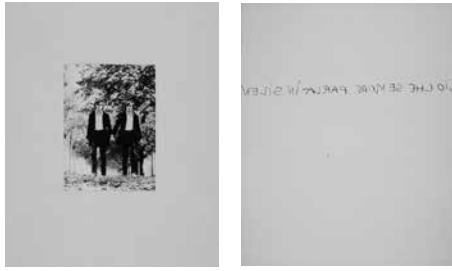
student until Stan Hensen, my sculpture teacher, told me: "Stroobant, you have to learn to let yourself go!" A pen or a point bounce rhythmically, like well-trained dancers or drummers. Without being aware of it, the arm follows one's heartbeat and lays down signs that often resemble molecular structures – this was in fact confirmed to me by a young biologist years later. Today, I recall a chapter from my biography of Ken Davis, The Floating Stones, entitled: "Why Do Things Leak? Why Do Things Sweat? Let Them Leak!" The argument was technical, biological, and political. Long before I realized it, what was leaking out of a pen or a brush onto those sheets that resembled an amazing inventory of shapes and organisms from whence I could glean everything I needed for future studies. Whether I penetrated deep inside a stone or filled paper with water and ink as if it was a translucent sponge, they were still the surfaces or undulating carpets on which I made my way'. (Dominique Stroobant)



Tjuringa
Ooldea Area, South Australia
18th – 19th century

Hardwood, natural ochre and white pigments, with a crusty patina, 226 × 14 × 0,3 cm
Private Collection. Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Company.
Photo Jan Liégeois

In the beginning there was the Dreamtime. Through the dream came the Cosmos from chaos, and the Great Beings were brought into existence, materializing the life force that is present in every human, animal, and object. They roamed the earth and modelled the landscape, gave all things a name and a lasting form, instead of the fluid nature these things had during the preceding period of chaos. The Australian continent is covered with mythical paths created by these Great Beings, which intertwine with those along which the Aboriginal people travel in their search for food. These paths and actions of the Beings are inscribed on sacred tablets of wood or stone that the Great Beings left behind, and which humans call *tjuringa*. The carvings on the *tjuringa* contain a limited number of signs, and there are neither abstract nor figurative, but conceptual in nature. The *tjuringa*, bearers of concepts, serve as mediators between the orders of the world of the invisible and that of the visible.



Alighiero Boetti
(Turin, 1949 – Rome, 1994)
Careless Insecure, 1975

Mixed media, 55 x 45 cm
Enea Righi Collection. Photo © Antonio Maniscalco

Careless Insecure is a portfolio of 80 images produced and gathered by Alighiero Boetti over the course of ten years (1966–1975). The drawings, writings, collages, and photos contained in it form an anthology – or, rather, a visual index of the projects that Boetti had created during his career, or that he was about to complete. Here we find the renowned picture of the *Twins* holding their hands, in which the artist is shown as a split being: both Alighiero and Boetti. We also find also the iconic photo used for his retrospective show at the Galleria Sperone in 1969 (*San Bernardino*). There are his ‘square sentences’, the *Ononymous*, the postcards of the Mole Antonelliana in Turin, and the ‘non-theoretical’ Manifesto with the names of the artists of his generation. His links with Afghanistan are symbolized by stamps of the One Hotel, which he set up in Kabul in 1971, along with the front page of the local newspaper of 9 April 1973, whose headline announces Pablo Picasso’s death (*Kabul Times*). This thick collection cannot but remind us of the *Boîte-en-valise* of Marcel Duchamp, an artist that Boetti enters into dialogue with when he moves the famous mustache of the Mona Lisa (*L.H.O.O.Q.*) onto Andy Warhol’s portrait of Jacqueline Kennedy in his lithograph *AW:AB=L:MD* (or Andy Warhol:Alighiero Boetti = Leonardo:Marcel Duchamp).

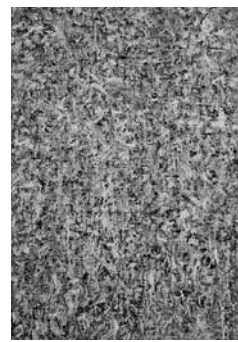


Iyembe Exchange Coin
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Early 20th century

Iron, 105 x 6 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jean Liégeois

This large iron spiral in the shape of a snake was used as currency by the Iyembe People in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was not used as a daily currency, but was reserved instead to confer status and wealth, and to make important payments for life-changing events, such as a dowry. Primitive African currencies existed in an infinite variety of objects: lumps of salt, shells, beads, animals, fabrics, metal objects, etc. To modern-day Westerners, these articles may seem surprising, but the indigenous people chose their currency for one of two possible reasons: either because the object had a practical use (food, tools, weapons), or because they were aesthetically pleasing (bracelets, necklaces, anklets).

Alfred Mahieu, a Belgian inspector who travelled around the Congo at the turn of the twentieth century, describes the practice in *Numismatique du Congo 1885–1924*: ‘The native people of the Congo use iron, red copper, and brass for the preparation of numerous exchange tools. Iron can be found everywhere, copper is present in many regions, brass is imported from Europe and was known before Stanley’s arrival; in their eyes, it represents a precious metal comparable to our gold, which instead they do not use’.

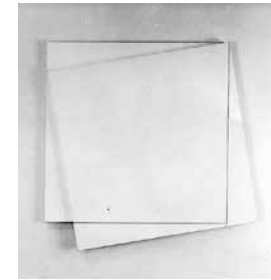


Mark Tobey
(Centerville, USA, 1890 – Basel, Switzerland, 1976)
Untitled, 1952

Oil on cardboard, 92 x 62 cm
Private collection

‘My friend, Takezaki, used to tell me: “Let nature take over in your work. Get yourself out of the way when you paint”. But, as it is wisely said in Zen: “You must be prepared before the fire can take over”. This is what I mean when I say that an artist should concentrate on his technique, so that he has a mastery on his craft. Then, when inspiration arrives, its expression will not be hampered by some lack of mastery of craft. Unless you know how to move your fingers on the piano, how to play the notes, how can you play music? But, mind you, you should develop your technique expressively. [...] I’m just not pleased at all with painting. I thought I was almost finished with it, but now I see that I’m just starting. It’s hard work. Maybe I’m trying to follow nature too closely. Sometimes I don’t know when to stop with a painting. At a point the mind starts to intrude, it wants to modify and change it. You’re on the verge of doing something

different, and the conscious mind wants to pull it back toward something you’ve already done. You’ve got to resist this sort of retreating! Ryder described himself as an inchworm on the end of a branch, reaching into the air. I like that! I like those paintings of mine where I keep discovering different things in them all the time – things I wasn’t even aware of as I painted them, surprises even to me’. (Mark Tobey)



François Morellet
(Chloet, 1926 – 2016)
Overlap and Transparency: back square horizontal, front square inclined at 10°, upper right angle on upper right angle, 1979

Acrylic on canvas, 116 x 116 x 6 cm
Studio Morellet

This work can be interpreted as a synthesis of many of the themes that characterize François Morellet’s artistic path: the absence of colour, the geometry of the square, the misalignment, the rotation, the transparency, the tension between two twin figures, shown with the highest concentration in this piece. Moreover, the use of overlapping canvases gives a powerful sculptural dimension to the whole procedure. At the same time, it creates the opportunity for an amused play of *trompe l’oeil*, where the painter empowers the barely-perceptible transparency that results from overlapping the two squares, by underlining it with a ‘deceptive’, but at the same time ‘revealing,’ shading.



Angel Vergara
(Mieres, 1958)
Straatman, 1988 – 2017

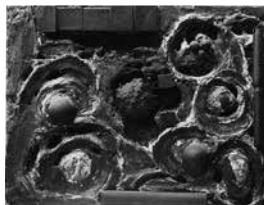
Performance, Charcoal on canvas, 210 x 240 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery.
Pictures taken at the Académie de St. Gilles, Brussels,
4 June 2016. Photo © Anita Jans

In 1988, Angel Vergara hijacked the Belgian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, where he performed as Straatman for the first time. Covered by a white sheet – like a canvas – he painted what was happening around him. Unable to see what was actually going on outside the big cloth over him, he followed his other senses and imagination. By turning into Straatman, the artist places himself in the centre of life while remaining protected in a subtle way; his public performance is done in all anonymity and seclusion. Vergara appears like a living sculpture in the city, although he is not a work of art himself. The performance is about a reflection. The painter is literally within the white canvas, which he uses as a movable studio where he can withdraw himself. This particular Straatman performance was originally accompanied by a text by Valère Novarina, who saw in the performance an instance that leads proverb and body into action and experience. For *Intuition*, however, the artist is working with the musician Mireille Capelle to create a new version of the performance. At the exhibition, a large canvas is attached to the wall and covered with charcoal, so that it is all black. Next to it is Straatman, moving to rhythm and echo. As figure draped in the white cloth erases the black surface of the canvas the white cloth becomes stained with black. This public improvisation allows the viewer to see displayed the intuition between an active body and sensitive spaces.



Miniature anthropomorphic statuette,
used in apotropaic ritual contexts
Africa, 1st half of 19th century

Aluminium, lost-wax casting, 9 x 4,7 x 2,4 cm
Private Collection. Photo © Matteo Falconi



Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
(Alba 1902–1964)
Untitled (Black from the series Next), 1964

Mixed media on panel, 71,5 x 91 x 6 cm
Private Collection. Courtesy Archivio Gallizio, Torino

In 1955, this pharmacist and self-taught artist met Asger Jorn at Albisola, with whom he founded the ‘Experimental Laboratory for Imaginary Bauhaus’ in Alba. In 1957, along with Guy Debord and Jorn he was one of the founders of the International Situationists. Giving expression to primordial and spontaneous instincts, his gestural painting and material is charged with vital and revolutionary energy expanding into space. In 1959, Gallizio realized at the Galerie Drouin in Paris *The Cave of Anti-Matter*, a multi-sensory environment, and developed his idea of proliferating and free creativity through the production of industrial painting, in long rolls of cloth to sell as bolts of cloth. His late works, like this one, were paintings and assemblages impregnated with black tragic materiality.



Raoul Ubac
(Malmedy, 1909 – Dieudonné, 1985)
Brûlage, 1939–1940

Gelatin silver print, 29,7 x 39,7 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d’art moderne –
Centre de création industrielle. Photo © Centre Pompidou,
MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Jacques Faujour



Park Seo-Bo
(Yé-Cheon, Kyung-Book, 1931)
Écriture No. 27–73, 1973

Oil on canvas, 99,8 x 80,8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Park Seo-Bo is best-known for his *Écriture* (Writing) series, which he started in the 1970s. Framing many of the fundamental concepts of Dansaekwha, Park has pursued his philosophy of the artist as a conduit, an idea that is clearly visible in these series. Similar to the technique of automatic drawing, he makes a work by drawing without pause, engaging with the canvas on both a spiritual

and physical level. This profound belief in the artist’s ability to merge with the medium reflects Park’s practice of illustrating the patterns of energy that make up consciousness, evoking what he refers to as body rhythm. ‘*People say my current work is similar to minimal art, but I don’t agree. [...] Even though my paintings may represent an idea about culture, the main focus is always based on nature. In other words, I want to reduce the idea and emotion in my work in order to express my interest in space from the point of view of nature. Then I want to reduce that to create pure emptiness. This has been an old value that still exists in oriental philosophy, where nature and men are one. This tendency is evident in my work from the 1970s and 1980s, not just in recent years.*’
(Park Seo-Bo)



Santiago Ramón y Cajal
(Petilla de Aragón, 1852 – Madrid, 1934)
Cellular Models of the Frontal Cortex

Chinese ink on paper, 33,7 x 15,5 cm
Courtesy: Instituto Cajal, Madrid

In 1906, the Noble Prize for Medicine was awarded to Camillo Golgi and Santiago Ramón y Cajal, for having described the architecture of our nervous system with unprecedented precision. Golgi had discovered a method, called ‘black reaction’, to colour neurons and thus render them visible under a microscope. Cajal, who remained fascinated by the views made possible by this invention, decided to study in detail the geography of our nervous cells, using as well his talent for drawing to share the results of his explorations and research. But this desire to reproduce was not born only with the end of divulging his findings. His drawings, done first in pencil then in Chinese ink, tried to recreate the infinitely small spectacle that had first surprised and fascinated the Spanish scientist by its aesthetic qualities. Cajal’s drawings give graphic form to the innate beauty that defines the neuronal basis of our mind, and of our intuitive thinking.



Claudine Draï
(Paris, 1951)
Untitled, 2016

Tissue paper on canvas, 150 × 150 × 38 cm
Artist private collection. Photo © Charles Duprat

INTUITION / Emotion deepens by itself / From the recall of the abyss / The body finds new depths / Lines furrow space / With unusual forms / The world is foreseen in the abandon / Because the void is seized by some thing / so that nothingness is only a spatial proximity / The present is immobile, and yet it moves / Forms seem to reap the indefinite / in life's becoming / Adding only the mystery of uncertain thoughts / of the imageless gaze / Lines are lost amidst the many traces of the real / In the same inaccessible moment of time / [...] It posits a world where it does not know / A place without expectations, without history, where thought loses itself / The primal silence of consciousness / The white posits what crosses it / The gestures of the paper already sense their next task / Feeling has found the inner being / It can't access the real but becomes real / It seems to emerge from the alchemy of the elements / From the forms time has wrenched from the flesh of the cosmos / It finds the world / The lines stretch out to the stars / And what takes flight is, perhaps, the soul / Which beholds what it has crossed, the aphasia of the world / like the sense of reality itself / It has left words to thought (Claudine Draï)



Joan Miró
(Barcelona, 1893 – Palma de Mallorca, 1983)
Sans titre VI, 1966

Ink on paper, 46 × 62 cm
Collection Isabelle Maeght, Paris

'I work in a state of passion, transported. When I begin a canvas, I'm obeying a physical impulse, the need to throw myself; it's like a physical outlet.' (Joan Miró, cited in the exhibition catalogue *Joan Miró: Instinct and Imagination*, Denver Art Museum, 2015.)

Joan Miró is very well known for his unique surrealist works, which are eminently recognizable due to his distinctive use of shapes and basic colours. Miró achieved his fluid lines and his personal pictorial sign through the process known as automatism.

Automatic drawing, a technique that attracted the attention of many artists in the early twentieth century, demands that the hand of the artist move randomly, so that the final picture is the result of chance, and not of any rational calculation. The technique was used to give visual image to unconscious ideas and intuitive thoughts that would otherwise remain suppressed. Constructing compositions by letting go of the anticipated and calculated act of creating were likewise instruments to satisfy Miró's urge to turn away from tradition. For Miró, this creative approach resulted in innocent and childlike, yet sophisticated, artworks that have an exceptionally intuitive feel to them.



Ida Barbarigo
(Venice, 1920)
Passeggiata Elettrica, 1963

Oil on canvas, 100 × 81 cm
Axel Vervoordt Gallery. Photo Jean Liégeois

'Why chairs? I see in them the rhythms and structures that I find indispensable, for the spaces that I unconsciously invent [...]. [I]t is an instinct that draws me towards those cafés and the chairs on the terraces suspended above the water, seeming to be slumbering in the sun, wrapped up in mist.' (Ida Barbarigo)
Feeling the need to forget what had been done before and to unlearn how to paint, Ida Barbarigo strived to develop her own personal style, a language that held no references to prior artists. This search led to a process of removal, and what remained at the end were simplicity and suggestive lines, making her work tumble into abstraction. Her drawings allude to what is depicted with moving lines that are emotionally charged. An important structural element throughout her work is the chair, a motif that she uses as the emblem of a contemporary world, the essence of the modern city. The exploration of Paris' and Venice' outdoors accumulated in a higher interest for *passeggiate* (walks) – the act of ecstatic vagabonding whereby she wandered around areas such as squares, terraces, and cafés, observing the light, colours, the sudden revelations, and the behaviour of the people. The resulting paintings of these *passeggiate* are emotionally and electrically charged spaces that give the impression of an intuitive personal calligraphy, offering a glimpse of that which cannot be seen: the wind, the air, void, time, and energy, all passing through.

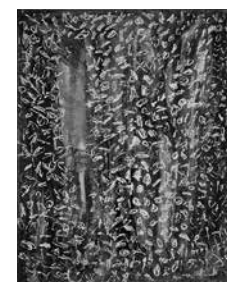


Unrecorded Ejaghan or Ekoi artist
(probably Bakor)
Carved figural monolith
'Akwanishi' or 'Atal' Stele
Ikrom area, Cross River State, Nigeria,
19th century

Basalt, 73 × 33 cm
Courtesy of Tobey Clarke Collection, London

Created by the Ekoi people that populate the Ikrom area to this day, 'Akwanishi' are found standing erect in circles, placed where the village elders hold their meetings, or else in areas of uncultivated forest outside the village. They are conceived in a phallic form and decorated with carvings of geometric shapes and stylized human features, which convey a complex system of codified information and a form of writing. While sharing a similar iconography, each stone is unique from every other stone in its design and execution.

According to oral tradition, these stones are relics of the Ekoi's ancestors. They were taken from the river, where they were polished by the endless flow of water. Each monolith is believed to represent an individual ancestor, whose name has now been lost.



Masatoshi Masanobu
(Koichi, 1911–1995)
Work, 1962

Oil on canvas, 162,2 × 130,3 cm
Axel Vervoordt Gallery. Photo Jean Liégeois

'What makes a painting retain intense appeal to the viewer even after all narratives and associations have been stripped away from it? Something that flows powerfully and freely like a waterfall, making the viewer forget everything for a time, stealing his or her soul away – something beyond logic that draws people in. That is what I am after.'

Japanese artist Masatoshi Masanobu, one of the lesser-known founding members of the Gutai Art

Association, produced a remarkable number of paintings around 1960. As is common to the art of all Gutai artists, Masanobu's practice entails an authentic and personal approach: *'I try to present pure painterly touch, as a direct expression of my own vital energy and emotion'*. Masanobu's important works show expression, movement, and vibration and seem to change infinitely. He creates multi-layered textures of oil paint and enamel on top of which he applies numerous little brushstrokes and scratches that reveal the colours of the layers underneath. As if it were the artist's signature, each symbol on the canvas is the product of repeated hand movements.



Maurizio Donzelli

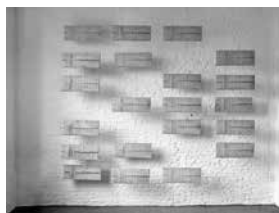
(Brescia, 1958)

Six Breaths, 2017

Mixed media, 200 x 300 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'Intuition is a beautiful nymph running across the woods, always fleeing through trees and foliage, always unreachable; we barely glimpse; like lightning; we hear her voice uttering wind-made words: 'I can't live either without you or with you' (nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum). Delicate and impalpable, she pushes us far away, where reasoning has a limited power, and rationality is suspended for endless moments. Her world is ruled by "maybe" and "who knows"; it is indeed a world that can be glimpsed at most. But, even though she could seem to us distant or chimerical, she is at the centre of every reality and every future. Intuition is transitory and, even when it is realized, she leaves us with a vague and distant nostalgia, like as a good dream that leaves us in the morning as it fades slowly into the light of dawn.' (Maurizio Donzelli, March 2017)



Michel Mouffe

(Brussels, 1957)

La Camera degli sposi II, 1991

21 canvases suspended in space, 228,5 x 288 cm
(total installation)

Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

La Camera degli Sposi II is a continuation of a first version of this work, from 1987, and it reinforces and expands the issue at its centre, namely the communication between twenty-one canvases and the exhibition wall behind them. The inspiration for the second version arrived to Michel Mouffe during a stay in Tokyo in 1991, where the exhibition space guided the artist into making his creative decisions concerning composition, lines, and dynamic. Since the canvases are hanging from the ceiling with nylon thread, the artwork is adjustable to any room it may be in: it does not require a specific wall, colour, or space. The floating paintings have a sensitive and easily interrupted movement of their own, while penetrating the surrounding air. It is about the objects having a meditative influence on its environment, and about the environment – and the viewer – absorbing the artwork. A mere gasp of a person can cause a change in the movement of the canvases, which makes this piece something to be sensitively experience more than something to be looked at.



Saul Steinberg

(Râmnicu Sărat, 1914 – New York City, 1999)

Feuille d'album, 1971

Oil on canvas, 78 x 108 cm
Collection Jules Maeght

Cartoonist and illustrator Saul Steinberg saw himself as a writer who draws. For over fifty years, he was a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*. Always critical, his cartoons display a sharp sense of humour. Throughout his career Steinberg kept experimenting with different materials, techniques, and styles. Besides cartoons and other drawings, he also created paintings. His postcard-style landscapes are rather simple in construction, with large skies, sometimes cloudy, and open planes – elements divided by nothing but an uninterrupted horizon. There are usually some people to be seen in these dream-like compositions, pictured from a great distance and therefore small, yet obviously human. Many of these tiny figures are an imprint of rubber stamps, a technique the artist began to use in the 60s. Steinberg said that he used these stamps as a symbol of the thing painted, to show that the paint is not real. He depicted nature through the banal tourist postcard, to illustrate how the landscape is the most cliché subject in art history: *'The artist in this drawing thinks he's painting a pure landscape. He isn't. He's making postcards'*.



Markus Schinwald

(Austria, 1973)

Skies, 2009

Oil on canvas, dimensions variable
Collection Enea Righi

'The work Skies is displayed as though it were a floating wall, an architecture that here, too, is mobile; intangible, almost as in a dream, is its presence in space, with the contrast between its size and the inner experience it offers the visitor'. (Paolo Nicolini, *Markus Schinwald: Il Dissoluto Punito*)

In this work, Markus Schinwald breaks up the heavens and brings clouds and sky indoors in an effort to understand humanity's place in the world. Schinwald creates a world that is poised between art and reality; he extracts certain elements of the 'real' world and arranges them into a choreography that focuses on the psychological implications of the study of space and the body. The artist is known for his extensive research, based on an exploration of the interplay between body and space, the fragility of language and the power of what is repressed in the human psyche.



Figurine of a horse and rider

Cyprus, Iron Age
2nd – 1st century BC

Painted earthenware, H: 13,6 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini



Jean-Jaques Lebel

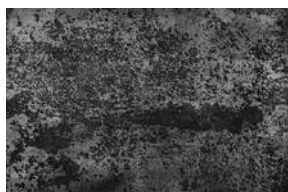
(Paris, 1936)

Ninmi pattes en l'air et en forêt, 1957

Oil and collage on canvas, 73 x 60,5 cm
Courtesy Galerie 1900–2000, Paris

'His forms interweave anarchically around an absolutely necessary structure, like the new face of the species looking for its triumphant place in today's concentration camp, where the mind is compressed by commandments that block the way to creation. They are the ethnographical antennae of an archetypal civilization, a concentrated and hypersensitive subjectivity, where great emotions surpass the means of expression. Lebel searches for desire's exact source (purity and youth), he wants to live, for he is not chained to slogans, or to any conformism or compulsion for integration. Genius does not manufacture: it feels the heterogeneous totality and extracts from it one or two philosophical stones. This psychic process uses all the materials of sensitivity: that is the sacred dance. Materializing imagination, imaginative materials devour each other and this terrible combat, which deeply marks the tragic evolution of a great and exemplary becoming. One can lose one's head, one's life too, in this tragedy. Here there are no stains of any kind; this perpetual change is the face of the knowledge machine itself, the face of man'.

(Text written by Victor Brauner for the exhibition by J. J. Lebel at Schwartz Gallery, Milan, 1961. Cited in the catalogue of the exhibition at Galerie 1900–2000, Paris, 2009)



Elena Mazzi

(Reggio Emilia, 1984)

Fracture(s), 2016

Print on Pescia cotton paper from photoengraving matrix with lava dust and calcographic ink, 46,4 x 69,7 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Ex Elettrofonica, Rome
Photo © Marco Di Giuseppe

'I remember when, in 2010, my mentor at the university told me: "just follow your intuitions". The best lesson ever. At that time, I was trying to figure out my role in the complicated geography of Venice – as a person, as a

human being, as a citizen. What was I, besides a student in a foreign city? How did my body relate to that city? I have always been intrigued by and interested in the complexity of the relationship to space, the environment, and to the thoughts of others. Curiosity used to overwhelm me, to the point that I needed to find a structure, a method to communicate and express my feelings and thinking in relation to different natural, social, urban, and undefined landscapes.

George Perec was right when he said: "Don't be too hasty in trying to find a definition of the town, it's far too big and there is every chance of getting it wrong. First, make an inventory of what you can see. List what you are sure of. Draw up elementary distinctions: for example, between what is the town and what isn't the town. [...] Method: you must either give up talking of the town, or force yourself to speak about it as simply as possible, obviously, familiarly. Get rid of all preconceived ideas. Stop thinking in ready-made terms, forget what the town-planners and sociologists have said" (Georges Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, London, Penguin, pp. 60–2). And I would add: "fall in love with complexity", because complexity is the only way to accept our layered and structured society. Our minds. Our feelings. Our landscapes. This is what I perceived inside the Etna volcano the first time I crossed it diagonally. That is why I needed to freeze it. And that is the reason why I absolutely need to get Paul Klee's notebooks back on my bedside table. Both volumes.' (Elena Mazzi)



Ryuji Tanaka

(Hyogo, 1927–2014)

Sei, 1963

Mineral pigments and mixed media on canvas,
130,5 x 162 cm
Courtesy Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

Artist Ryuji Tanaka was involved with two avant-garde groups that were of great importance to Japanese art in the post-War years: Pan-real Bijutsu Kyokai (Pan-real Art Association), and the Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai (Gutai Art Association). During his years with Gutai, Tanaka produced a number of works made with mineral pigments that are entitled *Sei* (era) and are often accompanied by a number. The use of these pigments goes back to *nihon-ga* (traditional Japanese painting), which attributed great importance to a set rules, conventions, techniques, and materials. One of those rules involves the application, to paper or silk, of natural pigments made out of crushed ore and other minerals dissolved in animal glue. Tanaka used old techniques,

but in a new and different way. Interested in loosening the rules of *nihon-ga*, he eventually kept nothing more than the traditional materials and how they were used. In the early 1960s, the artist developed a unique abstract style for which a large, thick heap of natural mineral pigments was placed at the centre of his paintings. The pigments were then transformed into a hard plane with a delicate texture. The colourful roughness shines bright against the dark background, and the edges of the colour plane overflow into the surrounding picture, imbuing his work with a fantastical, mysterious quality.



Marcel Broodthaers

(Saint-Gilles, 1924 – Keulen, 1976)

La Pluie, 1969

Video 16 mm
Fondation Lambert, Avignon

Marcel Broodthaers is known for questioning the established art world by ironically mocking its notable museums, art galleries, and ways of operating. Having started his career as an unsuccessful writer, Broodthaers' visual art often reminisces about his initial passion for language and words. His work is critical, and rooted in satire and the lyrical. Broodthaers flirted with Surrealism and Conceptual Art, and turned to a wide range of mediums, like video, photography, installation, readymades, writing, and painting. In this video (filmed in the garden of the rue de la Pépinière in Brussels during the satirical exhibition project *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXe siècle*), the artist is sitting outside with sheets of paper and a pot of ink placed on a box serving as a table. It is raining heavily, so that as he writes, loads of raindrops touch his words and erase them almost immediately. Also, the paper becomes too wet for the ink to adhere almost immediately, so that the letters evaporate into blotchy nothingness. Yet the writer continues to move his pen to form sentences. Despite his best effort, the artist's intangible thoughts remain true to their nature by dissolving before they were made tangible through visible words. By depicting a fleeting concept in a fleeting manner, this poetic approach connects idea and object in such a way that they become one. The unsuccessful act of preserving words on paper touches on the absurd, and adumbrates the difficulty of bringing thought into the physical world.



Duane Michals
(McKeesport, Pennsylvania, 1932)
The Illuminated Man, 1968

Gelatin silver print
Courtesy Admira, Milan
Photo © Duane Michals

A great photographer, at once ironic and visionary, Duane Michals created disturbing, oneiric, and fantastic visions using a variety of experimental techniques, such as double exposures, distortions, overlapping, and pictorial interventions applied directly onto the film. His aim has always been the exploration of what is invisible to the naked eye by overcoming mere realistic description. The 1968 photo series *The Naked Man* is an extraordinary example of his ability to transform a common individual into a fantastic metaphysical entity. Thanks to the suggestive flash that hides his face, the person emerges from a tunnel's dark background empowered with a mysterious energy.



'Bioma'
Papua New Guinea, ca. 1870 AD

Painted wood, H: 76 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

Bioma are anthropomorphic sculptures made of wood, often from discarded canoes, which accounts for the slight irregularity and twists in some of these figures. They occur mostly in the central and western Papuan Gulf, and are made in both male and female forms. The *Bioma* served as places for ancestral spirits to reside and as reminders of their presence among the living. The figures were displayed in family-designated shrines within longhouses, where men gathered and held ritual ceremonies.



Lucio Fontana
(Rosario de Santa Fé, 1899 – Varese, 1968)
Concetto Spaziale, Forma, 1957

Aniline on canvas, 150 × 150 cm
Fondazione Fontana, Milano

Lucio Fontana became known as the artist who created the Spatialism movement by cutting or puncturing the canvas. He stood before a prepped canvas, concentrating intensely, and then suddenly attacked it with a knife, accurately slicing it open. Destruction and creation went hand in hand. With this brutal act, Fontana wanted to explore the relationship between the space of the painting and the space beyond the painting. He called these artworks *Concetto Spaziale*. For Fontana, the act of creation was just as important as the artwork itself. He did not want to create a painting as such; instead, he aimed to open up a space and to create a new dimension for art. He also had no interest in decorating the surface. All he was looking for was to break dimensional limitations. The *Inchiostri* (Inks) series got their name because of the use of aniline to cover, in most cases with collage additions, the perforated canvas. The constellations of holes create outlines of irregular shapes through the surface of the canvas.



Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo
(Granada, 1871 – Venice, 1949)
Mirror Prototypes for the Projecting Clouds,
1902–1903

Tempera on glass, 37,3 × 60,5 cm
FMCV, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.
Photo © Claudio Utimpergher

Until the end of the 19th century, theatrical scenic design was limited to representing natural landscapes, the sky in particular, as multiple static planes, painted and arranged on the stage in such a way as to simulate depth. Mariano Fortuny inherited the use of colour derived from Venetian and Spanish traditions, and, from latter, he also inherited a tradition of scenic inventions for reproducing the illusion of a real contact with nature achieved by means of varying luminous effects obtained using electric lighting. Fortuny invented

a spherical dome that recalled, and developed in three dimensions, the circular surface of painted views that had been used in theatres since end of the 1700s. The dome enfolds the scene not only laterally but also vertically: it became a spherical horizon that created a unique background on which to uniformly project his light and colour atmospheres: 'a concave surface able to better create the illusion of the sky's homogeneity and depth' (Mariano Fortuny, *Memoria autobiografica*, [s.l.], [s.d.], f. 9, in Venezia, Mariano Fortuny, and in Mariano Fortuny, *Descriptiones et illustrationes*, Biblioteca Mariano Fortuny, inv. MFQ001). A glass surface, partially reflective and partially transparent, was painted with instinctive brush strokes, thus becoming a plate upon which to project clouds, just like magic lanterns in ancient times. Because they were translucent, the mirrors could be used both with a direct and concentrated light, if the light source was positioned behind the slab; and with an indirect and still more focused light, if the light source was positioned in front of the reflecting slab. By mixing multiple light sources with the adjustable support, it was at last possible to reproduce on the stage the ever-changing appearance of the clouds, an infinite source of shapes and colours.



Cy Twombly
(Lexington, 1928 – Rome, 2011)
Untitled, 2008

Acrylic on paper, 113,8 × 86 cm
Collection Lambert Avignon

Emerging from the New York School of Abstract Expressionism, Cy Twombly brought a distinctive approach to painting and sculpture. Twombly created – both on small-scale and on monumental panels – a sometimes inscrutable world of iconography, metaphor, and myth. There is a clear uniqueness about his near-metaphysical paintings within the climate of modern American art. Subtle nuance and immediate, rapid creative motion are their signature traits. These works are not simply automatic, but carefully varied and expressively composed. While Twombly exclusively favoured pencil during a first, large part of his career, he started to use paint only in a later phase, something he did in a tactile way by smearing out the wet paint with his hands. Whereas his graffiti drawings in pencil are more linear, like writing on a wall, Twombly's paintings are more lyrical. *In a painting, the content of what you are feeling can be complete, but it's also a form. Painting is plastic, it's visual*

in the way it's constructed too. It's the same with sculpture, if you are satisfied with it or happy with it, it reaches that kind of..., as far as you can perfect it. You try to perfect something, either an idea, a feeling or a plastic, a visual object. I study my paintings a lot. (Cy Twombly)



Gilles Delmas

(Paris, 1966)

Damien Jalet, The Ferryman, 2017

Video, edition of 7 + 2 AP
 Texts, choreography, performances and character of the deer: Damien Jalet
 Directed and filmed by: Gilles Delmas
 Voice: Marina Abramović
 Set design of the piece *Vessels*, 2016, ROHMTheater: Nawa Kohei
 Set design of the piece *Yama*, 2014, Scottish Dance Theatre: Jim Hodges
 Set design of the piece *Bolero*, 2013, Opéra de Paris: Marina Abramović

In *The Ferryman* filmmaker Gilles Delmas and choreographer Damien Jalet immerse themselves into rituals, dance, and sculpture spanning Belgium, Scotland, France, Indonesia, and Japan. Through the merging of their respective media, film and choreography, a third space is created, one exploring the relevance of ritualistic performance and dance to renew the visual and body language of our times.

With stunning landscapes as a backdrop, a character, half-deer, half-hunter, dissolves boundaries between ancient and contemporary relations to nature, self and other. He travels seamlessly through different incarnations of reality – from the disaster of Fukushima to Japanese healing processions. As a character devoid of a fixed identity, *The Ferryman* takes us where the intangible and the material meet in intuitive rhythms and animalistic, cathartic rawness.



'Phurbu-kila' Ritual Dagger
 Tibet, Late 18th century

Rock crystal, gold-plated silver and bone, H: 40 cm
 Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

This Phurbu-Kila bears a blade and central pearl made of rock crystal, with Makara and finishes

of union in golden silver foil, grip masks in bone. This fingernail of thunder, magical dagger served to subdue the demonic perhaps on the Doctrine and "nailing" literally to the ground. It is a symbol of introspective perception.



Piero Ruggeri

(Turin 1930 – Avigliana 2009)

Ritratto d'ignoto, 1960

Oil on cardboard, 131 × 130 cm
 Private collection

Piero Ruggeri was one of the key figures of Informalism in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, and his work was featured in several editions of the Venice Biennale (he had personal room in 1962). His research of actions and materials developed organically through multiple phases: from painting characterized by harsh expressive tensions, linked to the Later Naturalism theorized by Francesco Arcangeli, to the dramatic dark colouring inspired by Caravaggio and Rembrandt, from the rarefied fluidity of some of his work in the 1960s to the refined and intense tangles of 'brambles', ending with the almost monochromatic compositions of his final years. In this *Portrait of an Unknown Man*, from 1960, the vibrating existential energy of the ghostly figure, barely visible in the dark, emerges directly from the material corporeality of the pictorial action made by the artist on the canvas.



'Kobiz' Musical instrument
 with shamanic cord

Asian steppes, Kazakhstan. 19th century

Wood, horsehair and goatskin
 Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

This instrument is composed of two horsehair strings, a resonance cavity carved in a single piece of wood and is often covered with goatskin, to be played with a bow.

The Kazakh culture was originally closely connected with the nomadic culture of the Knights of the Asian steppes. This sacred instrument was used in shamanic practices and spiritual medicine.



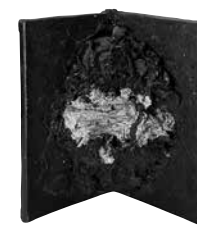
Alberto Burri

(Città di Castello, 1915 – Nice, 1995)

Muffa, 1951

Acrylic, oil, varnish, white of pumice zinc, and acetate glue on canvas, 62,5 × 55 cm
 Merlini Collection, Busto Arsizio

The essential characteristic of each phase in the artist's research is the use of materials taken from real life, which, in fact, often give their name to his series of works: *Tars, Moulds, Sacks, Woods, Irons, Plastics, Cracks, Cellotex*. In his work, the rich and existential physical expressivity of the rough materials (with the addition of chromatic interventions) is transformed through a complex and refined formal and spatial process in order to provide his compositions with high pictorial quality and refined balances. In *Moulds* (1950–51), the mixture made out of pumice, varnish, and acrylic colours gains a fascinating vitality thanks to the unexpected and mysterious organic efflorescence.



Sadaharu Horio

(Kobe, 1939)

Kado-Kuro (Angle-Noir), 1964

Canvas, plywood, cloth, rubbish, paint, 25 × 25 × 37 cm
 Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation
 Photo Jan Liégeois

'At the time, I was very interested in the corner or edge of a picture. What can come out of this angle? How can it be filled out? That's why I began to design angles with the help of paint and all kinds of materials that I stuffed inside, like a kind of bird's nest. While I was working on that, I was overcome by a feeling of peace.'
 (Sadaharu Horio)

Sadaharu Horio was a member of the Gutai, an important Japanese avant-garde movement that existed from 1954 till 1972. The Gutai had an absolute belief in originality, and strived to do what had never been done before, which led to experimental and innovative non-figurative work. Stemming from his wish to avoid having a specific style, he constantly changed his methods, using variable materials like scraps of metal, wood, rubbish, found objects, etc. In addition, Horio kept his personal focus on praxis. His pioneering performance-based work generates in-situ artworks, installations, and smaller objects. He puts together about a hundred exhibitions and presentations per year, a fact that emphasizes the idea that exhibiting and performing are rather an extension of his daily life. In his performances, Horio constantly challenges his audience's thoughts on art, deconstructing the concept of a product-based outcome, and enhancing the meaning of critical artistic practice. He seeks to capture the moment and preserve it in time. Each moment is unique and cannot be copied or reproduced.



'Nkisi' Power Figure
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa
Late 18th – early 19th century

Wood, metal nails, natural fibre and stone,
40,6 × 20,3 × 14 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

Nkisi were protective figures used by individuals, families, or whole communities to destroy or weaken evil spirits, prevent or cure illnesses, repel bad deeds, solemnize contracts or oath-taking, and decide arguments. A diviner or holy person would activate the statue, using magical substances. They are wooden carvings, either anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, which are covered with a variety of objects, such as nails or metal blades. The cavities on their back or stomach contain 'medicines' – grains, hairs, teeth, or fingernails – that are held together with various binding materials. Pieces of fabric, feathers, or lumps of clay are sometimes present too. Finally, bits of mirror, shiny metal, or shells are used to close the cavities or to mark the eyes. Very often, the faces alone are carved in detail, while the rest of the body – destined to be hidden under these various additional features – is sculpted more summarily. Generally grouped as Nkisi, they were the result of the combined work of two men, the carver and the fetishist or Nganga. The former created

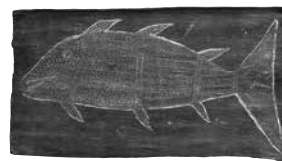
the shape, but without the latter the figure had no meaning. It was the Nganga who filled it with magic substances and completed the rituals that gave it supernatural powers.



Anthropomorphic Statuette
Vili/Tombe culture, Democratic Republic
of the Congo, Africa
Late 19th – early 20th century

Wood, metal, natural fibre and feathers, H: 29 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

The three-dimensional execution of this small statuette is remarkable, defying the usual frontal representation featured in most African sculptures. The figure is standing on a circular base, with the head turned sharply to its left. The face is carved with care, with its large eyes as the centre of the symbolic content. An imposing necklace – consisting of a ring, wooden beads, seeds, and bone elements – conceals the shape of the arms. A double ring is present on the abdomen and back. The ankles are bound with a charm in the shape of a node. An imposing headdress with feathers elongates the figure. The polychromy of the statuette, red for the headdress and white for the abdomen, back, and eyes, is meant to enhance the magical properties of the figure.



Aboriginal painting of a fish,
Australia, 19th century

Pigment on bark, 35 × 65 cm
Axel Vervoordt company. Photo Jean Liégeois

Symbol and metaphor pervade Aboriginal life, and they are evident in all artistic works, expressed through an extremely sophisticated visual language, created at the time of the Ancestors, that was handed down through the generations. Bark painting is associated closely with Arnhem Land and the surrounding areas, and is an ancient manner of painting on the dried bark of a local species of gum tree.

Aboriginal artists work in a deeply subjective way. Unlike Western artists, who often focus on reproducing the appearance of an object, they consider their feelings, the meaning the object holds to them, to be as important for the artistic representation as its outward aspect, sometimes even more so. One subject can have different meanings: an animal can be an ancestral being or a symbol, or simply food. The painted subject is conditioned by the personal imagination of the artist. This approach, as well as their dynamism and pictorial quality, places some of these works amongst the strongest expressionistic paintings of human civilization.



Dan 'Passport' Mask
Dan Complex, Ivory Coast or Liberia,
first half of the 20th century

Wood and leather wrapped in fibre and encrusted
10 × 5,5 × 3 cm
Axel Vervoordt Company. Photo Jean Liégeois

Passport masks are made by several cultures in West Africa, but the Dan complex produced more of them than any other people. Less than 20 cm in height, these 'passport' masks are miniature copies of a family mask. They are powerful charms, filled with spirit, but serve a different function than the life-size masks. The small masks were sewn onto a piece of cloth, kept in a leather pouch, and possibly worn in the small of the back. They could act as witnesses during initiation ceremonies, received libations, and had general apotropaic qualities. The Dan Complex includes the Dan, which populate both the Ivory Coast and Liberia, as well as the Mano Kpelle, Grebo, and Loma peoples of Liberia, and the We (Gwere), Toma, Tura, and Mau of Ivory Coast. At the basis of the Dan belief system is the idea that the world is divided into two separate spheres. The first sphere is benign in nature and comprises the village with its inhabitants and their possessions and tools, while the second sphere, more ambiguous, includes the forest with the wild animals, the spirits, and uncultivated yet potentially fertile terrains. Crossing the border between both spheres can be dangerous. In the forest lives a supernatural power, called *gle*, desirous of participating in the life of the village. As this force is invisible, it needs a physical body to be able to join the people at their ceremonies and rituals. Most of the Dan life-size masks are made to facilitate the transition of this spirit.



Berlinde De Bruyckere

(Ghent, 1964)

It Almost Seemed a Lily, 2017

Wood, paper, wax, textile, lead, iron, epoxy
328 × 172 × 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo © Mirjam Devriendt

Berlinde De Bruyckere's sculptures and installations of tormented bodies explore such themes as vulnerability, melancholy, death, and loneliness. Within her oeuvre, De Bruyckere works with sensitive human sculptures, soft blankets, and horses' bodies, or their skins. Shedding light on the opposition of life and death, those of her installations that use real horses point to the intuitive basic instincts that relate us to animals. These works embody pain and the need to heal. The use of horses originates from the urge to express excruciating suffering and loss caused by war. De Bruyckere found that the human body fell short in narrating the extent of this destruction. Thus the animal body became the artist's medium of choice to enunciate deep human emotions. Emphasizing the connection between man and animal, her works with horses channel horror and beauty, suffering and desire, fragility and strength.



'Phurbu', Ceremonial Knife

Asia, Nepal, first half of 19th century

Lost-wax casting. Aluminium, copper, brass, fabrics,
21,3 × 4,2 × 4,8 cm.
Private collection. Photo © Fabrizio Fenucci

Phurbu is a Tibetan term that means, literally, nail or wedge: it refers to a ceremonial dagger whose function is to defeat demons in the ritual context of Tibetan Buddhism (or Vajrayana). The authentic *Phurbu* has a three-sided blade and a moulded handle.



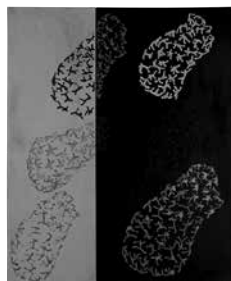
Jana Sterbak

(Czechoslovakia, 1955)

Artist as Combustible, 1986

Video
Collection Enea Righi, Italy

Jana Sterbak has always been very creative in her choice of materials and the mode of presentation of her work, which hovers between installation, performance, and film, and is often kept in close relation to the human body – a living material. The artist engages the body as a portal for reflection about the human condition. She is interested in such questions as what the limits and costs of personal freedom may be, where dependency begins, and at what point action turns into reaction. For this, she chooses to present ideas and concepts in such a way that the viewer can feel motivated to confront the reality of the problems she wants to tackle. Sterbak is not all that interested in traditional artistic concepts like the permanent and the constant, and instead sees art as a continuing process. This suggests that, in general, her work depends a great deal on the creative act itself, and on the intuitive reaction of the viewer.



Francesco Candeloro

(Venice, 1974)

Ombre danzanti, 1998

Pigment and oil pigment on canvas, 249 × 210 cm
(diptych: 249 × 80,5 cm; 249 × 128,5 cm)
Private collection. Courtesy of the artist

The *sign* that characterizes a large part of Francesco Candeloro's work, a biomorphic profile that the artist loves to call 'the eye', can already be discerned, in embryo, in the shapes generated by the swarming figures of this large diptych (painted in the first years of his research), in which concentrations are somehow analogous to 'footprints'.

'Signs of the times, like fossil-imprints, past, present, and future. Sign in moving space, in time, scanning the feet of a foreboding dance. Space made mobile through pictorial signs and matter. Time changes the colour of matter, oxidizes it slowly, so that it darkens or lightens in accordance with a continuous and uncontrollable cycle. Intuition of a moving space through pictorial bodies of light. Forms in movement like footprints beyond time. Premonition of future forms, sites that impress themselves on the space. Dancing in time, continuously in movement'
(Francesco Candeloro).



'Temes Nevinbur' Mask-Puppet
Vanuatu culture, Malekula, Melanesia,
19th century

Tree fern kneaded and painted with natural pigments,
natural fiber and teeth of a warthog, H: 14 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini



Paul Klee

(Münchenbuchsee, 1879 – Muralto, 1940)

Drei Subjekte Polyphon, 1931

Watercolour and pencil on paper, 50,3 × 65 cm
Private collection donated to
Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte, Venice



'Songye' Statuette

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa
19th – 20th century

Wood, metal, natural fibre and feathers,
55,9 × 17,8 × 22,9 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

Traditionally, the Songye are governed by a central authority, the leaders of which were formed by secret societies, including the 'Bukishi'. This dominant educational society helped to maintain social control and passed along the great Songye myths and symbols related to nature.

A large number of sculpture and amulets, called Boanga, are used to ensure success, fertility, and wealth, or to protect against hostile forces such as lightning or epidemics. The Boanga was composed of magical ingredients, its mixture stored in an antelope horn that was hung on the roof of the house. The Songye's expressive statuary often depict a standing man, with elongated face and rounded forehead, placing his hands on his belly. Other magical elements could be added, such as knife blades, axes, beads, metal ring necklaces, skins, and belts, to confer still more magical power to the statuette.



'Okuyi' Mask, or 'Punu' Mask
Gabon, Africa, 19th century

Wood painted with kaolin and other natural pigments,
H: 34 cm
Collection Ligabue. Photo © Claudio Franzini

These white masks generically called *Punu*, are indigenous to the region south of Gabon. They depict a human face, painted white with kaolin, and decorated with a black crest of hair with earlobes surrounded by braids. They were used in important group occasions, especially during ceremonies. The dancers wore masks and a large cape of cotton. This represented the deceased, placed in the green area surrounding the village, and gesticulating in a threatening manner, accompanied by the sound of drums, dancing to keep evil spirits away from their village.



Afro Basaldella
(Udine, 1912 – Zurich, 1976)
*Composizione astratta –
Per una ricorrenza*, 1955

Charcoal on canvas paper, 150 x 200 cm
Ca'Pesaro – Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna, Venezia
Photo © Claudio Franzini

For Afro Basaldella, the 1950s were the years that made his international fame: in 1951 he had his first show in New York; in 1955, his work was featured in the first edition of Documenta; that same year his work was shown at MoMA, as part of the exhibition *The New Decade*. In 1958, he was commissioned to decorate the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where he made *Il giardino della speranza*. The large drawing shown here is a study for an oil painting, in the same dimensions, now in the collection of the Guggenheim in New York.

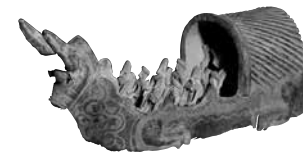
'... a pictorial form is never born in me solely as a form [...]; it must also be endowed with a particular expressive meaning, I would even say sentiment. The form, then, will need to have a specific character, just as the colour will have to have a specific tone – the sign, for me, is that immediate trepidation that you feel in the urgency to say something that is bubbling up inside you. [...] What I want to capture is not so much the appearance of things as the ideas of those things, and I want to capture these in the most concise and direct forms – that which the pure gaze, new to the world, takes in with the excitement of a first discovery, or that which pain digs inside the person, leaving its wound.'

(Afro Basaldella, 1953, cited in Germano Celant, *L'inferno dell'arte italiana: Materiali, 1946-1964*, Genova, Costa & Nolan, 1990, p. 161.)



Georges Braque
(Argenteuil, 1882 – Paris, 1963)
Les Travaux et les jours – fragment, 1939–1955

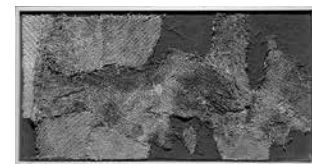
Bronze, 25 x 47 x 22 cm
Collection Isabelle Maeght, Paris



'Bull-vehicle' with the Lady of
the Spiked Throne
Indus Valley, India, late Regionalization
Era or Kot-Dijan Period, 2800 – 2600 BC

Painted earthenware
Private collection
Photo Federica Aghadian

A collective event is represented in this object, most likely a ceremony in which a vehicle associated with the power of the bull – and probably drawn by one or two of these animals – transports a prominent female personage sitting on a throne. The female figure, though hidden from view within the 'cabin', forms the centre of the ceremony. Was she a goddess, identifiable by the spikes on the throne that suggest supernatural rays of light? Or was she human, a queen or priestess, her status expressed by the size of the figure and its careful modelling? The cabin where the female figure is seated and the bull-shaped prow of the boat display a similar iconography – male attendants, steps or stool, a prominent bovine symbolism – and are physically connected by a passageway. Walking along this passage, the woman could traverse the vehicle and walk the steps to, stand on, the rear of the bull's head, where a carefully shaped cavity was designed as a sound-bow. If the priestess or queen were to sing or pray, her voice would have sounded unnaturally powerful, becoming 'the voice of the bull'. In this way, the three elements – bull, vehicle/boat and woman – were intimately intermingled, allowing the lady to become the bull.



Alberto Burri
(Città di Castello, 1915 – Nice, 1995)
Sacco (cat.n. 374), 1956

Burlap, oil, PVA glue on cellox, 18 x 38,5 cm
Private collection

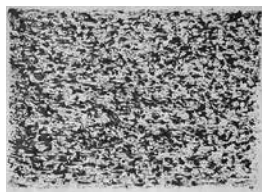


Yun Hyong-Keun
(Miwon, 1928 – Seoul, 2007)
Umber-Blue, 1978

Oil paint on linen
280,4 × 151 cm
Courtesy PKM and Axel Vervoordt Gallery

'What is painting? Is it a mere trace from the combustion of life? I think one's ego is more freely and definitely expressed in the world of the unconscious. The more one tries to express oneself, the more the ego becomes self-conscious, and the more the expression becomes contrived. I have no idea as to what I should paint, and at which point I should stop painting. There, in the midst of such uncertainty, I just paint. I don't have a goal in mind. I want to paint that something which is nothing, that will inspire me endlessly to go on.'

Yun Hyong-Keun, former member of the Korean art movement Dansaekhwa, became best known for his *Umber-Blue* paintings. Yun's inspiration came from nature, from when he witnessed a tree and its roots dissolving into the soil of a mountain. Strongly impressed by the scene, Yun decided to capture the essence of nature in his work. The honesty and truthfulness of nature gave way to muted, receded colours, and a simple composition of bold, squared-shaped fields in earthly shades. Over time, the artist reduced his colour palette to ultramarine blue and burnt umber. Yun consecutively applied the heavily diluted paints directly onto the linen canvas, one on top of the other. Due to the characteristics of these materials, the paint smears quickly into the canvas and creates blurred margins around the bars. Different rates of colour absorption can be seen, as each brush stroke is unique. The process is very natural and organic, like water soaking into the soil.



Henri Michaux
(Namur, 1899 – Paris, 1984)
Untitled, ca. 1961

Chinese ink on paper, 75 × 104 cm
Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

'By means of zigzag strokes, by means of transversal flights, by means of flashing furrows, by means of I don't know what all, always beginning again, asserting itself, recovering itself, steadying itself, by means of punctuations, of repetitions, of hesitant jerks, by slow cantings, by fissurations, by indiscernible slidings, I see, being formed, unformed, re-unformed, a jerking building, a building in abeyance, in perpetual metamorphosis and transubstantiation ...' (Henri Michaux, *Miserable Miracle*, trans. Louise Varèse, p. 32)

Henri Michaux was both a poet and a painter. However, he spoke of drawing as a release from words, as a new language that rejects the verbal. That said, his ink drawings are calligraphic in character, often suggesting indecipherable writing. His symbols – or rather 'traces' – are a seismographic reflection of the artist's inner emotions. The two systems of word-language and sign-language pervade each other. Between 1954 and 1962, Michaux experimented with working under the influence of mescaline. The early results were obsessively detailed, while the ink drawings show an intense repetition of slashing marks. He described fighting with these blots, comparing them to *'insatiable desires or knots of force destined never to take form'*.

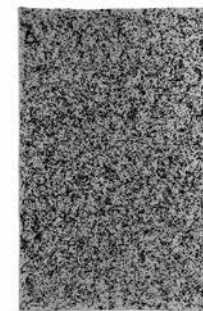


Isa Genzken
(Bad Oldesloe, 1948)
Basic Research, 1988 – 1991

Oil on canvas, 125 × 195 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz,
Berlin/Cologne/New York
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

'I always wanted to have the courage to do totally crazy, impossible, and also wrong things.' (Isa Genzken)
As part of her wish to change sculpture without abandoning it, artist Isa Genzken does not accept boundaries. And consequently, she keeps pushing the limits. Looking for interesting and new ways of artmaking, she turns to a wide range of different materials, like wood, plaster, epoxy resin, concrete, plastics, and textile. Her work remains rooted in sculpture, but the radical renewal of material has led the artist to installation, film, video art, paintings, drawings, collages, and photography. A new language based on an assemblage of these different approaches mixed with found objects from daily life became the core of Genzken's oeuvre. The series *Basic Research* was originally made to be hung as the background for her sculptures, but they are truly something more when shown alone. To create these works, Genzken coated her studio floor with paint, covered that with a canvas, and then rubbed

the canvas with a squeegee. As a result, an inverse and tactile imprint of the concrete appeared on the surface of the canvas. With a relief of light, dark, high, and low features, these works almost look like landscapes. The process took the artist back to her childhood, and shows the limits of her own body – her arms, for example, are not long enough to produce extremely large canvasses in this way – giving these mysterious-looking works a personal dimension.



Günther Uecker
(Wendorf, 1930)
Regen, 1999

Ink on canvas, 300 × 200 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Photo Jan Liégeois

German artist Günther Uecker began his artistic career by making finger and earth paintings in order to defy content. At first, he looked towards the simplicity of Colour Field painting, but later he found his own form of expression by using nails. These compositions with nails are what he became most famous for. The incorporation of unconventional materials is characteristic of Uecker's approach to art, and one that has played a significant role in his technique. Being the co-founder of the German avant-garde movement created in 1958, ZERO, Uecker felt the urge to react against the subjectivity that dominated the art world at the time. ZERO believed that contemporary art had become incapable of providing any right answers to the disasters of World War II and the trauma related to Germany's role in it. And the group's members wished to start anew by concentrating on pure abstraction, and by using mostly natural 'materials' like light, wind, movement, fire, etc., in order to eliminate subjectivity from art and thus merge art and nature. With his *Rain* series, Uecker shows the viewer the strong relation between water – a necessary element for the fertilization of the earth – and mankind. These large canvasses, sprinkled with black ink, can be interpreted as the depiction of rain chaotically falling out of the sky, or drops that have only just begun to wet the floor. It can be read as a staining of the soil with a very personal writing, or as a result of hard farm labour (blood, sweat, and tears), or simply as one of the greater powers of nature (rain).



Kimsooja
(Daegu, 1957)
Archive of Mind, 2017

Archive of Mind, 2016, participatory site specific installation consisting of clay balls, 11 m elliptical wooden table, and sound performance *Unfolding Sphere*, 2016, Installation at Kimsooja – Archive of Mind at MMCA, Seoul, Photo by Jeon Byung Cheol, Courtesy of MMCA, Hyundai Motor Co., Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp and Kimsooja Studio

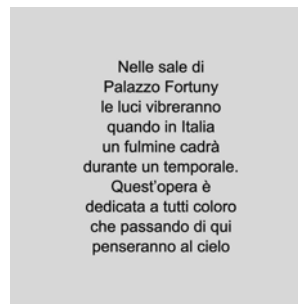
Korean multidisciplinary artist Kimsooja explores what it means to be human. In the early 1980s, she started to focus on sewn work as a way to do so. Kimsooja says that, symbolically, the needle is her body: *'I found my body as a studio ... I discovered it as a symbolic needle that weaves the big fabric of nature and humanity'*. In her *Bottari* works – *bottari* means 'to wrap' in Korean – she bundles found textiles from different lives and cultures so that they co-exist in one space: a quilt as a sculpture. Some of her more recent works weave together culture, humanity, nature, and cosmogony. *Archive of Mind* is such a work. It is a performative installation that depends on and is transformed by the participation of the audience. The visitor, standing at a large table, is encouraged to mould balls from lumps of clay while surrounded by a sound performance of the artist gurgling and clay balls rolling. Each visitor's meditative and even spiritual moment becomes forever frozen in the finished clay balls, hence the title: *Archive of Mind*.

'I consider this clay ball also as another Bottari. When you touch the lump of clay with your hands, your hand and your palms function as a bottari, as a "wrapping". In the beginning you feel very much the cold clay in your hand, it is very tactile and physical. And once you caress and embrace it into a sphere, focusing on that action, there is a moment that your mind is in a way absent and this material almost becomes a void: you don't feel the materiality anymore. I really want to have my audience feel the clay and the materiality in their hands as a Bottari making, but also and at the same time to feel the transcendent moments in their mind'.

Mireille Capelle 'Architecture sonore' for *INTUITION* *DO'UN*, 2017

Sound engineer: Jean-Marc Sullon. Musicians: Peter Mercks, Marc Tooten, Stijn Saveniers, Karin Defleyt, Geert Callaert, Melike Tarhan, and Osama Abdoullasol. Courtesy of Inspiratum, HERMESensemble and Centre Henri Pousseur

'Even though when I talk about it, I find that intuition is closer to mind than instinct, the sound architecture DO'UN, created for Intuition, seems to prove the opposite. This piece is very sensory. Perhaps intuition is what most closely connects visual to auditory art. Sound needs the sensitivity of the physical body to receive intuitive auditory information. As if listening to the invisible is really a human act, a human need. Something that is within us and that we inevitably seek, either consciously or unconsciously. The rhythm that is often used for the communication of ancient peoples with the invisible universe, and that goes against our rationality, is present in the installation. The meaning of the call, the sense of water and fire, a predominance of the colours Si and Fa. Yes, there is a lot of fire and a lot of water in DO'UN's waves. Clear yellow flame'
(Mireille Capelle)



Alberto Garutti
Temporalis (2009–2017)

Electrical material, monitor, computer;
environmental dimension
Courtesy of the artist and Studio La Città, Verona

The lamps Mariano Fortuny made, and which still illuminate the rooms of the Palazzo Orfei, will change their brightness every time the Italian territory is hit by thunder. Alberto Garutti's *Temporalis* (2009–2017) – realized thanks to the collaboration of the CESI (Centro Elettrotecnico Sperimentali Italiano) – changes in a very subtle way the architecture of the museum: it turns an institutional space into a mysterious site of revelations. *Temporalis* is conceived as an instrument with which to transmute the rooms of the Palazzo Fortuny into a single space capable, metaphorically speaking, of gathering the whole of the Italian sky. Through a simple process of electrical surveying, Garutti's work reveals to visitors the consanguineous links between art and primal energy – the universal and generating force – of nature. It confirms the value of the work as a *mediating* instrument between

humans and the world; it reaffirms, with visionary force, the crucial role – centripetal and centrifugal, cultural and ethical – of the museum in a society. Museal architecture is one of the few places in the contemporary city where it is still possible to experience a sublime vertigo and to lose oneself in the contemplation of indecipherable narratives and mysterious energies. Through the language of light, *Temporalis* invites spectators to transform their own perception of time and space and to be witnesses to the enigmatic happenings, between vision and abstraction, of nature. As is always the case with projects by this Italian artist, *Temporalis* is accompanied by a *didascalia*/caption, a valued mechanism to announce the work and activate a web of correspondences between the spectator, the museum, the city, and the whole of the Italian sky.

*Whenever Italy is struck by thunder
During a storm, the lights will quiver
In all the rooms of the Palazzo Fortuny.
A work dedicated to everyone whose thoughts
When passing by here, turn skywards.*



Kurt Ralske
(New York, 1967)
'Tristis Est Anima Mea', 2017

In situ installation, Palazzo Fortuny
In collaboration with Giulio d'Alessio

A madrigale spirituale by composer 16th century Carlo Gesualdo is presented as a space of light and shadow. The composition's six voices are each located two meters apart extending down a corridor, and the dynamics of the voices are made visible as the varying intensity of the lights. The viewers, navigating the corridor lit only on one side, create images of themselves. Towards the end of the corridor, they see other, digitally created, shadow representations of themselves. Some theorize that humans first created art in the Neolithic period by playing with the shadows cast on cave walls by the firelight. As in Plato's allegory of the cave, the act of creating shadows is the act of creating worlds.

During the past ten years, the Palazzo Fortuny has added a profound new dimension to my work. As president of the Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation, I would sincerely like to thank all of the presidents of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Sandro Parenzo, Walter Hartsarich and Mariacristina Gribaudo, and the directors Giandomenico Romanelli and Gabriella Belli, for the organisation's trust to offer this magnificent museum, a relationship that began in 2007, and continues again this year for *Intuition*.

Thank you very much to Arch. Daniela Ferretti, Director of Palazzo Fortuny. As our series of exhibitions in Venice comes to an end, I'm thankful for our close collaboration over the years while curating *Artempo*, *Accademia*, *In-finitum*, *TRA*, *Tàpies: Eye of the Artist*, *Proportio*, and *Intuition*. Over the years, I feel that you've become like a sister to me. In tribute to all that we've realised together, thank you for your time, intelligence, insight, and inspiring friendship.

Thank you to the co-curators, Dario Dalla Lana, Davide Daninos, and Anne-Sophie Dusselier – you're a fantastic team. While producing the exhibition, I've appreciated your talent, vision, knowledge, dedication, and tireless work. In the spirit of sharing knowledge through art, the result is a tremendous accomplishment of which we can all be proud.

Mariano Fortuny was an artist, philosopher, inventor, and creator in many disciplines. I have tremendous admiration for his work. Being in the Fortuny Museum allows us to see that the universal spirit of his legacy is alive and well. I'm grateful to have spent the last ten years working in this environment and feeling his inspiration and guidance.

Thank you to all of the participating artists, who have responded so positively to the exhibition's theme, which we shared with them based on the synopsis of the think tanks. For the artists that created works especially for the exhibition, we are very grateful.

I would like to thank the participants of the think tanks and creative salons. By sharing your knowledge, research, critical thinking, and insight, you've given us a wider lens to view such an expansive concept. Thank you Joachim Claes, Giulio D'Alessio, Eddi De Wolf, Michael Gardner, Koen Kessels, Bernard Lietaer, Ludovica Lumer, Tatsuro Miki, and Michel Van De Vyvere.

A very special thank you to Mireille Capelle. For each exhibition, you composed music based on your experiences in the think tanks using musical proportions inspired by the respective themes. Your *Architecture Sonore* is a composition that binds all of the universal sounds and energies of every exhibition together. The artistry you've displayed over the last ten years is an achievement that I deeply admire. Listening to the sounds and voices will continue to provide inspiration for years to come.

Thank you to all of the lenders from public institutions and private collections for kindly agreeing to loan their great works for *Intuition*. We appreciate your generosity, and as a result, the museum's visitors have the opportunity to experience the inspiration these works provide.

Thank you to the translators, photographers, writers, editors, and all those who made this catalogue possible – specifically the talented and dedicated team at Studio Luc Derycke, and especially my friend Luc himself, with whom the creation of every book is an inspiring endeavour full of positive creativity.

Thank you to Giulio D'Alessio, Davide Daninos, Michael Gardner, Margaret Iversen, Erik Lumer, Ludovica Lumer, Francesco Poli, Eddi De Wolf, Paul Vandebroek, and Michel Vande Vyvere for the texts that appear in this catalogue, and for sharing your way of thinking about *Intuition* with us.

Thank you Roger Borgmans from Borg-Bouw NV for the generous gift and donation of the wooden planks for the top floor of the Fortuny Museum. Thank you, as well, to the staff of Musei Civici,

especially the people that worked for the exhibition: Tiziana Alvisi, Francesca Boni, Cristina da Roit, Garance Laporte, Georg Malfertheiner, Silvia Toffano, and Monica Vianello.

Thank you to the team at Axel Vervoordt Company for their help in realising this exhibition, especially the art historical research team. Thank you Annelien De Troij, Robert Lauwers, Veerle Pauwels, Noach Vander Beken, and Yasmin Van 'tveld. I would also like to thank Bert Kenens,

Francois Van Schevensteen, Goedele Zwaenepoel, as well as the entire logistics team for their efforts, particularly Tine Anseeuw and Valentina Tyuleneva.

Last, but not least, thank you to my family for their omnipresent love, support, and inspiration – my wife May, and my son Dick and daughter-in-law Marleen. Thank you to my son-in-law Michael, for helping to write and edit many texts, and my son Boris for his contributions and important work with the participating artists.

AXEL VERVOORDT

INTUITION

Venice, Palazzo Fortuny
13.05 – 26.11.2017

Exhibition organised and produced by
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia and
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation



Axel & May Vervoordt
Foundation

With the support of
Axel Vervoordt Gallery
Kanaal
Stokerijstraat 19
2110 Wijnegem
Belgium
www.axelvervoordtgallery.com
info@axelvervoordtgallery.com

AXELVERVOORDTGALLERY

FONDAZIONE MUSEI
CIVICI DI VENEZIA

President
Mariacristina Gribaudo

Vice President
Luigi Brugnaro

Councilors
Bruno Bernardi
Barbara Nino
Roberto Zuccato

Director
Gabriella Belli

Executive Secretary
Mattia Agnetti

Executive Managers
Daniela Ferretti (Museum Area 3)
Chiara Squarcina (Museum Area 2)

Director Palazzo Fortuny
Daniela Ferretti



EXHIBITION

Curators
Daniela Ferretti
Axel Vervoordt

Co-curators and Project Management
Dario Dalla Lana
Davide Daninos
Anne-Sophie Dusselier

Scientific advisors
Mireille Capelle
Joachim Claes
Giulio d'Alessio
Eddi De Wolf
Bernard Liettaer
Erik Lumer
Ludovica Lumer
Tatsuro Miki
Francesco Poli
Ming Tiampo
Michel Vande Vyvere
with a special thank to Luca Massimo Barbero

Exhibition office
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia: coordina-
tion Tiziana Alvisi with Garance Laporte,
Georg Malfertheiner, Silvia Toffano, Monica Vianello
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation:
Anne-Sophie Dusselier with Bert Kenens

Exhibition set-up
Daniela Ferretti and Axel Vervoordt

Condition report
Bettina Bouittens with Pauline Vyncke and
Mariella Gnani

Photographic archive of Palazzo Fortuny
Cristina Da Roit

Press Office
Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia: Riccardo Bon with
Villaggio Globale International
Brunswick Arts: Roya Nasser and Rosalee Rich with
Fanny Guesdon and Andréa Azéma
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation: Anne-Sophie
Dusselier with Tom Bovyn

Communication
Mara Vittori con Raffaele La Gala, Chiara Marusso
Silvia Negretti, Alessandro Paolinelli

Inspiratum Events
Annelies Castelein

Educational Services

Monica da Cortà Fumei
con Claudia Calabresi, Cristina Gazzola,
Chiara Miotto, Gabriele Paglia

Administration

Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia:
Antonella Ballarin with Piero Calore, Carla Povelato,
Francesca Rodella
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation:
François van Schevensteen with Els Dandois

Logistics and Shipment

Interlinea Fine Art Services
Laguna Trasporti
Imming Logistics
Shipment organisation: Tine Anseeuw with Valentina
Tyuleneva

Art Handling

Interlinea Fine Art Services

Decoration

Renato Danieli

Lighting

I-Rado, Chris Pype

Video and Sound Installation

Neo Tech Srl

Exhibition graphics and Booklet

Tomomot

With additional support of

Accademia di Belle Arti, Venice
Arts Mouvementés, Swiss
Clima Gallery, Milan
Corodis
Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris / Venice
Galleria Fonti, Naples
Galeria Madragoa, Lisbona
ILLENC, Institut de la Llenga i la Cultura de les
Illes Balears
Loterie Romande
Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero
Arte y Ciencia, Sáenz Peña, Buenos Aires
Operativa Arte Contemporanea, Rome
Pro Helvetia - Fondation Suisse pour la Culture
Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Sáenz Peña,
Buenos Aires
Ville de Lausanne

Lenders

Admira, Milan
Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milan
Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation, Antwerp
Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp-Hong Kong
Beni Archeologici-Provincia Autonoma di Trento,
Trento
Biblioteca Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice
Cajal Insitute, Madrid
Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne/
Centre de création industrielle, Paris
Chembuk Gallery
Clima Gallery, Milan
Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint Paul de Vence
Collection Cadorin -Barbarigo -Music
Collection Brückner, Bruxelles
Collection David et Marcel Fleiss,
Galerie 1900-2000, Paris
Collection De Beuil & Ract-Madoux

Collection Patrick Derom, Bruxelles
 Collection Isabelle Maeght, Paris
 Collection Jules Maeght, San Francisco
 Collection Lambert, Avignon
 Collezione E. Righi, Bologna
 Collezione Merlini, Busto Arsizio
 D.Daskalopoulos Collection
 Ella, Hedan & Dariya Collection
 Enrico Pezzica
 Estate of Paul Jenkins
 Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul
 de Vence
 Fondazione Emilio and Annabianca Vedova, Venice
 Fondazione Giancarlo Ligabue, Venice
 Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milan
 Frac Alsace, Agence culturelle d'Alsace, Sélestat
 Foxy Production, New York
 Gagosian, Athens / Geneva / Hong Kong / London /
 New York / Paris / Rome
 Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon
 Galerie Buchholz, Berlin / Cologne / New York
 Galerie KEWENIG, Berlin, Palma.
 Galerie Maeght, Paris
 Galerie Thessa Herold
 Galleria Alberta Pane, Paris / Venice
 Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples
 Galleria d'Arte Maggiore G.A.M., Bologna
 Galleria Ex Elettrofonica, Rome
 Galleria Fonti, Naples
 Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna di Ca' Pesaro,
 Venice
 Galleria Monitor Rome
 Greta Meert Gallery, Brussels
 Geukens & De Vil Gallery
 kaufmann repetto, Milan / New York
 Kluser Collection, Munich
 Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten
 Antwerpen – KMSKA, Antwerpen
 Franco Lizza, Genova
 La cinémathèque française, Paris
 LADS Gallery, Japan
 Lévy-Gorvy Gallery
 Micheline Sz wajcer, Antwerpen
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Nimes
 Musée Fenaille, Rodez
 Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou,
 Paris
 Musée Soulages, Rodez
 Museo Correr, Venice
 Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Bolzano –
 Museion, Bolzano
 Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli
 Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon
 Operativa Arte Contemporanea, Rome
 State Museum of Contemporary Art, Salonicco
 Studio la Città, Verona
 Studio Morellet
 The Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm
 Toby Clarke Collection, London
 Victoria Combalia Collection

And the private collectors who wish to remain
 anonymous and all the participating artists

CATALOGUE

Published by

Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation in association with
 MER. Paper Kunsthalle, Ghent (BE)

Edited by

Luc Derycke
 Axel Vervoordt

Texts

Giulio d'Alessio, Davide Daninos, Eddi De Wolf,
 Daniela Ferretti, Michael Gardner, Erik Lumer,
 Ludovica Lumer, Margaret Iversen, Francesco Poli,
 Paul Vandebroek, Michel Vande Vyvere,
 Axel Vervoordt

Annotations

Davide Daninos, Dario Dalla Lana,
 Annelien De Troij, Anne-Sophie Dusselier,
 Francesco Poli, Veerle Pauwels, Yasmin Van 't veld
*and all the contemporary artists for their quotes
 about Intuition*

Translations

Emiliano Battista, Anna Favaro

Copy-editing

Michael Gardner, Emiliano Battista

Coordination and iconographic research

Anne-Sophie Dusselier

Photography

Claudio Franzini, Jean-Pierre Gabriel, Jan Liégeois

Book design

Luc Derycke

Lay-out and pre-press

Viktor Van den Braembussche, Lieselot Verdeyen,
 Jeroen Wille, Studio Luc Derycke

Printing

Cassochrome, Waregem (BE)

Art © 2017 SABAM and all the artists and copyright-
 holders as stated with the Annotated Illustrations
 Photography © 2017 the photographers and copyright-
 holders as stated with the Annotated Illustrations
 Texts © 2017 the authors
 Translations © 2017 the translators
 Essay Illustrations © 2017 SABAM / © Bridgeman
 Images for Edouard Manet and Samuel Palmer /
 © AKG Images / © Ghetty Images / © William
 Anastasi / © Emotiv, Alberto Giacometti Stiftung /
 © Instituto Cajal, Madrid / © Antonio Maniscalco /
 © Jules-Etienne, Marey Cinémathèque française,
 Paris / © Tate, London, for Rauschenberg /
 © Archivio fotografico Museo Fortuny, Fondazione
 Musei Civici di Venezia

Every effort has been made to contact copyright-
 holders of photographs. Any copyright-holders
 we have been unable to reach or to whom inaccurate
 acknowledgement has been made are invited to
 contact the publisher.



Published by

AsaMER, an imprint of
 MER. Paper Kunsthalle
 Geldmunt 36
 B-9000 Gent
 Belgium
 www.merpaperkunsthalle.org

All rights reserved.

ISBN 978 94 9232 159 6
 D/2017/7852/10

This exhibition was made possible thanks to:

ULRIKA AF KLINT

President, The Hilma af Klint Foundation, Stockholm

GERMANA AGNETTI

President Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti

IGNACIO TORRES ALEMÁN

Director, Cajal Insitute, Madrid

CATERINA BON VALSASSINA

General Director, Direzione generale Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio, Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo, Rome

FRÉDÉRIC BONNAUD

Director, La cinémathèque française, Paris

BERNARD BLISTÈNE

Director, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Paris

EMANUELA CARPANI

Superintendent, Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e Laguna, Venice

BENOÎT DECRON

Director, Musée Soulages, Rodez

LILIANA DEMATTEIS

President, Archivio Gallizio, Torino

DANIELE FERRARA

Director, Polo Museale del Veneto, Venice

LUIGI FICACCI

Superintendent, Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Province di Lucca e Massa Carrara, Lucca

EMANUELA PARIBENI

Funzionario archeologo, Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio di Lucca e Massa Carrara

FABRIZIO GAZZARRI

Director, Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, Venice

ANGELO GHIRETTI

Director, Museo delle Statue Stele Lunigianesi, Pontremoli

RENATO FRANCO GIUGLIANO

Direzione generale Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio, Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo, Rome

MARC JACQUEMOND

Director, Frac Alsace, Agence culturelle d'Alsace, Sélestat

ADRIEN MAEGHT AND OLIVIER KAEPPELIN

President and Director, Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

PEDRO LAPA

Director, Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon

NINI ARDEMAGNI LAURINI
President, Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milan

INTI LIGABUE
President, Fondazione Giancarlo Ligabue, Venice

FRANCO NICOLIS
Director Ufficio Beni Archeologici-Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Trento

AURÉLIEN PIERRE
Director, Musée Fenaille, Rodez

LETIZIA RAGAGLIA
Director, Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Bolzano – Museion, Bolzano

ADELINE TARDIEU-ROUILLY
Conservator, Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Nîmes

MANFRED SELLINK
Director, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen – KMSKA, Antwerp

MARIA TSANTSANOGLOU
Director, State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki
Angelica Charistou, Curator of the Costakis Collection and Archive, State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki

GIUSEPPE ZENNARO
Ufficio Esportazione, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Veneziano

Special thanks to:

ELISABETTA BARISONI
ANDREA BELLINI
FRANCESCA BONI
VALERIA CAFÀ
CARLA CALISI
ELENA D'ANGELO
ANDREA MARIN
MONICA VIERO
ROSSELLA GRANZIERO
PINKSUMMER, GENOVA
SCHEUBLEIN + BAK, ZURIGO
SALOMON CUELLAR
CARLO KNÖLL
LORENZO PAINI
PAOLO BOLPAGNI
BARBARA GAMBA
ROSA MARTINEZ

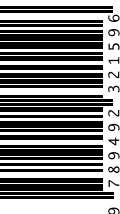
INTUITION

What is intuition and how does it work? What role does intuition play in an artist's creative process? Described in various circumstances as a subconscious activity, a gut feeling, a sixth sense, or a hunch – intuition is a mysterious process that gives us the ability to know something without proof or evidence. It guides us to act in a certain way without knowing exactly why or how. It's a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind, between instinct and reason, between perception, logic, and the leap from a question to its answer.

Intuition has consistently provoked vast fields of research. Everyone from philosophers, physicists, artists, actors, mathematicians, neuroscientists, musicians, to many others, have tried to offer their understanding of its mysterious processes. A challenging

and complex topic, intuition has fascinated and perplexed some of humanity's greatest minds for centuries.

Held at the Palazzo Fortuny in Venice, the exhibition Intuition brings together historic, modern, and contemporary artworks related to dreams, meditation, telepathy, creative power, and inspiration. Spanning diverse geographies and cultures, the exhibition explores how intuition has shaped our collective understanding of art for generations. The exhibition aims to provoke questions about the origins of creation, which is constantly evolving. Therefore, this ambitious project is necessarily to be seen as a work in progress, with leading contemporary artists creating a dialogue with historic works staged within the unique character of Mariano Fortuny's former home.



9 789492 321596