Michel Parmentier does not like to be treated as important
He needs to think he is forgotten
He is a painter
He has never done anything else

He paints on a few rare days each year
When he doesn't paint, it's the same weakness
It can go on for years

He needs a lot of time to find the strength to say even less

For him, indifference is the sine qua non for still being able to work

He hates journeys
Like crossing the Seine

The studio is in Brussels
It's not his but a young painter's
He lends it to him but that's not a problem

The characterless hotel is outside the center

The studio is even further in a disused industrial building

You enter through a heavy, rusty door devoid of enigma

The freight elevator is blocked in a metal cage around which
A concrete-gray staircase leads to the 2nd floor

Behind the door the walls are white

The light comes in through bays

In this space you can walk without going back on your footsteps

Besides the central post, rolls of Herculene tracing paper imported from the United States via Brussels
On the label: *drafting film, static free, polyester/matte one side*

Nearby a measuring table is used to cut paper
Steel rulers fitted to the format hold and slide the tracing paper up to the folding marks

They are indicated every 38 cm

Each band is 304 cm long and 77 cm wide
Bands marked with a horizontal fold at regular intervals of 38 cm are ready

They rest on a transparent protective film away from the walls

Michel Parmentier brought a few things with him

It all fits in a bag

White overalls

A stapler

Pincers

Gloves

White oil bars imported from the United States
The label says: *oil bar antique white*
A date stamp

The morning of the first day the work starts
He crosses the studio disappears comes back
On the side wall raking light
The tracing of a horizontal line at a height of 3 meters serves as a guide
The upper part of the first band is applied against it
The smooth wall pounced beforehand
Dull noise of the stepladder being moved
The first fold is repeated pinched stretched between the fingers in the width of the paper
It is 19 cm from the start of the band
It is folded back against the wall

The top left corner of the band of tracing paper is stapled onto the wall
The top right corner is stapled
Finally the middle
The staple is horizontal
The other 48 too

The second fold is iterated pinched stretched between the fingers
It is twice 38 cm from the first staple

Stapled at three points it is folded back exactly in line with the first at 38 cm below

The actions are the same

For greater flatness one person's hand presses the surface
Horizontally
The other person's hand staples
One person's hand holds the band at the left end while the other person
Holds it on the right

The work is divided up

Together they fold back they press the fold
The paper bends the mark is linear
One staples on the right passes the stapler to the other who staples on the left and in the middle
Last fold that of folding back

It will be the same for the second band like the first
It takes its strictly adjusted place edge to edge to the right of the first band

Monotony sets in

There is no room for surprise

The gestures are identical

There is no other exchange

Ascend the steps stretch adjust staple pinch stretch tense apply take smooth place staple extend descend fold give take regulate staple lower refold tense staple

It will be the same for the third band
For the fourth too
We'll see

Half the surface of the paper is hidden
It is between the wall and the external layer folded up inside

From top down a thickness alternates with three
Except for the start and the end

The color is a kind of white

Folding reduces the length of the bands in half
The width doesn't vary

The value of the white is different
That of the addition of layers

The morning of the second day he crosses the studio
Disappears and comes back
Near the windows the oil bars lie on a sheet of white paper
He peels the paper sheath from each bar
With a penknife he cuts the first bar lengthways

Into three roughly equal parts
Now he is starting on each cylindrical part
The cut is clean
The flat side
Several meters from the work wall a piece of tracing paper is used for tests
Moves the stepladder
He starts at the top of the first band to the left
Applying the cut face of the oil bar segment lengthways on the tracing paper
Always the same regular pressure
The gesture works from the top down
He goes down 19 cm without varying
Short
Pause
Second application
Edge to edge on the right
Identical
The pressure is the same
The third application on the right of the second
Like that another then another
Moves the stepladder
77 applications in a line
The first

Is repetition of the same trace
The covering is heterogeneous
Homogenous patches and aggregates
Granular and smooth zones
Always white

The gesture is the same
In a word, from the top
He slides the oil bar 19 cm on the tracing paper
Vertically

One way with a beginning and end
And no return
And that starts again beside it
Unvarying

Incidents

Rubbing
Extended repeated contact of the oil pigment solidified between the fingers generates heat
The white sticks too well or badly on the tracing paper
Uncontrollable slide skid

Weighty

Stepladder noises
He crosses the studio
Cuts another segment of oil bar abandons the other
Crosses the studio tries the cut side on a sheet of tracing paper
He crosses the studio and goes back to the work
Three times

The second horizontal band starts below the spot
where the first ends
Exactly

The oil bar is getting thin
The tracing paper rustles under the pressure
80 times more repetition of the same trace
White on white

He applies what's left takes another piece goes to the work applies it leaves it comes back and takes another

The work breaks off
Starts again
The same trace again

Another band
Below

The third band is made 60 uninterrupted times

The fourth receives 76 strokes

It looks like insensitivity

There are 8 like that one below another

Folded in two
The last traces
It's the end
The monotony ceases

4 bands of tracing paper 77 cm by 304 cm
11 folds per band
44 folds in all
12 staples per band 48 staples in all
77 strokes with an oil bar 3 cm by 19 cm the first band
80 strokes the second
78 the third
76 the fourth
80 the fifth
77 the sixth
78 the seventh
78 the eighth
624 in all

The piece may be destroyed
Wait for the paint to dry
Must check on the fifteenth day

"Painting blindly is an excess that I know I can deny by unfolding"

The morning of the third day he leaves
Brussels Gare du Midi
Paris Gare du Nord

Brussels fifteen days later
He crosses the studio disappears comes back

With gloves a screwdriver and pincers
He pulls the first staple from the lower left corner of the first band of tracing paper
Then on the right
And in the middle

The tracing paper is not held
It unfolds

Dull stepladder noise

3 more staples pop out
The second fold comes undone

One by one up to the top
Almost
The last three remain

Second band
The screwdriver slips between the staple and tracing paper
The pressure pulls out part of the staple
The pincers free it from the wall and paper

The paper keeps a trace of two close micro-holes

The fold falls

He holds the fold when he removes the last staple
He follows the fall with his hand

In order
From the top

He pulls out 9 staples in the third band
3 folds are undone
The marks remain

The holes to be as discreet as possible
The tools leave no mark

The folds rustle as they unfold
Muted
Shrill

An unbroken cascade
Active
Without spectacle

For the fourth band too

One has to decide whether to keep or destroy

Invisibility is what makes the difference

624 times the same trace
White on white
Indifferent
Alternating with nothing on the tracing paper

Maybe there is little enough to see
To keep it

We must see

He crosses the studio disappears comes back
He leaves

Another day he comes to the studio

For a few minutes

He applies a date stamp indicating the day the month the year in the lower right corner of the first band

The ink is black
The line horizontal

The action is the same on the second

The third

Then the fourth

The day is the day painting ended

Michel Parmentier March 1994 (see pp. 1-9)

Agnès Foiret

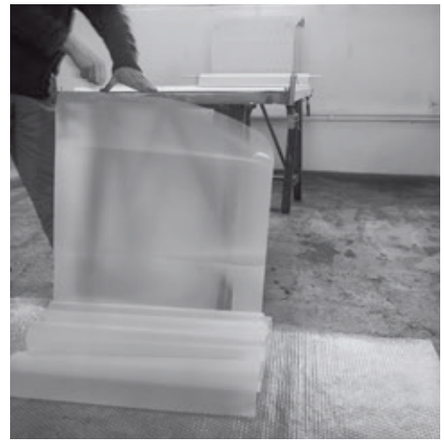
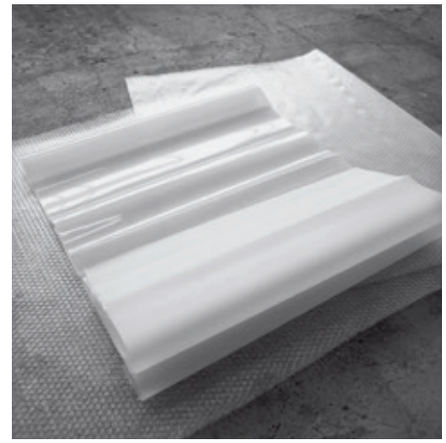
Note by the author

Begun in 1993 and finished in 1994, this previously unpublished text is based on the working notes and observations made of Michel Parmentier at work in Guy Massaux's studio in Brussels (Belgium) (fig. 129, p. 193). In the paintings made between March 27 and April 1, 1993 (see pp. 210-211), we see only one sign, repeated like an identical multiple, with the effect that it seems to erase all difference. What remains there, a white deposit on the tracing paper, is the trace of what took place, and thus the object of reediting, a return of the same that guides the act of replication. With Parmentier, the notion of iteration [*redite*] is a de facto necessity; what is imitated is not so much a gesture as the act of starting again, which is constantly asking to be repeated. The most literal expressive function of the trace is asserted here at the same time as its total absence of meaning. "Striking" [*taper*] with the oil bar is the essential principle that engenders the trace. The unity of his works is due not only to the regularity of the application of paint — it results from the unaccomplished intention of exactitude in the vertical movement of the gesture, with no reworking or corrections.

The narrative of creation, whose flatness and absence of punctuation are deliberate, was the first element delivered to Bernard Bloch for the writing of the screenplay (fig. 130, p. 194) of the film *304 × 308* (*Presque le silence* [Almost silence]) (1995, pp. 194-198), shot in Massaux's studio. It corresponds to the tight economy required by the filmmaker, to a rigorous approach to image-writing recapturing as closely and as clearly as possible the legibility of an experience of painting; a film with no other sound than the synchronous sound of cold and unexplained noises. To observe Parmentier, the only option, in Bloch's opinion, is a stationary approach. The narrative, endlessly revised, crossed out, and annotated by Parmentier, right down to the last doubts, is presented here in the ultimate version proposed to Bloch (fig. 134, p. 198). Each word, each interval, is calculated in relation to painting and cinema, in order to approximate a laying bare of sections and planes, an almost-nothing where, as Stéphane Mallarmé put it, "the blanks become important." ["1897 Preface" to *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance).]

Translated by Charles Penwarden

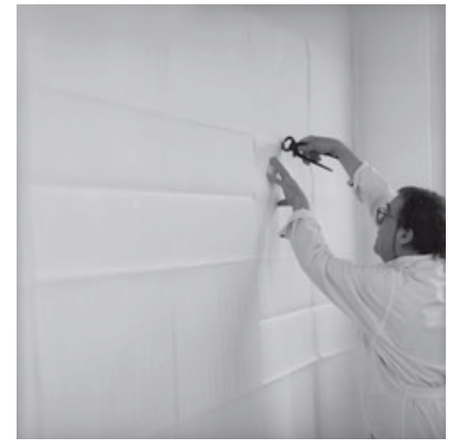
1 Michel Parmentier in Guy Massaux's studio, 123, Rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), 16 photographs (15 black and white and 1 color), black-and-white reproduction from negatives and transparency, 6 × 6 cm each.









Preface to the English Edition

This monograph follows the same format and contents as *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective*, edited by Guy Massaux and first published in French in October 2016 by Éditions Loevenbruck, Paris (France). It is based on the Michel Parmentier retrospective Massaux curated at the Villa Tamaris centre d'art in La Seyne-sur-Mer (France) in 2014[1], as well as archival documents.[2]

With the exception of *Propos délibérés* — the book-length interview Parmentier gave in 1990 with Daniel Buren[3] — the English edition includes all the texts published by Parmentier during his lifetime, translated from the French by Philip Armstrong.

Documents and texts have been presented side by side in order to foreground the correspondence between archival material and the published texts. The monograph thus includes a number of texts published by other authors during Parmentier's lifetime, texts that often include exchanges and debates in which Parmentier himself participated or to which he responded in his own writings.

The English edition includes updates and corrections to the captions and commentaries, as well as to material included in the appendices regarding exhibition histories and bibliographic information. Translator's notes have also been added to Parmentier's writings and the original commentaries in order to provide further context.

While already existing in partial or fragmentary forms in English, the texts signed by the group of protagonists associated with the series of four "Manifestations" in 1967 — BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI — have been translated in their entirety.[4]

Lastly, the English edition also includes several texts not included in the French edition: a brief exchange between Parmentier and Benjamin Buchloh from 1982 (p. 90); a translation of "Dire, redire et bafouiller, me contredire, dévier en apparence, digresser, bref: rhizomer toujours. M'avouer," the "notes" Parmentier published in the first monograph for his retrospective in 1988[5] (pp. 146; 152-155); and two essays — by Laura Lisbon and Molly Warnock — related to Parmentier's work (pp. 219-227).

Guy Massaux
Philip Armstrong

1 "Michel Parmentier, déc. 1965 – 20 nov. 1999, une rétrospective." The exhibition was held at Villa Tamaris centre d'art, La Seyne-sur-Mer (France), June 7 – September 14, 2014.

2 Archival works come primarily from the Michel Parmentier archives and the Association Michel Parmentier (AMP), Brussels, Belgium; the archives of the Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle (Mnam-Cci), Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Bibliothèque Kandinsky.

3 The text is now included in *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (*dont Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier: Propos délibérés* (*1991*)), ed. Aristide Bianchi (Paris: BlackJack Éditions, 2014), pp. 133-259. An English translation is forthcoming.

4 We would like to acknowledge the help and support of Daniel Buren in publishing the texts from the "Manifestations."

5 See *Michel Parmentier,* exhibition catalogue, September 20 – October 31, 1988, Centre national des arts plastiques (rue Berryer), curated by Alfred Pacquement, Paris, France, pp. 24-37.

Michel Parmentier

December 1965 – November 20, 1999: A Retrospective

Guy Massaux
Association Michel Parmentier (AMP)
– Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels

Ortuzar Projects
Editions Loevenbruck
MSU BROAD Museum

Almost-Silence

Robert Bonaccorsi

To be paradoxical in order to assert one's coherence could be seen as a kind of project. But does that mean we should reduce Michel Parmentier's life and work to an overarching plan? In the biographical outline written with exemplary precision by Guy Massaux,[1] we discern a will, a tension, a way of thinking that underlies the artist's refusals, contradictions, negations, and demands. His radicalism. While obvious, it is important to stress his connection to an artistic and political generation that emerged in the early 1960s and came into its own after 1968, before it was drowned under the irrepressible wave of media culture. This historical association, which does not imply any notion of school, membership, or affiliation, is to be understood in terms of, and above all *through,* its differences, antagonisms, and even detestations. Parmentier's on-and-off frequentation of Roger Chastel's studio at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris,[2] the Prix Lefranc awarded to him in 1963, and the presence of his works at the Biennale de Paris (see pp. 30-31), at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture (in 1962, 1963, and 1966) (see pp. 32-33), at the Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui (1963 and 1965) (see fig. 19, p. 32), and of course the Salon de Mai (1964) all bear witness to this contextual grounding.[3] His interventions at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, one of the key spaces for artistic effervescence at the time, began as a simple mode of presentation and then shifted to secession. Beginning in December 1965, Parmentier embarked on a new approach that would lead him to disown his earlier work. He now produced works based on reiteration by means of folding, a method inspired by Simon Hantaï: alternating horizontal bands of a single color, 38 cm wide, protected from subsequent applications of paint by a preliminary folding. Unfolding the support revealed in one piece the alternation of painted and unpainted bands. Parmentier repeated this procedure for three years, changing only the color using an arbitrary system (blue in 1966, gray in 1967, red in 1968). In 1967, alongside Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Niele Toroni, he intervened at the eighteenth Salon de la Jeune Peinture (see pp. 54-55). Painting was challenged in the form of a triple refusal: of hanging (pp. 56-58), of the artist's situation, and of painting itself: "NOUS NE SOMMES PAS PEINTRES" (We are not painters) (see fig. 35, p. 55).[4]

Parmentier stopped painting in 1968, and then, after fifteen years, not of silence, but of total cessation of pictorial practice, resumed it in September 1983, taking it up at the point where he appeared to have abandoned it. "If my work *is itself theory,* all theory (my absenting itself) must have recourse to words in order to be neither a dramatic stage exit, nor dubious disaffection, nor a badly motivated desertion by an artist who reinvents himself. This absence or cessation is the intimate extension of my work, it is dictated directly by its objectively subversive quality"[5] (see pp. 96-99 and fig. 66, p. 101). In this strategy of disappearance – "I thought I had effaced myself, but I realize that I must now efface myself even more. And that's never finished"[6] (see pp. 150-156) – the gloss becomes central. Parmentier's recently published texts and interviews reveal this literary dimension as the polemicist competes with the theoretician. "I hate theoretical texts as I do justifications. But settling scores or totting up temporary accounts are loathsome attitudes, which I nevertheless freely confess, because with a bit of luck they are going to help with the transformation, the mutation of the 'painting' function."[7] The overt references of this painting of silence[8] run from Samuel Beckett to Maurice Blanchot and take in Emmanuel Levinas, Charles Juliet, and Louis-René des Forêts. Nevertheless, in his pronouncements, Parmentier cultivated a penchant and knack for epigram, humor, and ridicule, but never in an anecdotal way: "I've come to believe more in the spoken word than I do in painting."[9] Paint/speak/reiterate/be silent. "In fact, what appeared stupid to me one day was that silence was extremely pretentious, of the type: 'I've said everything, I'm pissing you off.' It isn't possible anymore. In fact, what's interesting is *not stopping to say what one cannot say*… which was already in my previous work. The fold was the negative of the me who paints and then, when I was opening and unfolding, there was the non-said that appeared… but that gave me an artistic, aesthetic, a slightly impressive result. Too strong, too violent. Today, I'm more on the side of stuttering, the stuttering of a baby who paradoxically arrives late, with difficulty. But that's not what is specific to painting."[10] "Michel Parmentier, Profession Non-Painter," an article by Jacques Vallet based on an interview,[11] (see pp. 110-111) revealed a lover of painting capable of "falling dumbstruck" in front of a Poussin. "Having myself provoked the entire avant-garde for the last fifteen years, I feel like seeing a Poussin… but nothing since Poussin, who died in 1665, and my first real paintings date from 1965."[12] Speech also becomes the conflictual place where contradiction is defined as a principle, a motor. Everything may change, dwindle, be denied, abstracted, die, with the exception of movement, which is immutable by its very principle. The quest is a form of ascesis, of indecision, of searching for the specific, for pictorial specificity: "… in taking painting that is neither mimetic nor even communicative but as given to an immediately literal reading — this is what I call specificity — one can finally *paint in vain.* Obviously, it is by finally breaking free of codes that one can hope to approach what is essential. Specificity annuls disciplinarity and categorization. And so, what then is specificity in painting? This is the place where the painted trace does not express the coded image in effect at the time when it is painted but what is given in addition, as a bonus, over and above the image and the communicator — in spite of the artist, we might say. When painting escapes and *paints itself*" (see pp. 132-133).[13]

"Subverting precariousness, just there," writes Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet.[14]

"Paint painting," he says.[15] Never deny or betray yourself, never play the game. Michel Parmentier wants to be, exists, and is like a "painter of painting," to borrow Yves Michaud's felicitous expression.[16]

"See painting, think painting, erase painting, redo painting, erase painting again, etc. We will never have done (except of course when dead). This isn't new? No, not really. And yet, in the final phase, perhaps yes, it is a bit: erasing oneself."[17] In these notes, dated March – July 1988, Parmentier advises his imaginary interlocutor (who plays the role of the serving maid in Molière) to "think before talking. You. Yes you, unlike Kleist."[18] As of 1978, in the flyer printed for the retrospective at Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert featuring three canvases from 1966-1968 (see p. 105), he quoted Heinrich von Kleist under the subtitle *Allégation:* "The idea does not pre-exist language, it is formed in it and by it."[19] Movement, more than ever, the dialectic of saying and doing, of how it's done, of speech, of presence, of absence, of withdrawal, "almost silence, but spoken."[20] The vanity of solitary thought, the need to express what we don't know (yet) and want to know, it is all there in this gap, this tension. Kleist again, in "The Puppet Theatre" (1810), stating that a little articulated puppet had the advantage over a living dancer, because the puppet would be "incapable of affectation."[21] The mechanics of the repeated action as a way of escaping all affectation and (re) gaining both a point of equilibrium and a point of uncertainty. Going for the essential, "turning around an unintelligible and finally transparent trace: not limpid like the water that flows at the bottom of your garden, no: *transparent.*"[22] For Parmentier, "If there is a moral dimension — or simply a moral approach — in any given work of a plastic nature, it can appear only in praxis, can be revealed only by that."[23] A theoretical practice in which the ethical and the aesthetic go hand in hand. "Produce 'to have done again.'"[24] Parmentier's itinerary (a traversal?[25]) (see fig. 28, p. 44) unfolds like a life-work, a perpetual questioning in which methodically exercised doubt leads to a productive aporia instituting the sensorial presence of the work. Recidivism, defection, "almost-silence"[26] here institute the very conditions of painting's unpredictable revenge.

May 2014
Translated by Charles Penwarden

1 This document is available on the website of Villa Tamaris centre d'art: www.villatamaris.fr/page/communiques-de-presse-2014. I refer to it several times here.
2 This studio where Daniel Buren, François Rouan, Jacques Poli, Claude Viallat, Pierre Buraglio, and Vincent Bioulès all crossed paths warrants a more thorough study.
3 At the fourth Biennale de Paris (Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 28 – November 3, 1965), Parmentier exhibited *Peinture N° 8* (Painting N° 8) in the "Les jeunes artistes ont retenu" (Young artists' choice) section. Galerie Jean Fournier exhibited his early works in a show titled "Avant les bandes, 1962-1965," May 22 – June 21, 2014.
4 See Tract for "Manifestation 1" **(see p. 54)**.
5 Michel Parmentier, "Open Letter to François Mathey," published in *Douze Ans d'art contemporain en France 1960-1972*, Paris, Grand Palais, May – September 1972 **(see pp. 98-99, translated p. 120)**.
6 Michel Parmentier, "Interview with Michel Nuridsany" **(see pp. 150-151, translated pp. 155-156)**.
7 "Say, repeat and stutter, contradict myself, deviate in appearance, digress: in short, keep rhizoming. Self-avowal." **(see p. 146, translated pp. 152-155)**.
8 See the dissertation by Sabine Emptaz Collomb, *Michel Parmentier, Le bruit du silence*, Université Pierre-Mendès-France–Grenoble II, 2007; and Michel Nuridsany refers to "a voice of fine silence" in his interview with Michel Parmentier **(op.cit.)**.
9 "Interview with Michel Nuridsany" **(op.cit.)**.
10 Ibid.
11 Jacques Vallet, "Michel Parmentier, Profession Non-Painter," pp. 110-111.
12 Ibid.
13 "Interview with Bernard Blistène" **(see pp. 132-133, translated p. 134)**.
14 See Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet's text in *Michel Parmentier*, Paris, CNAP, September 20 – October 31, 1988, note 5, p. 39.
15 "B.M.T., Me, and the Others" **(see pp. 112-113, translated p. 121-122)**.
16 Yves Michaud in *Jacques Poli: Rétrospective (1966-2002)*, La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris, May 5 – June 27, 2012, La Nerthe – La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris centre d'art, 2012, p. 19.
17 "Open Letter to François Mathey," ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 This no doubt came from Ernst Cassirer's *Essais sur le langage* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969). See Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Speaking" in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. by David Constantine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), pp. 405-409.
20 In "Open Letter to François Mathey," ibid.
21 Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theatre," in *Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 413. (See also: "should we have to eat again of the Tree of Knowledge to fall back into the state of innocence," p. 416).
22 "Open Letter to François Mathey," ibid.
23 "Did You Say Ethics"? **(see pp.208-209)**.
24 Text for the Carré des Arts catalogue **(see fig. 128, p. 192)**.
25 See Daniel Buren, *Une traversée, peintures 1964-1999*, in the Catalogue Raisonné published for the exhibition "Une traversée, peintures, 1964-1999," Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Musée d'Art moderne Lille Métropole, 22 janvier – 14 mai 2000, Le Bourget et Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Musée d'Art moderne Lille Métropole, 2000 **(see p. 44)**.
26 "The moment silence holds sway, it is imperialist. What interests me is the almost-silence when, in spite of it all, you can still speak silence" (Michel Parmentier, quoted in "Interview with Michel Nuridsany" **(op.cit)**. See also the film by Bernard Bloch, 304 × 308, *Michel Parmentier, presque le silence* (Almost silence), 1999.

2 **Poster for the exhibition *Michel Parmentier, déc. 1965 – 20 nov. 1999, une rétrospective*, 2014, Villa Tamaris centre d'art, La Seyne-sur-Mer (France), June 7 – September 14, 2014. Printed by Vincent Carlier, Atelier Vertical, Brussels, silkscreen print, limited edition of 70 copies of each color (blue, gray, red, black), 10 not for sale and 10 numbered I to X, 100 × 70 cm each.**

Foreword 1

"Michel Parmentier, déc. 1965 – 20 nov. 1999, une rétrospective." is an exhibition organized around a chronological presentation of thirty-one works, starting in October/November 1965 and spanning nearly thirty-five years. Accompanying the work, a selection of 250 documents in display cases, mostly from the Michel Parmentier archives, helps reconstruct the emergence and specific contexts of the works. This presentation includes quite varied kinds of documentation.

If the exhibition is organized around the figure of the loop, in which the first folded work (*Décembre 1965*) (December 1965) and the last (*20 novembre 1999*) (November 20, 1999) face each other, it nonetheless reveals aporias in which for long absences Parmentier remained silent, with the extreme vigilance that preoccupied him and the doubt that reassured him.

The decision to include works with bands and *without folds* in the present retrospective — which precede the bands made *with folds* — results from recent exhibitions in which unfolded canvases have appeared alongside folded canvases. Ignoring this pretense, it seemed to us important to exhibit canvases with bands without folding in a different space, apart from the chronological presentation, thus situating these works in their historical moment. This serves to emphasize the problematics explored in Parmentier's creative process.

Likewise, the paintings that preceded the band paintings have not been included here. When he was alive, Parmentier categorically opposed any idea that they might be *revived.*

From *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) (p. 24) onward, the epistemological rupture that Parmentier established with his earlier work informed a critical stance that he explained at length.

Michel Parmentier – ... what interests me in my work is what emerged in 1966 or at the end of '65. It is true that what I did before paved the way for this work, but it only becomes significant — and I only claim it — from that moment on.

Anne Baldassari – So you deliberately date the beginning of your work at that time?

M. P. – Yes.

A. B. – Does that mean that you disown the earlier works?

M. P. – No, I have no choice but to recognize them... but as garbage — useful, no doubt, but garbage.[1]

Guy Massaux

1 See Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier,* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 33.

Guy Massaux : When did you meet Michel?

Pierrette Bloch[1]: I met him twice. When he was starting out, I think toward 1965, at the time of the bands, I don't believe it was before that. I think I met him at the Fournier gallery. I hardly spoke to him at the time. I had quite a powerful memory of the painting. I believe it was pink bands.

[...]

P. B. : I remember that painting, I remember exactly where it was, facing the door, and very well placed, and that really struck me.

G. M. : What struck you?

P. B. : It's hard to say. Perhaps something abrasive [*décapant*].

[...]

1 [Pierrette Bloch was a Swiss painter who was born in 1928 and died in 2017. She worked in Paris.] Bloch interviewed by Guy Massaux (*Entretien avec Pierrette Bloch*) and Noémie Goldberg, recorded October 26, 2001, in Paris. CD no. 1, from a recording of 58'0". Transcription by Aurore de Montpellier, 2'50", correction and second listening: Noémie Goldberg, 2 h, Brussels, AMP – Fonds Michel Parmentier, inv.: CD011026PB1

Contents

Supplementary Texts

1965

1965 December – 1999 November 20: A Retrospective.

During the month of December 1965, Michel Parmentier started using the folding method (*pliage*) that he borrowed from Simon Hantaï (1922-2008). This marked a radical change of direction, and from now on it would constitute the main focus of his work.

1966

At once inaugural and unprecedented, the first pliage, *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) (see p. 24), was a palimpsest. It began as a canvas painted pink (light magenta) and white, arranged on a stretcher. On the front, pink overflowed from under the blue on the edge of the unfolded folds; on the back, the pink had risen back to the surface of the canvas and left large faded areas. The canvas is a repaint, a pentimento, which bears the traces of old folds that have been transferred, the

1967

imprint of an initial stretcher. Drips in the blue surfaces indicate that the canvas was re-executed, reused several times, painted uniformly white, folded horizontally, stapled all along the edges of the flattened folds, completely covered in paint (all-over) with "Lefranc's medium blue," unstapled, unfolded, and then presented vertically on a wall.

For Sittard (The Netherlands), the (4) strips of polyester calque are first pre-folded and fixed (folded and stapled) vertically on a panel.

1968

The polyester calque is translucent, smooth, and matte. The staples hold the folds, the four folded strips are aligned, one by one, edge to edge.

November 20, 1999, in the morning: painting with oilstick (Winsor & Newton Artist's Oil bar, ref.: Titanium White AA Series I Titanium Dioxide), random gestures.

December 17, 1999, in the morning: unstaple, unfold, date stamp at the bottom of each strip and number in pencil from 1 to 4.

1983

In the rule notebook, with the date stamp: "20 NOV. 1999"; handwritten: "I piece 4 sq. oil bar."

December 18, 1999, *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) (see p. 25), is pinned on the wall: "7 alternating horizontal bands: oil bar/blank, 38 cm wide (4+3), and, at the top and bottom, two 19 cm partially blank bands, 304 × 300 cm."

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

3

4

5

3 ***Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965), Daniel Buren's studio, color photograph, reproduced from transparency, 6 × 6 cm.**
This photograph was taken by Bernard Boyer between January and July 1966 during a single photo session in the studio used by Daniel Buren at La Cité des Fleurs in the 13th arrondissement of Paris (at bottom left of the photograph, a work by Buren can be seen leaning and facing against the wall). Other works by Parmentier photographed in the studio included a blue and white canvas that has yet to be identified **(fig. 25, p. 42)**.

The canvas photographed here is unstapled, removed from its stretcher, and presented flat on a wall in its original format (251 × 238.5 cm). We know that it was painted with an aerosol spray, and redone and *retouched* several times with a brush in the areas where the accumulation of paint had caused dripping. *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965) might be considered an initial version of *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) **(p. 24)**: it is this same pink that was (re)discovered under the blue layer of *Décembre 1965* (December 1965).

Simon Hantaï's studio was also in the Cité des Fleurs. Buren introduced Parmentier to Hantaï in 1963. The latter had already been using his "folding as method" [1] since 1960.

1 *Pliage comme méthode* is a concept presented by Hantaï in the exhibition catalogue *Simon Hantaï. Peintures 1960-1967*, Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, June 22 – July 31, 1967, taken up by Molly Warnock in *Penser la peinture: Simon Hantaï* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), p. 218.

4 ***Décembre 1965* (December 1965), Daniel Buren's studio, photograph dated January 1966, black and white, 22 × 18 cm.**
Décembre 1965 (December 1965) during the same photo session with Bernard Boyer in 1966, Daniel Buren's studio in the Cité des Fleurs.

At the time, the work had a white upper horizontal band and a blue lower band. A hole in the wall locates the studio floor in the middle at the bottom of the photo; it appears in other photographs taken on the same day **(fig. 25, p. 42)**.

Other photographs in black and white by André Morin taken for CNAP-FNAC (Centre national des arts plastiques-Fonds national d'art contemporain) depict *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) with the white band still at the top and do not show whether or not the canvas was fixed on a stretcher.

As it is exhibited today, the canvas is no longer in its original position: it is pivoted and turned 180 degrees. However, the signature "Parmentier" and the date of the work — "Dec. 65" — on the back corroborate the hanging position that is now standard.

The photograph shows us that the work is attached at the top (white band) on a batten and that two rings screwed to this were used to hang the ensemble from two bolts fixed to the wall. Parmentier later added a self-fixing strip to the back of the canvas, thereby choosing a new fixation system for the work.

5 **Digital photomontage, 2014.**
In 1988, the Centre national des arts plastiques (which had acquired the canvas) revealed to Parmentier that it had taken the initiative of rehanging the canvas on a stretcher. Parmentier threatened the CNAP that he would cease to recognize it as one of his works. However, he did agree to the canvas being restored and reinstated without a stretcher, although its four edges were reduced **(fig. 7, p. 22)**. This digital montage superposes two stages of the canvas, before and after it was cut.

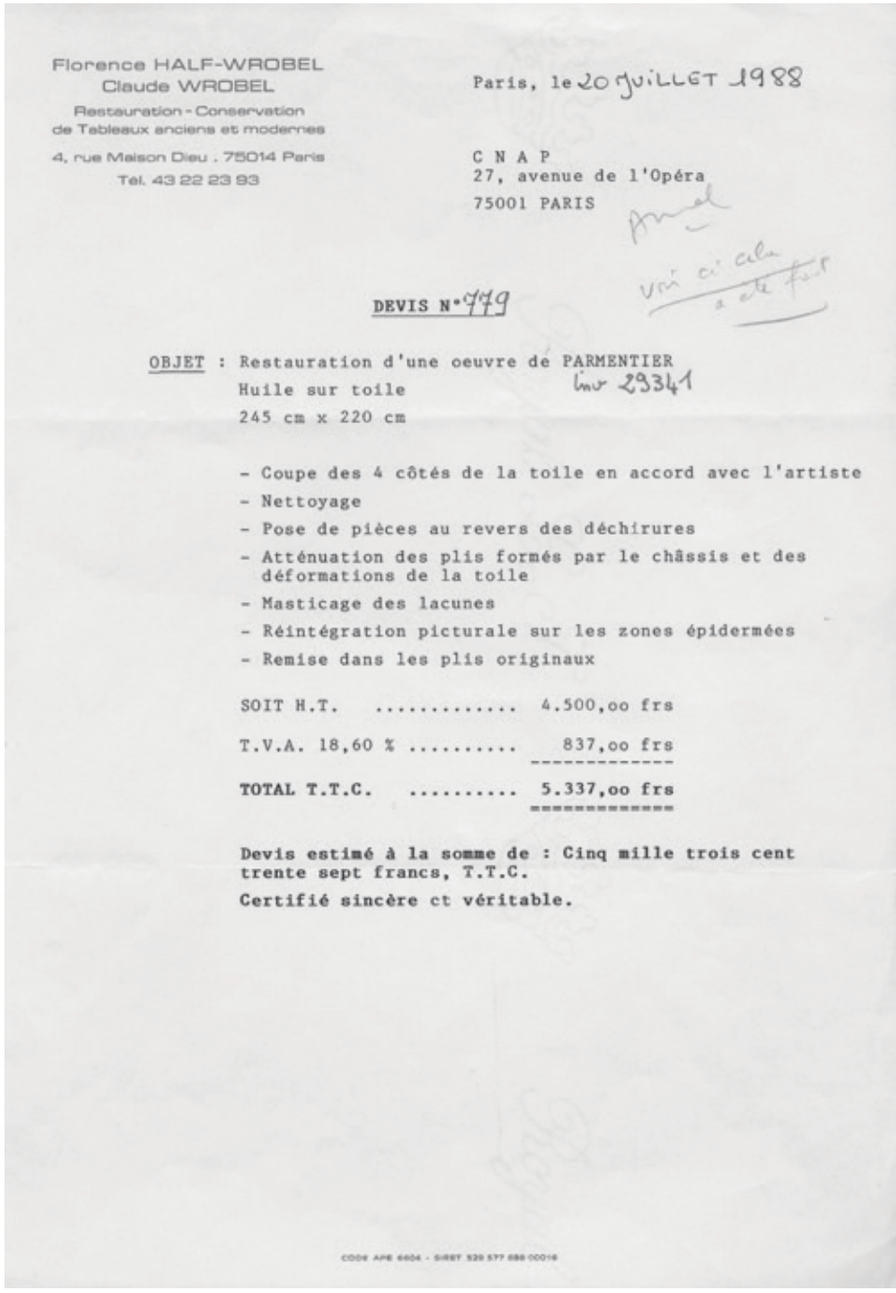
6

6 **Recto and verso of *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965), October – November (?) 1965, glycerophtalic paint on canvas, 231 × 196 cm (partial size of the canvas mounted on stretcher), 251 × 238.5 cm (with the parts of the canvas folded down at the back), signed on the back, with the indication "245 × 205 cm" written in felt pen by Parmentier.**

In terms of its principle of production and elaboration, *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965) shares a certain number of characteristics with *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), except that here the alternation of painted (pink) bands and unpainted (white) bands is obtained by unfolding the canvas and removing several lengths of masking tape (zip), previously used for other canvases and works on paper during October – November 1965.

Peinture N° 15 – 1965 (Painting N° 15 – 1965), dating from October–November (?) 1965, came onto the art market recently in a sale at Sotheby's, Paris, on December 4, 2014. Before that, its last public appearance was at the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (January 9 – February 1, 1966), where it was exhibited with *Peinture N° 13 – 1965* (Painting N° 13 – 1965) **(p. 37)**.

On the back, the surplus canvas is folded and stapled to the stretcher. We may suppose that for this exhibition Parmentier deliberately folded the excess canvas behind the stretcher, so that he was able to present two works of the same size, with identical band widths (+/- 50 cm), with two horizontal bands, one at the top and one at the bottom, (+/- 20 cm wide).



Florence HALF-WROBEL
Claude WROBEL
Restauration - Conservation
de Tableaux anciens et modernes
4, rue Maison Dieu . 75014 Paris
Tél. 43 22 23 93

Paris, le 20 JUILLET 1988

C N A P
27, avenue de l'Opéra
75001 PARIS

Accord

Voir ci-dessus a été fait

DEVIS N° 779

OBJET : Restauration d'une oeuvre de PARMENTIER
Inv 29341
Huile sur toile
245 cm x 220 cm

- Coupe des 4 côtés de la toile en accord avec l'artiste
- Nettoyage
- Pose de pièces au revers des déchirures
- Atténuation des plis formés par le châssis et des déformations de la toile
- Masticage des lacunes
- Réintégration picturale sur les zones épidermées
- Remise dans les plis originaux

SOIT H.T. ..... 4.500,oo frs

T.V.A. 18,60 % ..... 837,oo frs

TOTAL T.T.C. ..... 5.337,oo frs

Devis estimé à la somme de : Cinq mille trois cent trente sept francs, T.T.C.

Certifié sincère et véritable.

CODE APE 6404 - SIRET 320 577 688 00016

7

7 **Estimate no. 779 for restoration of the work *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) (p. 24).**
[Paris, July 20, 1988: Florence HALF-WROBEL, Claude WROBEL, Restoration-Conservation of Antique and Modern Paintings, 4, rue Maison Dieu, 75104 Paris, Tel: 43 22 23 93 [to] Centre national des arts plastiques, 27,avenue de l'Opéra, 75001 Paris,
Invoice # 779, OBJECT: Restoration of a work by PARMENTIER, Oil on canvas, 245 cm × 220 cm
— trimming of 4 sides of the canvas, with agreement of the artist
— cleaning
— placement of pieces behind tears in the canvas
— attenuation of folds created by the stretcher and distortions in the canvas
— filling of cracks
— final restoration of all surface areas
— redefinition of original folds
Cost 4,500.00 frs, Tax @ 18.6 % 837.00 frs, Total TTC 5,337.00 frs, Estimated amount: Five thousand, three hundred and thirty seven francs. Certified to be true and accurate,...]

8 **A4 sheet folded/unfolded, model for folding and conservation of work *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]).**
"*To protect the canvas*, it must never be rolled up but suspended. Before a new hanging, plan to refold the original folds (concertinaed) for a short time, in a way that the folds are visible in the new unfolding. Please see the attached photocopy". The italics are by Parmentier himself **(see fig. 66, p. 101)**.

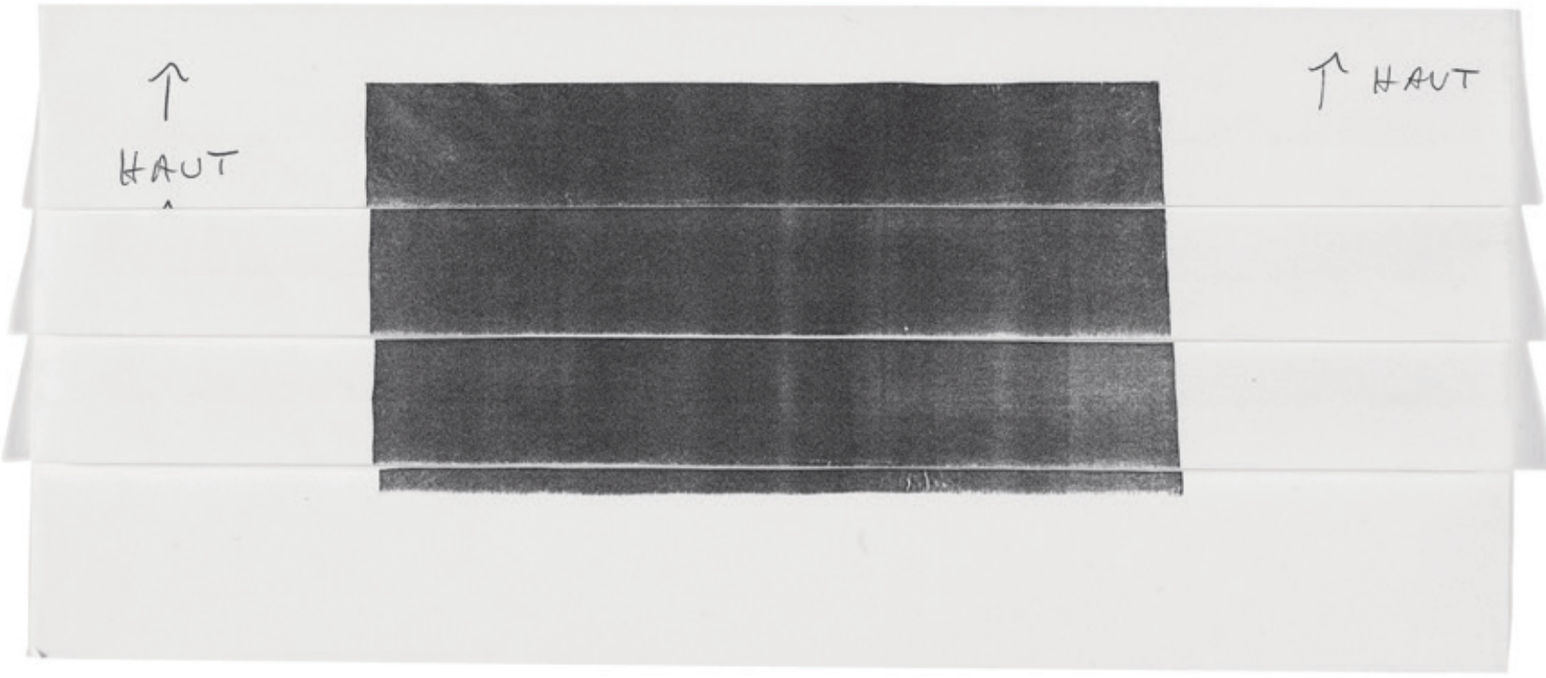
This folded/unfolded sheet is a mock-up of the work *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), made using a photocopy and dated 1986. This was kept with *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]) **(fig. 65, p. 100)** and specified the conditions of its conservation in order to keep the folds visible. Retrospectively, and while many canvases had already been acquired by museums or collectors, Parmentier made it known and specified that when they were exhibited, these canvases should display the folds, free of all constraints (such as a frame or stretcher). The canvas, held at the top, hangs at a certain distance perpendicular to the wall.

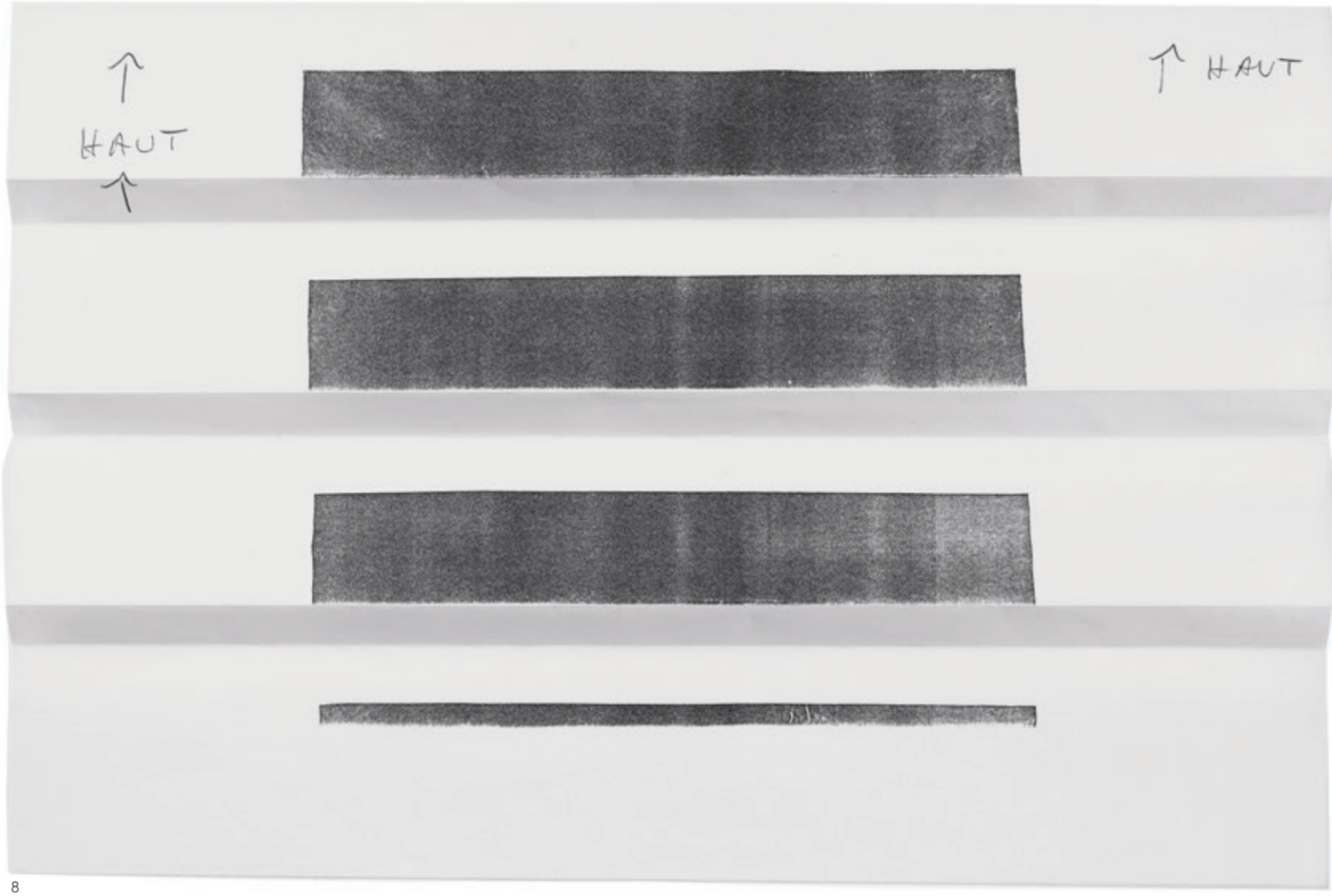
The question of stretching, re-stretching, or not fixing the unfolded canvas on a stretcher was resolved only much later.

In 1966, in a group show at the Jean Fournier gallery, *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) was exhibited fixed on a stretcher **(fig. 27, p. 43)**.

In 1967, in "Manifestation 3" and "Manifestation 4," Parmentier backed his folds on a stretcher in order to show his works in association with those of his fellow artists.

One of the ongoing concerns in Parmentier's work was emphasizing the fold/unfold: folds were essential. To do this, he perfected his hanging system by sticking a self-gripping strip (Velcro) between the back of the canvas at its upper edge and a batten fixed to the wall. The thickness of the batten (3 cm × 3 cm) meant that the canvas did not adhere to the wall. This system for hanging was perfected in 1978 in collaboration with Michel Durand-Dessert, who was his gallerist from 1978 to 1991.



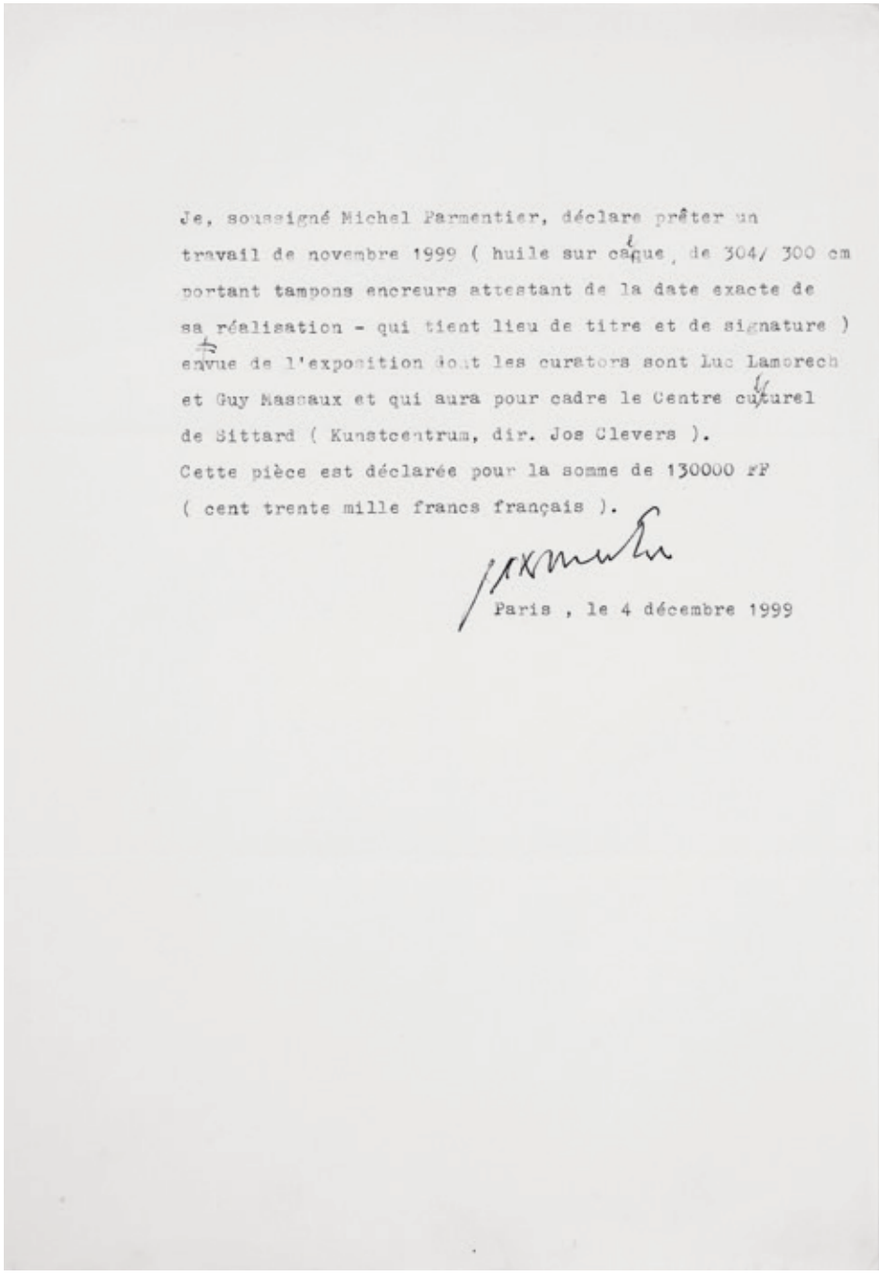


8

20 novembre 1999 (November 20, 1999)

9

10



Je, soussigné Michel Parmentier, déclare prêter un travail de novembre 1999 (huile sur caque, de 304/ 300 cm portant tampons encreurs attestant de la date exacte de sa réalisation - qui tient lieu de titre et de signature) envue de l'exposition dont les curators sont Luc Lamorech et Guy Massaux et qui aura pour cadre le Centre culturel de Sittard (Kunstcentrum, dir. Jos Clevers).
Cette pièce est déclarée pour la somme de 130000 FF (cent trente mille francs français).

Paris , le 4 décembre 1999

9 ***20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), "JARS IV. Tegenvleug /à rebrousse-poil" exhibition, Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, December 19, 1999 – February 20, 2000. Color photograph, 11.5 × 18 cm.**
Rear left, *Tabula 1982-1986* by Simon Hantaï.

10 **Simon Hantaï, *Tabula 1982-1986*. Acrylic on canvas, 300 × 482 cm.**

11 **Loan certificate concerning *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), signed by Michel Parmentier on December 4, 1999, for the exhibition "JARS IV. Tegenvleug /à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[I the undersigned, Michel Parmentier, declare that I am lending a work from November 1999 (oil on paper vellum, 304 cm × 300 cm, bearing date stamps attesting to the exact date of its completion — which stands in for the title and signature) to be included in an exhibition whose curators are Luc Lambrecht and Guy Massaux, which will take place in the Sittard Cultural Center (Kunstcentrum, director Jos Clevers). This piece is valued at 130,000 FF (one hundred and thirty thousand French francs).
Michel Parmentier (signature) Paris, December 4, 1999]

In 1999, at the initiative of Jos Cleevers (director of the Kunstcentrum Sittard), and within the framework of "JARS IV," Luk Lambrecht and Guy Massaux were chosen to curate an exhibition titled "Tegenvleug /à rebrousse-poil (Positie in de schilderkunst – Positions dans la peinture)" at the Kunstcentrum Sittard from December 19, 1999 to February 20, 2000. Among the artists featured in this group show was Simon Hantaï, who lent *Tabula 1982-1986*, his latest painting. Parmentier, for his part, painted on site what would prove to be his last work.

This work was acquired by Galerie Jean Fournier. In 2002 it entered the collection of the Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, under inventory number AM 2002-114. AMP inventory: MP991120.

JARS IV

"TEGENVLEUG / À REBROUSSE-POIL"

INVITATION / UITNODIGING

"TEGENVLEUG / À REBROUSSE-POIL"
POSITIES IN DE SCHILDERKUNST

19.12 - 20.02

een tentoonstelling samengesteld door:
LUK LAMBRECHT EN GUY MASSAUX
met werken van:
BRUNO GOOSSE, SIMON HANTAÏ, MICHAEL KREBBER, LAURA LISBON, GUY MEES, JOHAN MESKENS, WILLEM OOREBEEK, MICHEL PARMENTIER, MINO TRAFELI, PHILIPPE VAN SNICK, JAMES WELLING

OPENING: zo. 19 dec om 15.00 uur. geopend: wo. t/m zo 14.00 - 17.00 u (feestdagen gesloten)
Leyenbroekerweg 113 a, 6132 CD Sittard (NL.) tel. 0031 (0) 46 4523686 fax 0031 (0) 46 4584989

met dank aan: Gemeente Sittard, Provincie Limburg, Mondriaan Stichting, Winter Bouts BV, collectie Daled (Brussel), Johan Meskens - Chromatic Space [Lab.] i.s.m. I.R.D Brussel, Drukkerij Bern. Claessens B.V. - Sittard.

KUNSTCENTRUM SITTARD

12

much as creating a discourse on the world. I relate this desire more to the intentions of painting than to photography as practiced up to now" (J.W)

colofon

JARS IV

19.12.1999 - 20.02.2000

"TEGENVLEUG / Á REBROUSSE-POIL"
POSITIES IN DE SCHILDERKUNST

gastcuratoren: LUK LAMBRECHT EN GUY MASSAUX

met: BRUNO GOOSSE, SIMON HANTAÏ, MICHAEL KREBBER, LAURA LISBON, GUY MEES, JOHAN MESKENS, WILLEM OOREBEEK, MICHEL PARMENTIER, MINO TRAFELI, PHILIPPE VAN SNICK, JAMES WELLING

produktie: STICHTING KUNSTCENTRUM SITTARD
coördinator: JOS CLEVERS

opening: zo 19 dec om 15.00 uur.
geopend wo / zo van 14.00u - 17.00 uur (feestdagen gesloten)

Kunstcentrum Sittard
Leyenbroekerweg 113 a, 6132 CD, Sittard (NL.)
tel 00 31 (0)46 4523686, Fax 00 31 (0)46 4584989

Met dank aan: Gemeente Sittard, Provincie Limburg, Mondriaan Stichting, Winter Bouts BV, Collectie Daled (Brussel), Johan Meskens - Chromatic Space [lab] i.s.m. I.R.D. (Brussel), Samsung (België).

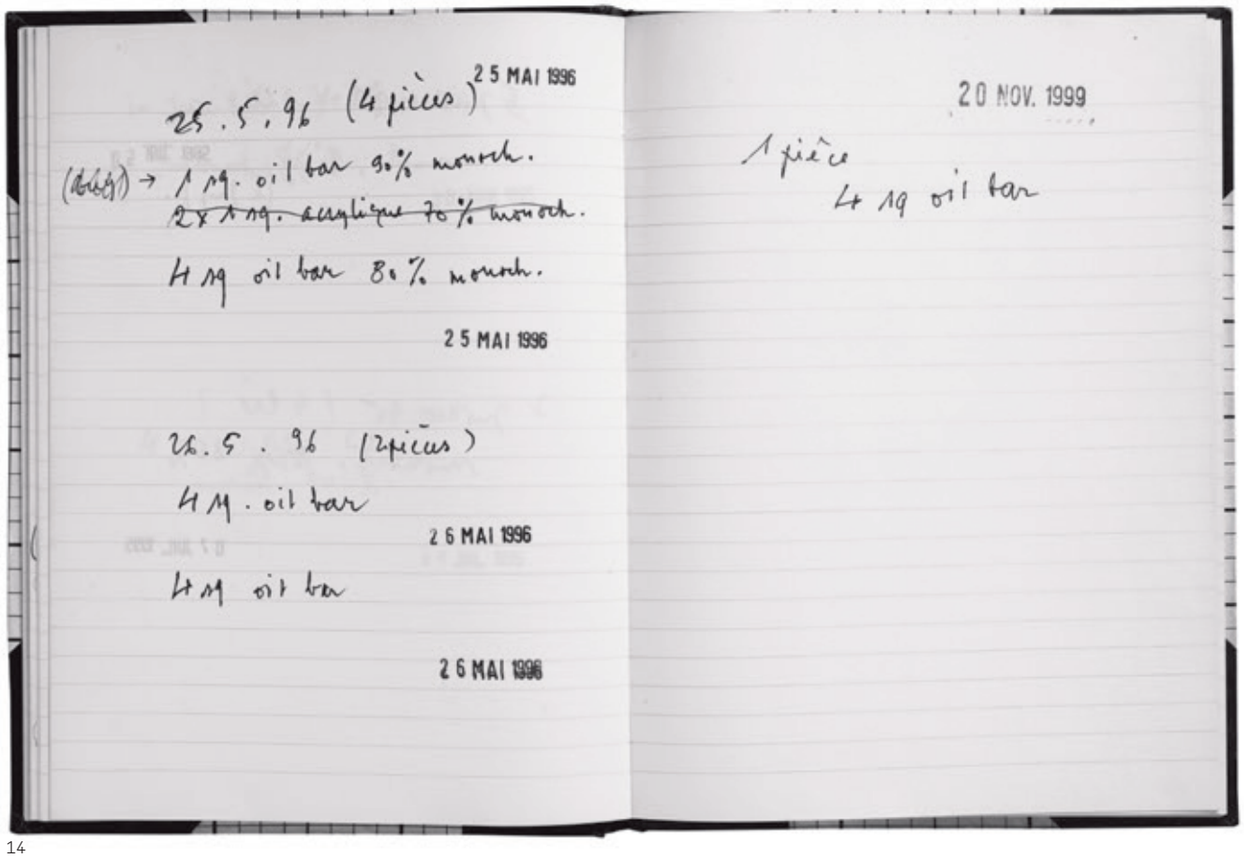
KUNSTCENTRUM SITTARD

ravissement — 245 — **receveur**

ravissement m. 1 *entvoering, schaking* f.; 2 *verrukking, vervoering, opgetogenheid* f.
ravisseur m. *roover, schaker* m.
ravitaillement m. *bevoorrading* f.
ravitailler v. tr. *bevoorraden.*
rayer v. tr. [sig. y] 1 *strepen maken op ou in;* 2 *[door]halen, [door]schrappen;* 3 *(tuil, canon) trekken, groeven.*
1. rayon m. 1 *straal* m.; —*ss lichtgevende stralen* m. pl.; 2 *omtrek* m., *rond, gebied* n.; 3 (béton) *spaak* f.; 4 *spaakhoen* n.
2. rayon m. 1 — *de miel honingraat* f.; 2 *rek* n., *kast* f. *met vakken;* 3 *schap, plank* f., *boord* n.; 4 (magasin) *afdeling* f.
rayonné 1 adj. *straalvormig, straal-;* 2 m. *straaldier* n. [*straling* f.
rayonnement m. 1 *stralen* n.; 2 (phys.) *uit-* ↑
rayonner 1 v. i. *stralen, glinsteren, schitteren;* 2 *zich verspreiden, richten maken;* 3 v. i. & tr. (phys.) *uitstralen.*
rayure f. 1 *streep* f.; (arme) *trekken* m. pl.; ↓
raz = 4. **ras.** [2 *uitschrapping* f.
razzia f. 1 *roeftocht* m., *razzia* f.; 2 *opruiming, kuising* f.
re, ré, r préfixe (= de nouveau) *her-* voorvoegsel (= opnieuw). V. Préface.
réaccoutumer v. tr. *weer gewennen.*
réactif 1 adj. *reagerend;* 2 *reagens* m. *(scheik.).*
réactionnaire 1 adj. *reactionnair;* 2 m. *reactionnair* m.
réadaptation f. *heraanpassing* f.
réadapter v. tr. *heraanpassen; reclasseren (v. oud gevangenen).*
réagir v. i. *reageren;* — *contre ingaan tegen.*
réalisable adj. *verwezenlijkbaar;* (argent) *omzetbaar.* [(argent) *omzetting* f.
réalisation f. *verwezenlijking, uitvoering;* ↑
réaliser v. tr. 1 *verwezenlijken, uitvoeren;* 2 *te gelde maken* [2 *werkelijkheidszin* f.
réalisme m. 1 *werkelijkheid* f., *realisme* n.; ↑
réalité f. *wezenlijkheid, werkelijkheid* f.; en — *wezenlijk, werkelijk.*
réapparaître v. i. *weer verschijnen.*
réapparition f. *wederverschijning* f.
réapprovisionner v. tr. *opnieuw bevoorraden;* se — *nieuwe voorraad indoen.*
réassurance f. *herverzekering* f.
réassurer v. tr. *herverzekeren.* [*barstig.*
rébarbatif adj. (...ive) *norsch, stuurs, weer-* ↑
rebâtir v. tr. *weder opbouwen.*
rebelle 1 adj. *oproerig, muitzuch;* 2 *weerbarstig, weerspannig;* fièvre — *hardnekkige koorts* f.; 3 m. *oproerling, muiter* m.
rebeller se — v. réfl. *opstaan (tegen), zich verzetten (tegen).*
rébellion f. *oproer* n., *opstand* m.
rebiffer v. tr. : se — *tegenspartelen, zich ver-* ↓
reboisement m. *herbebossing* f. [*zetten.*
rebondi adj. *rond, vol,* (joue, nuisi) *bol.*
rebondir v. i. *weer opspringen.*
rebord m. 1 *(opstaande ou uitstekende) rand* m.; (route) *spoorkrans* m.; 2 *omslag* m. & n.
rebouillir v. tr. *opkoken.*
rebours m. *tegenstrook, tegenleug* f.; (fig.) *omgekeerde* n.; à — *tegen de vleug, tegen de draad, verkeerd, averechts;* au — du bon sens *tegen het gezond verstand in.*
rebouter v. tr. *(een gebroken been) zetten.*
rebroussement m. 1 *opstrijking* f.; 2 *terugkeer, ommekeer* m.; gant de — *kapitation* n.
rebrousse-poil m. *tegenleug* f.; à — *tegen de draad, averechts.*
rebrousser v. tr. 1 *opstrijken;* 2 — chemin *op zijn stappen terugkeren.*
rebuffade f. *afstanwing* f.
rébus m. *beeldraadsel* n., *rebus* m.
rebut m. 1 *afstanwing* f.; 2 *uitschot* n.; papier de — *uitschot van papier;* au — *in de prullenmand* f.
rebutant adj. 1 *afschrikkend, afkeerwekkend, afstotend;* 2 *terugstotend, nors, stuurs.*
rebuter v. tr. 1 *afstanwen;* 2 *uitschieten, afkeuren, van de hand wijzen;* 3 *afschrikken, afstoten;* rebuté de beau van; être rebuté *moedeloos zijn;* 4 se — *afgeschrikt worden, een tegenzin krijgen.*
récalcitrant 1 adj. *weerspannig;* 2 m. *weerspanneling* m. [*laten zakken.*
recaler v. tr. *(muzikl) vastzetten; (examen)* ↑
recanner v. tr. *opnieuw rieten.* [*samenwaffend.*
récapitulatif adj. (...ive) *herhalend, weer-* ↑
récapitulation f. *herhaling* f., *samenvatting* f.
récapituler v. tr. *herhalen, samenvatten.*
recauser v. i. *er nog eens over praten.*
recélement m. *verberging, geheimhouding* f.
recéler v. tr. [sig. é, è] 1 *(ver)helen;* 2 *verbergen, achterhouden, verzwijgen, geheimhouden;* 3 *bergen, bevatten.* [*ger* m.
recéleur m. 1 *heler;* 2 *verberger;* 3 *verzwij-* ↑
récemment adv. *onlangs, sedert kort, nieuwlings; plus* — *sedert korter tijd.*
recensement m. 1 *(op)telling;* 2 *volkstelling* f.
recenser v. tr. *tellen, opnemen.*
récent adj. *vers, nieuw, pas geplooid, pas gebeurd.*
récépissé m. *ontvangst of bewijs, recepis* n.
réceptacle m. *vergaarplaats, verzamelplaats* f., (mauv. part) *vergaarbak* m.
récepteur 1 adj. *ontvangend, ontvang-; apparell, poste* — *ontvangtoestel* n., *ontvangpost* m.; 2 m. *ontvanger;* (eau) *opvanger;* (té- ↓
réceptif adj. *ontvankelijk.* [(Zeph.) *horen* m.
réception f. 1 *ontvangst, aanneming;* 2 *ontvangst* f., *onthaal* n.; 3 *aanneming, opneming* f.; discours de — *intreerede;* 4 *toelating* f., *bevordering, promotie* f.; 5 *(contrangstenming* f.
réceptivité f. *ontvankelijkheid, vatbaarheid* f.
recette f. 1 *ontvangst* f.; pièce qui fait — *kassstuk* n.; 2 *ontvangsti* f.; 3 *ontvangstkantoor* n.; 4 *voorschrift, recept* n.
recevable adj. 1 *ontvangbaar, aanneemelijk;* 2 (fig.) *ontvankelijk.*
receveur m. *ontvanger* m.

KUNSTCENTRUM SITTARD

13



14

14 **Michel Parmentier's personal notebook, 21 × 16 cm (folded).**
Starting with the work *29 septembre 1983* (September 29, 1983), which is when he began painting again after a hiatus of fifteen years, between 1968 and 1983, Parmentier noted down many of the works he had produced, together with brief details about the works. The last date stamp: 20 NOV. 1999.

1965

Antechamber (1965 October – November)

Between October and November 1965, Michel Parmentier breaks with the kind of painting he has been producing up to that point, and for which he won the Prix Lefranc[1] in 1963.

From now on, his rejection of expressive, signifying representation leads him into work that consists of horizontal bands of alternating color and different whites, their width/height dimensions varying from one work to another, executed on large canvases fixed to stretchers.[2] Several works are done on smaller paper supports.

Among the components used: glycerophtalic paint (industrial paint) spread with a house-painter's or painter's brush, masking tape[3] to delimit the zones to be painted, staples — successive staplings through the canvas onto its stretcher — to hold the masking tape applied during the covering of the canvas by successive layers of paint, thus ensuring a certain stability/workability of the apparatus/work.

The canvases/stretchers are painted/executed horizontally on the floor and then raised up vertically on the wall. Then comes the action of removing the staples and peeling away the masking tape. The works on paper, first covered with a layer of white paint, are fixed to the wall. The orientation and traces left by the colors indicate that at first the paint sometimes overflows the masking tape and/or then enters the zone left blank by the tape, now removed (see pp. 36-40).

A final phase consists in numbering (no. 1, I, 2, II, etc.), dating (month/year), signing or putting initials on the back, and marking arrows to indicate the direction of the works selected.

1 Prize awarded (in the painting category) by the jury to a promising young artist. This prize, which was significant at the time, also ensured that the winner would be given a solo exhibition in a gallery. Daniel Buren (b. 1938-) received the same prize in 1965.

2 The canvases are full of traces of their successive changes, including corrections and repetitions. Parmentier insists on his urge to designate (drips, overflows, etc.) in the effervescence of the working process.

Parmentier executed his paintings *a fresco*, which meant accepting/espousing a series of unforeseen factors: traces left by adhesive tape, brush marks, the irregularity of the painted horizontal bands, stretcher marks visible through the canvas, etc.

3 Parmentier himself used the English terms "masking tape" or "tape."

1966

1967

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

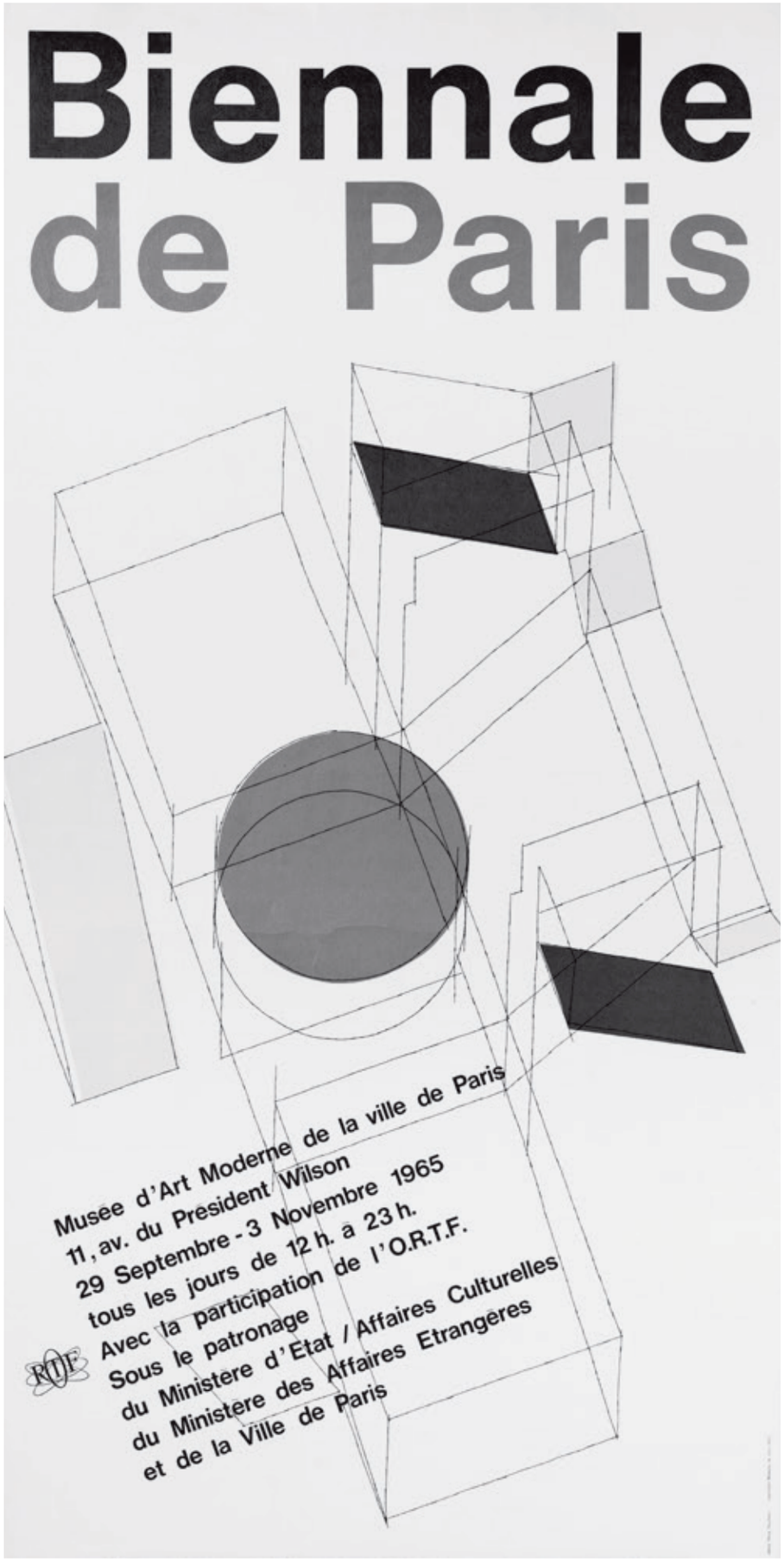
1996

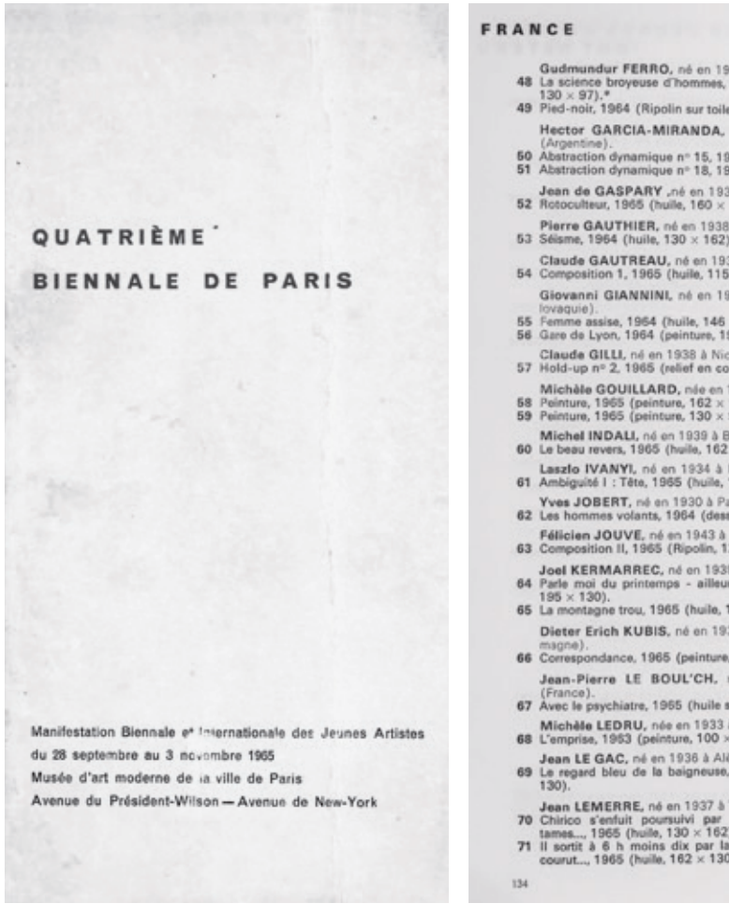
1997

1998

1999

15





QUATRIÈME

BIENNALE DE PARIS

Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes
du 28 septembre au 3 novembre 1965
Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris
Avenue du Président-Wilson — Avenue de New-York

FRANCE

Gudmundur FERRO, né en 19
48 La science broyeuse d'hommes, 130 × 97).*
49 Pied-noir, 1964 (Ripolin sur toile

Hector GARCIA-MIRANDA, (Argentine).
50 Abstraction dynamique n° 15, 19
51 Abstraction dynamique n° 18, 19

Jean de GASPARY ,né en 193
52 Rotoculteur, 1965 (huile, 160 ×

Pierre GAUTHIER, né en 1938
53 Séisme, 1964 (huile, 130 × 162)

Claude GAUTREAU, né en 193
54 Composition 1, 1965 (huile, 115

Giovanni GIANNINI, né en 19 (ovaquie).
55 Femme assise, 1964 (huile, 146
56 Gare de Lyon, 1964 (peinture, 1

Claude GILLI, né en 1938 à Nic
57 Hold-up n° 2, 1965 (relief en co

Michèle GOUILLARD, née en
58 Peinture, 1965 (peinture, 162 ×
59 Peinture, 1965 (peinture, 130 ×

Michel INDALI, né en 1939 à B
60 Le beau revers, 1965 (huile, 162

Laszlo IVANYI, né en 1934 à
61 Ambiguïté I : Tête, 1965 (huile,

Yves JOBERT, né en 1930 à Pa
62 Les hommes volants, 1964 (des

Félicien JOUVE, né en 1943 à
63 Composition II, 1965 (Ripolin, 1

Joel KERMARREC, né en 193
64 Parle moi du printemps - ailleu 195 × 130).
65 La montagne trou, 1965 (huile, 1

Dieter Erich KUBIS, né en 19 magne).
66 Correspondance, 1965 (peinture

Jean-Pierre LE BOUL'CH, (France).
67 Avec le psychiatre, 1965 (huile

Michèle LEDRU, née en 1933
68 L'emprise, 1963 (peinture, 100 ×

Jean LE GAC, né en 1936 à Al
69 Le regard bleu de la baigneuse, 130).

Jean LEMERRE, né en 1937 à
70 Chirico s'enfuit poursuivi par tames..., 1965 (huile, 130 × 162
71 Il sortit à 6 h moins dix par la courut..., 1965 (huile, 162 × 130

134

16

15 **Poster for the 4th Biennale de Paris: Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes, 1965, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), September 29 – November 3, 1965, lithograph. Imprimerie du Lion, Atelier Pierre Faucheux, Paris, 80 × 40 cm.**
In the 1960s, Paris was home to numerous competitions, painting prizes, salons, biennials, collective exhibitions, etc. In this context, in 1966 Parmentier took part at the same time in the 7th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris and the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 1965, he participated in the 4th Biennale de Paris, held at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, and in the "Exposition inaugurale [50 Artistes / 50 oeuvres]" at Galerie Lutèce, Paris. In 1964, he was at the 20th Salon de Mai at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; and at the 6th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; in 1963, at the 14th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; competing for the Lefranc Prix for young painters at Galerie Lefranc, Paris; at the 3rd Biennale de Paris at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; and at the 5th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, also at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; in 1962, at the 13th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

It is instructive to note here that, from the inaugural exhibition in 1959, the Paris Biennales were all titled "Manifestation." The term was also used in the title of a series of exhibitions that André Breton curated at the Galerie Kléber in 1957 – "Manifestations de la Galerie Kléber," commemorating the condemnation of Siger of Brabant by Thomas Aquinas – in which Simon Hantaï also exhibited. Galerie Kleber became the Galerie Jean Fournier.

16 **Catalogue of the 4th Biennale de Paris, 1965, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), September 29 – November 3, 1965, Paris, Les Presses Artistiques, 1965, cover and pp. 134-135, 21 × 10.5 cm.**
At the 4th Biennale de Paris, Parmentier exhibited *Peinture N° 8 – 1965* (Painting N° 8 – 1965), oil on canvas, 224 × 185 cm. This painting before his band works was selected in an open competition and reproduced in the catalogue. See "Les jeunes artistes ont retenu, N° 83, Michel Parmentier, né en 1938. Paris (France), *Peinture N° 8 – 1965* (painting, 240 × 180)."

32 à Olafsvik (Islande).
1964 (Ripolin sur toile,
, 93 × 114).
né en 1930 à Pinayro
63 (huile, 100 × 70).
63 (huile, 80 × 80).
8 à Paris (France).
130).
à Bordeaux (France).
,
33 à Paris (France).
× 87).
30 à Prague (Tchécos-
× 97).*
95 × 114).
e (France).
ntreplaqué, 120 × 140).
1940 à Paris (France).
130).
97).
Budapest (Hongrie).
× 130).*
Budapest (Hongrie).
162 × 130).
ris (France).
in à la plume, 45 × 60)
Nyons (France).
20 × 70).
à Ostende (Belgique).
rs on tue, 1965 (huile.
130 × 130).
38 à Magdebourg (Alle-
, 120 × 120).
né en 1940 à Toulon
ur toile, 73 × 116).
à Paris (France).
: 81).
s (France).
1965 (tempera, 162 ×
Toulouse (France).
une meute d'hippopo-
).
petite porte et courut,
).

LES JEUNES ARTISTES ONT RETENU

Philippe LEROY, né en 1940 à Paris (France).
72 Le meneur d'Hommes, 1965 (peinture, 146 × 97).
73 Conférence, 1965 (peinture, 65 × 54).

Yves LEVEQUE, né en 1937 à Boulogne-sur-Seine (France).
74 Ventre d'homme, 1964-65 (huile, 150 × 150).

Bernard LONDINSKY, né en 1932 à Paris (France).
75 Tubéreuse, 1963 (dessin, 50 × 65).

Pascal MAHOU, né en 1939 à Faulquemont (France).
76 Envol fabuleux, 1962 (encre de chine, 27 × 21).
77 Mascotte politique, 1962 (encre de chine, 21 × 27). Collection Mlle N. Faivre.

Carlo MARANGIO, né en 1932 à Lecce (Italie).
78 Nature morte I, 1965 (huile, 130 × 97).

Jorge MARTINS, né en 1940 à Lisbonne (Portugal).
79 Dessin, 1965 (dessin, 45 × 55).

Marcel MERGUI, né en 1936 à Tanger (Maroc).
80 Rêve de Cléopâtre, 1964 (peinture, 100 × 100).

Jean-Michel MEURICE, né en 1938 à Lille (France).
81 Peinture, 1965 (huile, 195 × 130).

Hubert MOLLIEN, né en 1935 à Paris (France).
82 Personnage au pipo, 1963 (tenture cousue, 120 × 100).

Michel PARMENTIER, né en 1938 à Paris (France).
83 Peinture n° 8, 1965 (peinture, 240 × 180).

Jacques POLI, né en 1938 à Nimes (France).
84 Composition III, 1965 (huile, 80 × 80).

Henri PROSI, né en 1936 à Metz (France)
85 Paysage obscur, 1965 (peinture, 162 × 130).
86 Sinuosité, 1965 (gouache, 65 × 50).

Raoul RABA, né en 1930 à Neuilly-sur-Seine (France)
87 La boule, 1965 (dessin, 50 × 65).
88 La Pouilleda, 1965 (dessin, 50 × 65).

Aguilella-Cueco RAMON, né en 1931 à Uzerche (France).
89 Mobilisation, 1965 (peinture et sérigraphie, 115×195).*

Juan ROMERO, né en 1932 à Séville (Espagne).
90 Chez moi, 1965 (huile, 114 × 146).

Jean SARIANO, né en 1943 à Oran (Algérie).
91 La France quel tour I, 1964 (peinture, 92 × 73).

Shohachi SHIMIZU, né en 1933 à Taiji (Japon).
92 Point et Carreaux, 1965 (huile, 195 × 146).

Peter STAMPFLI, né en 1937 à Berne (Suisse).
93 Bouche 2, 1965 (huile, 113 × 167).
94 Bouche 3, 1965 (huile, 113 × 167).*

Daniel STOTZKY, né en 1937 à Luxembourg (Luxembourg)
95 Etude 2, 1964 (huile, 130 × 97).
96 Cirque Maurice, 1962 (dessin, 24 × 31).
97 Cirque, 1962 (dessin, 24 × 31).

135

galerie lutèce 13 rue guénegaud paris 6 téléphone danton 39 30

Reçu de...Parmentier les oeuvres d'Art notées ci-dessous.
Il est entendu que ces oeuvres sont données en dépôt à la Galerie Lutèce et qu'elles restent la propriété de Parmentier

A la vente, le prix sera réparti de la façon suivante :
60% pour..Parmentier
40% pour Galerie Lutèce

Prix de vente

5 grandes huiles — 700 fr -
6 petites " 400 fr -

Galerie Lutèce

Michelin

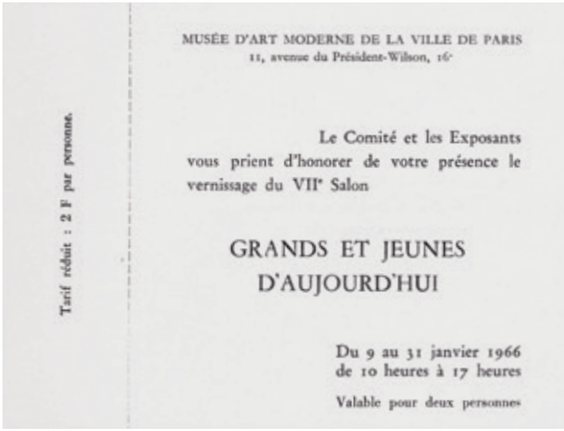
le, 4.12.65

en permanence - gouaches dessins aquarelles de jeunes artistes et d'artistes de renom
dépositaire exclusif pour l'europe des cadres kulicke de new york
galerie lutèce 65 s.a.r.l. au capital de 10 000 frs r.c. seine 65 b 3709

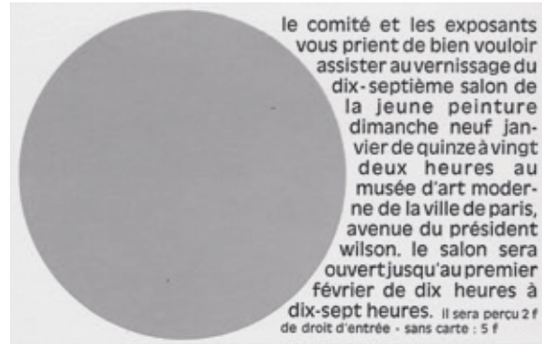
17

17 **Receipt from Galerie Lutèce, Paris (France), for seven works on loan by Michel Parmentier, December 4, 1965, 26.9 × 21 cm.**
After Parmentier won the Prix Lefranc in 1963, several Parisian galleries contacted him, including the Galerie Lutèce.

18



19

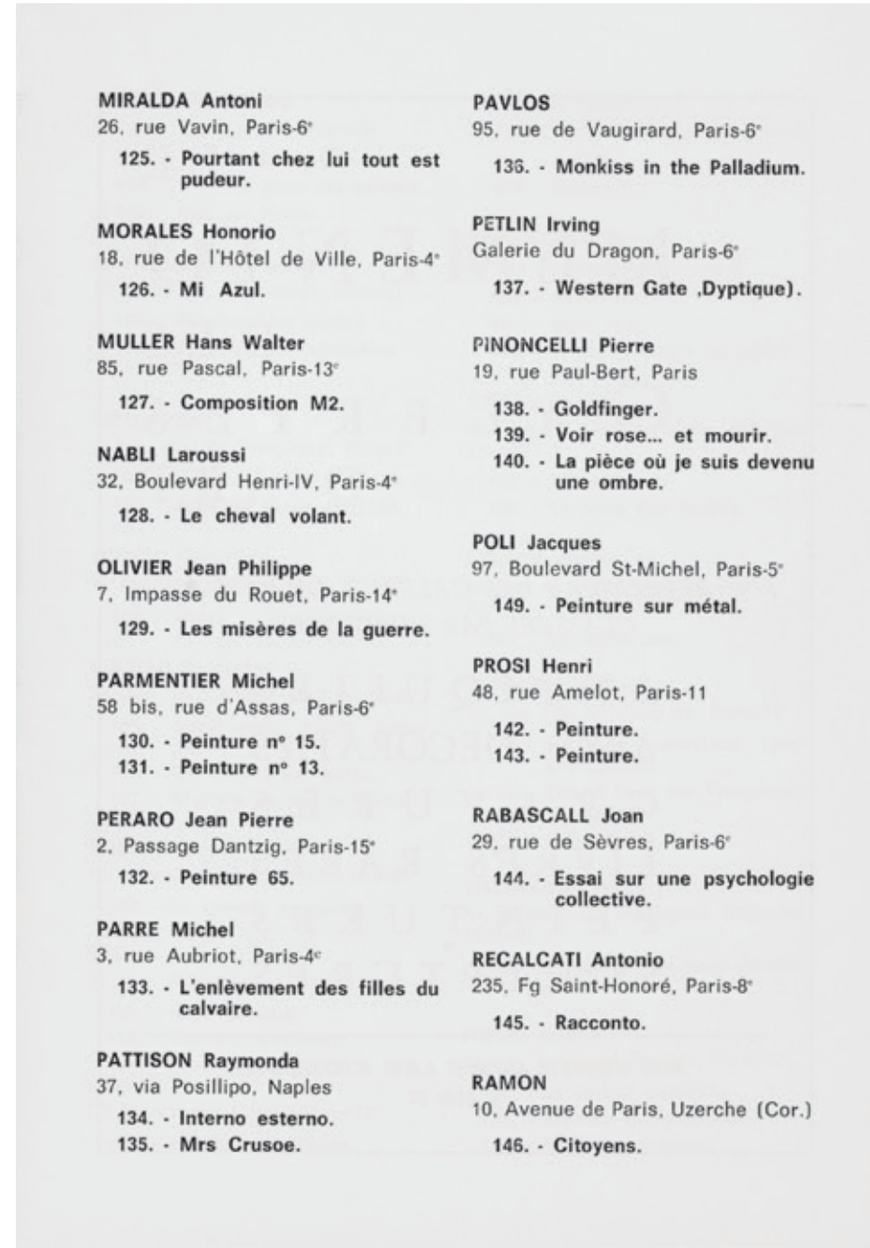


20

18 **Invitation and insert for "Exposition inaugurale [50 artistes/50 oeuvres]," Galerie Lutèce, Paris (France), November 9 and 23, 1965, 10.7 × 13.9 cm (folded) and 10.4 × 13.7 cm.**
[Sabine Michelin and Jack P. Meyer have the pleasure of announcing the opening of their gallery.
The LUTÈCE GALLERY is dedicated to exhibiting gouaches, drawings, watercolors, and oil on paper by young and well-known artists. It aims to bring together a wide choice of Works of Art which will be of strong interest to Collectors and affordable to an increasingly wider audience of Art Enthusiasts.]

19 **Invitation to the 7th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 9 – 31, 1966, 10.6 × 14.1 cm.**

20 **Invitation to the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 9 – February 1, 1966, 8.9 × 13.9 cm.**
[The committee and exhibitors invite you to attend the opening of the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture on Sunday, January 9 at 10pm at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Avenue du Président Wilson. The Salon will be open until February 1 from 10am–7pm.]



MIRALDA Antoni
26, rue Vavin, Paris-6e

125. - Pourtant chez lui tout est pudeur.

MORALES Honorio
18, rue de l'Hôtel de Ville, Paris-4e

126. - Mi Azul.

MULLER Hans Walter
85, rue Pascal, Paris-13e

127. - Composition M2.

NABLI Laroussi
32, Boulevard Henri-IV, Paris-4e

128. - Le cheval volant.

OLIVIER Jean Philippe
7, Impasse du Rouet, Paris-14e

129. - Les misères de la guerre.

PARMENTIER Michel
58 bis, rue d'Assas, Paris-6e

130. - Peinture n° 15.
131. - Peinture n° 13.

PERARO Jean Pierre
2, Passage Dantzig, Paris-15e

132. - Peinture 65.

PARRE Michel
3, rue Aubriot, Paris-4e

133. - L'enlèvement des filles du calvaire.

PATTISON Raymonda
37, via Posillipo, Naples

134. - Interno esterno.
135. - Mrs Crusoe.

PAVLOS
95, rue de Vaugirard, Paris-6e

136. - Monkiss in the Palladium.

PETLIN Irving
Galerie du Dragon, Paris-6e

137. - Western Gate ,Dyptique).

PINONCELLI Pierre
19, rue Paul-Bert, Paris

138. - Goldfinger.
139. - Voir rose... et mourir.
140. - La pièce où je suis devenu une ombre.

POLI Jacques
97, Boulevard St-Michel, Paris-5e

149. - Peinture sur métal.

PROSI Henri
48, rue Amelot, Paris-11

142. - Peinture.
143. - Peinture.

RABASCALL Joan
29, rue de Sèvres, Paris-6e

144. - Essai sur une psychologie collective.

RECALCATI Antonio
235, Fg Saint-Honoré, Paris-8e

145. - Racconto.

RAMON
10, Avenue de Paris, Uzerche (Cor.)

146. - Citoyens.

21

21 **Catalogue of the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 9 – February 1, 1966. Édition La Jeune Peinture, Imprimerie Michel Brient, 1966, unpaginated, cover and flyleaf, 18.4 × 13 cm.**
At the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Parmentier presented two works with the same dimensions, with identical band widths and, at the top and bottom, partial bands also equal in width. Both were chosen by the Salon selection committee and reproduced in the exhibition catalogue under numbers 130, *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965), and 131, *Peinture N° 13 – 1965* (Painting N° 13 – 1965).

During October and November 1965, Parmentier worked on revising his pictorial components: format, color, band width, reserve areas created through masking tape, stapling, date stamp, signature, etc. However, the articulation between all these elements and the problematics that arose from them were resolved only on a case-by-case basis, partially, from painting to painting, with no particular order and without decisive conclusions. Parmentier referred to this as "gibberish" [*bafouillages*] in his 1991 *Propos délibérés*.

Paris, le 5 Février 1966.

Monsieur Marc NETTER
Maison de la Culture
Le Havre (S.M.)

Monsieur,

J'ai bien reçu votre lettre du 7 Janvier et votre projet de location de peinture aux adhérents de votre maison de la culture me semble très intéréssant : c'est avec plaisir que j'accepterais de mettre en dépot une toile dans votre musée.

En ce qui concerne le choix de cette toile, je pense que vous, ou l'un de vos collaborateurs, pourriez le faire en passant quand vous en aurez le loisir à mon atelier. Veuillez trouver ci-jointes quelques planches contact de photos de toiles disponibles, (à l'exception de la n° 8 indiquée sur la planche.) faites entre Décembre 64 et Mai 65, leurs dimensions varient entre 220x180 et 240 x 180. Vous voudrez bien m'excuser pour la mauvaise qualité de ces photos prises dans des conditions difficiles. J'espère tout de même qu'elles vous seront de quelque utilité.

Dans l'attente d'une lettre de vous , je vous prie de croire, Monsieur, en mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Michel PARMENTIER
58 bis rue d'Assas. Paris 6°
LIT. 89.90

Atelier : 189 rue Ordener. Paris 18°

22

M.D.C LE HAVRE

maison de la culture
direction marc netter
association agréée par le ministère d'état chargé des affaires culturelles

Le 19 Février 1966.

Monsieur Michel PARMENTIER
58 Bis, rue d'Assas

PARIS (6ème)

Monsieur,

Je vous remercie de votre lettre du 5 Février, acceptant le principe d'une participation à notre galerie de prêt d'oeuvres d'art, ainsi que des photos qui y étaient annexées.

Malheureusement, il ne nous est absolument pas possible de prendre une toile de la dimension que vous nous indiquez (2,20 x 1,80) puisque cette oeuvre doit être prêtée à un amateur. Vous serait-il possible de nous proposer une toile plus petite ?

Je ne pourrai pas malheureusement aller visiter votre atelier prochainement car je pars en voyage pour un mois. Croyez que je le regrette.

Dans l'attente de vous lire, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes meilleurs sentiments.

Marc Netter

MARC NETTER
Directeur
de la Maison de la Culture
du Havre.

nouveau musée des beaux-arts - chaussée j.-f.-kennedy - le havre (s.-m.)
tél. 42-63-35

23

22 **Letter from Michel Parmentier to Marc Netter, February 5, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[Paris, February 5, 1966: Michel Parmentier, 58a, rue d'Assas, Paris 6th, Studio: 189, rue Ordener, Paris 18th [to] Mr. Marc Netter, Maison de la Culture, Le Havre (Seine-Maritime)
Dear Sir,
I received your letter from January 7. Your project of lending paintings to members of your cultural institution seems to me very interesting. It is with pleasure that I agree to make the painting available to your museum.
Concerning the choice of painting, when you have the time to visit my studio, I think that you or one of your collaborators could choose while passing through. Please find attached several contact sheets of available paintings (with the exception of #8 indicated on the sheet), made between December '64 and May '65. Dimensions vary between 220 cm × 180 cm and 240 cm × 180 cm. I apologize for the poor quality of the photos taken in difficult conditions. However, I hope they will be of some use to you.
In anticipation of hearing from you, I remain sincerely yours]

23 **Letter from Marc Netter to Michel Parmentier, February 19, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[February 19, 1966: Maison de la Culture, Le Havre, Director: Marc Netter, Association registered with the Ministry of Culture, [to] Mr. Michel PARMENTIER, 58a, rue d'Assas, PARIS (6th)
Dear Sir,
Many thanks for your letter dated January 5, which agrees in principle to loan works of art to our gallery, together with the photographs with which they are related.
Unfortunately, it is absolutely impossible for us to take a painting with the dimensions you indicate (220 cm × 180 cm) since this work must be loaned outside the museum to an art enthusiast. Would it be possible for you to offer us a smaller canvas?
Unfortunately, I will not be able to visit your studio anytime soon, alas, since I will be traveling for the next month. This, you can well believe me, I much regret.
I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will accept my best wishes
MARC NETTER, Director, Maison de la Culture, Le Havre, Nouveau Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chaussée John F. Kennedy, Le Havre (Seine-Maritime).]

Monsieur MARC NETTER
Maison de la Culture
Le Havre. (S.M.)

Paris, le 23 Février 1966.

Monsieur,

Je reçois votre lettre du 19 Février, mais suis malheureusement dans l'impossibilité de participer actuellement à votre galerie de prêt. En effet la question du format qui est, dans le cadre de votre projet, déterminante, ne peut en ce moment trouver de solution, puisque je ne travaille pas sur des formats inférieurs à ceux dont vous avez eu connaissance, et n'envisage pas non plus de le faire dans les mois à venir.

Croyez bien que je suis tout à fait désolé par cette inadéquation. Je regarde toujours votre projet avec intéret et lui souhaite la réussite qu'il mérite.

Veuillez croire, Monsieur, en mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Michel Parmentier.

58 bis rue d'Assas.
Paris 6°. LIT. 89-90.

24

24 **Letter from Michel Parmentier to Marc Netter, February 23, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[Paris, February 23, 1966: Michel Parmentier, 58a, rue d'Assas, Paris 6th [to] Mr. MARC NETTER, Maison de la Culture, Le Havre (Seine-Maritime)
Dear Sir,
I received your letter dated February 19. Unfortunately, it will be impossible at present for me participate in your gallery of loaned works. Indeed, it will be difficult to resolve the question of format that determines the framework of your project since I do not work with formats smaller than the ones you know, and I do not plan to make smaller formats in the coming months.
Please believe me that I am extremely sorry for this inexpediency. I remain very interested in your project and wish it every success. Please accept my best wishes,
Michel Parmentier, 58a, rue d'Assas, Paris 6th]

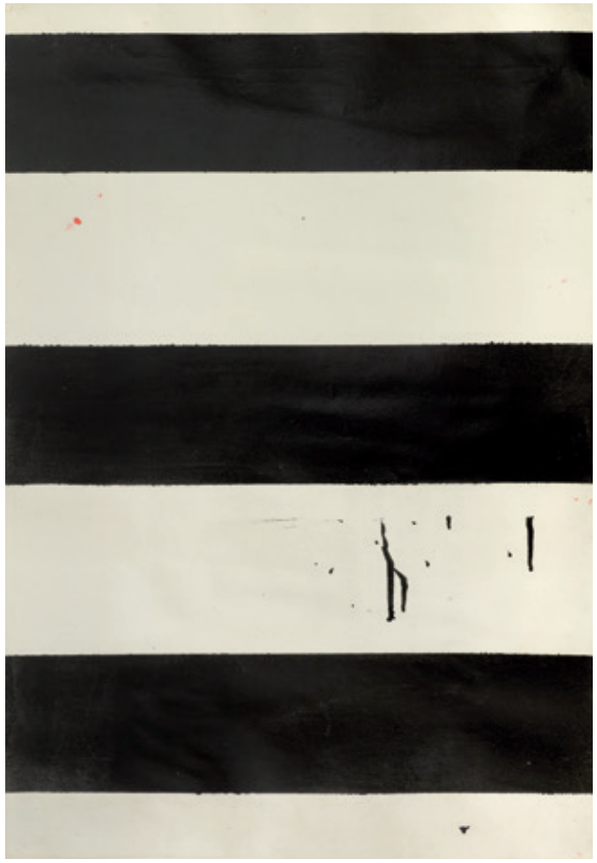
Although working on a complete overhaul of his pictorial practice, Parmentier made no hint of his recent progress and continued to promote his earlier paintings, the "pre-band" paintings (1963 – September 1965).
In a letter to Marc Netter, he refers to *Peinture N° 8 – 1965* (Painting N° 8 – 1965) **(fig. 22, p. 34)**. Netter had attended Parmentier's first solo show at Galerie H. Le Gendre in Paris (April 23 – May 15, 1965), in which this work featured.

Peinture N° 10 – 1965 (Painting N° 10 – 1965)

Peinture N° 13 – 1965 (Painting N° 13 – 1965)

Peinture – oct. 65 (Painting – Oct. 65)

Peinture N° 39 – nov. 65 (Painting N° 39 – Nov. 65)



Peinture N° 42 – nov. 65 (Painting N° 42 – Nov. 65)

1965

1966

[blue]

In 1966, Michel Parmentier engages in a complete and methodical overhaul of his pictorial method. By about April he has achieved a synthesis of the problematics raised earlier. The formal solution found on this occasion arises from the artist's discovery and introduction of folding *(pliage).*

1. In its overall dimensions, the canvas is higher than wider.
2. The canvas[1] is prepared in advance and uniformly covered in white.
3. The repeated and regular folding of the canvas segments and divides the height of the canvas into several horizontal bands.
4. The folded canvas is regularly[2] stapled along the fold lines..
5. "Lefranc blue" paint (sprayed on with a spray gun[3]) is applied to the folded surface placed on the floor, in a single layer and uniform color. "Lefranc blue" will be the color of choice throughout 1966.
6. After removal of the staples from the folds and unfolding, the canvas reveals several horizontal bands that are alternately "painted" and "unpainted"[4] and of equal width (38 cm), with the exception of the partial bands left at the top and/or bottom, which vary in width from one work to another.
7. On the back of the canvas, he uses a date stamp[5] with ink to date and title the works, writes the dimensions of the canvas by hand, and signs it.
8. To hang and stabilize the canvas, which is left free,[6] he sticks a self-adhesive strip[7] on the upper edge of the canvas. The other side of the self-adhesive strip is stuck to a batten of the same width as the canvas and fixed to the wall.

1 The canvas was prepared with white cellulose paint by Lefranc. It could be fixed to a stretcher or onto a wall in order to be pre-stretched.
2 The spaces between staples vary from one canvas to another: closely packed or widely spaced, at regular intervals.
3 The use of the spray gun to spread the paint introduces the idea of the "neutrality" of gesture: the "covering" trace of a "mechanical" gesture is uniformly applied.
4 The concept of "painted" and "unpainted" is developed during the last months of 1965, in the course of numerous exchanges with Daniel Buren (see Christian Besson, "Naissance de Daniel Buren," in Annick Boisnard and Daniel Buren (eds.), *Daniel Buren. Catalogue raisonné chronologique, Tome II 1964/1966* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole and Le Bourget: Éditions 11/28/48, 2000), pp. 6-22).
The "unpainted" is prepared in advance with white and a slight hint of blue — a "neutral" white that reappears at the moment of unfolding. When the fold is opened, the "painted" and the "unpainted" are on the same plane: 4 painted bands + 3 unpainted bands, with, at the top and/or bottom, a "partial painted" or "unpainted."
5 The works are stamped with the date the canvas was covered with paint.
6 The notion of the "unstretched canvas [*toile libre*]" appears in extenso in the first certificate/contract for the work dated *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966) **(p. 50)**. The certificate was drawn up after the event, written and signed, and accompanied the sale of the work to Liliane and Michel Durand-Dessert on February 15, 1978.
7 The self-adhesive strip is a textile material consisting of two strips each covered with a different texture which, when placed together, offer a quick but impermanent connection/fixation (Velcro). According to Michel Durand-Dessert (Parmentier's gallerist from 1978 to 1991), the invention of this hanging method using a self-adhesive strip came later (1978).

1967

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

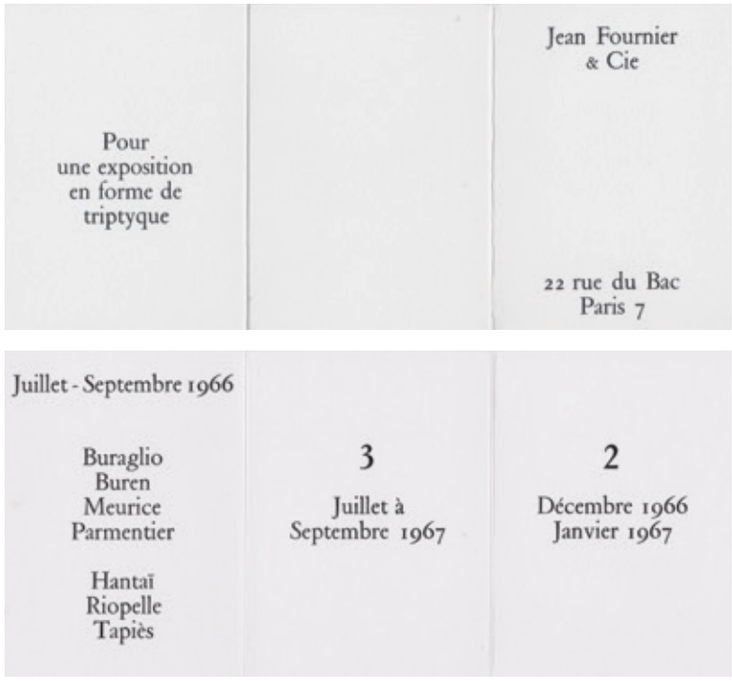
1996

1997

1998

1999

25



Pour
une exposition
en forme de
triptyque

Jean Fournier
& Cie

22 rue du Bac
Paris 7

Juillet - Septembre 1966

Buraglio
Buren
Meurice
Parmentier

Hantaï
Riopelle
Tapiès

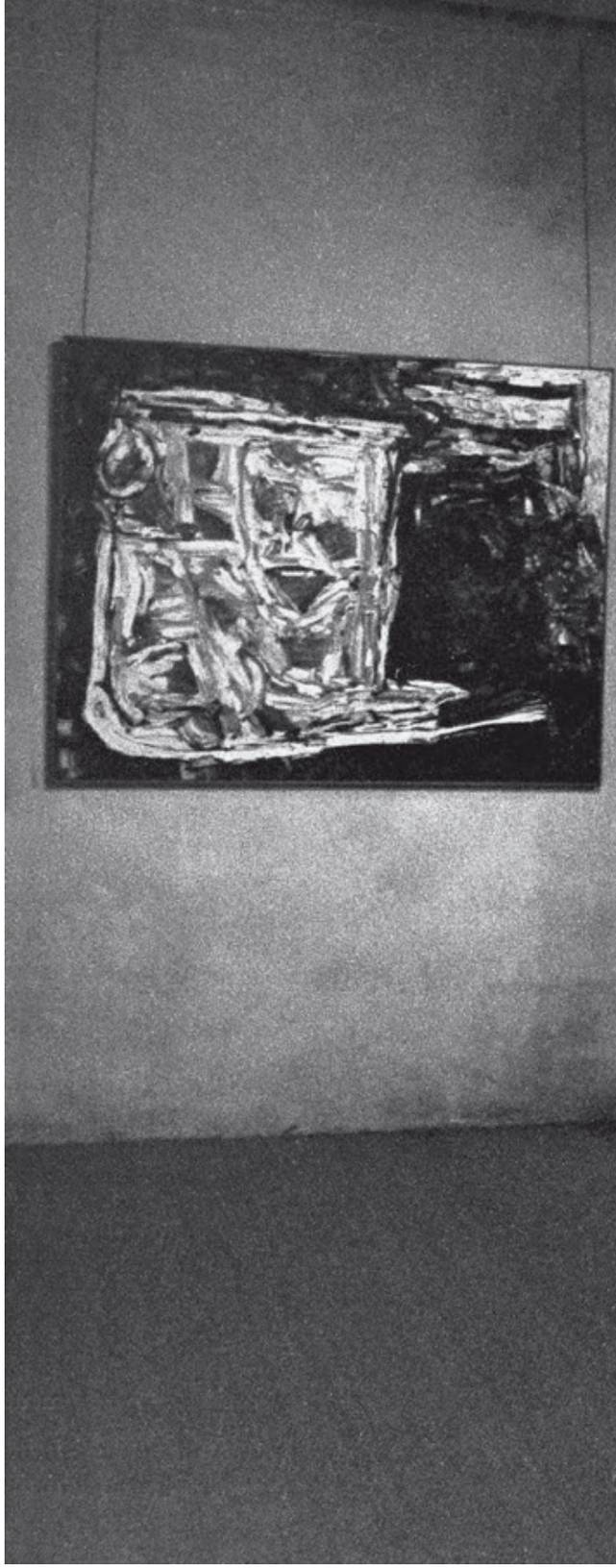
3

Juillet à
Septembre 1967

2

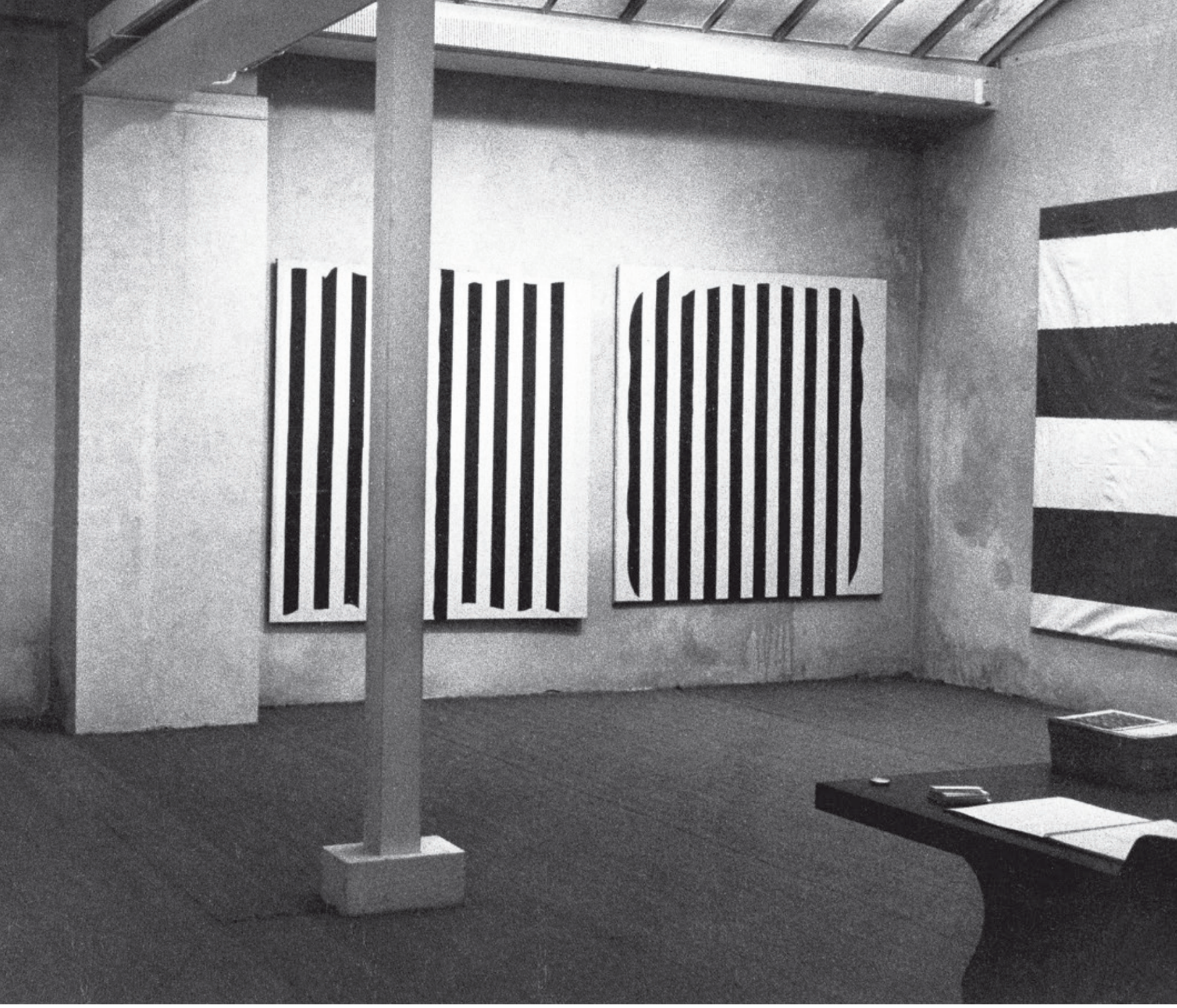
Décembre 1966
Janvier 1967

26



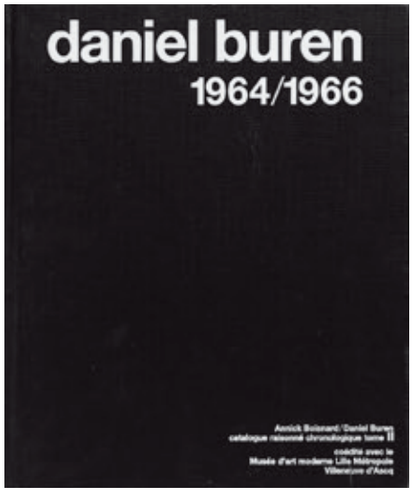
27

25 Unstretched blue canvas, Daniel Buren's studio, color photograph, reproduced from transparency, 6 × 6 cm.
26 Invitation to the exhibition "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque" with Buraglio, Buren, Hantaï, Meurice, Riopelle, Tàpies, Jean Fournier & Cie, Paris (France), July – September 1966, December 1966 – January 1967, July – September 1967, recto and verso, 10 × 7.5 cm (folded).



27 **Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren, *Peinture aux formes indéfinies* (Painting with indefinite forms) and *Peinture N° 9* (Painting N° 9); Michel Parmentier, *Décembre 1965* (December 1965). View of the exhibition "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," Galerie Jean Fournier & Cie, Paris (France), July – September 1966, detail.**

→ Commentaries on **p. 44**



28 **Photos-souvenirs: in Annick Boisnard and Daniel Buren (eds), *Daniel Buren. Catalogue raisonné chronologique, Tome II-1964/1966* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole and Le Bourget: Éditions 11/28/48, 2000), cover and pp. 134 – 135.**
Peinture aux formes indéfinies (Painting with indefinite forms) and *Peinture N° 9* (Painting N° 9) (pp. 134-135) and a black-and-white photograph by Daniel Buren, a "photo-souvenir" of the two canvases shown at Galerie Jean Fournier. Respective captions under the two works: "T II-28 Painting with indefinite forms (January-May) 1966, made in Paris, Paint on canvas woven with cotton with alternating vertical white and black stripes, each 8.7 cm wide, 191 × 191 cm, white acrylic paint defining two reserves with undulated contours" and "T II-282, *Painting N° 9* (January-May) 1966, made in Paris, paint on canvas woven with cotton with alternating vertical white and black stripes, each 8.7 cm wide, 191 × 191 cm, white acrylic paint defining a reserve with undulated contours."

←
25 Canvas, not located. Probably one of the first folded canvases painted using aerosol and then unfolded. The blue appears to have been spread in a single layer, all in one go. The folds are distinctly marked and alongside them are regular, repetitive traces left by the staples (removed).

In the photograph, the left and right edges of the canvas are irregular (Parmentier recropped the lateral edges of his canvases in order to assert their verticality before exhibiting them).

Its format, identical to the original format of *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965) **(fig. 6, p. 21)**, is square. If *Peinture N° 15 – 1965* (Painting N° 15 – 1965) has bands 45 cm wide, the alternating blue and white bands in this canvas are 38 cm wide. By dividing the height of the canvas by the number of horizontal bands, Parmentier arrived at a band width of 38 cm, which is the dimension that, with only the odd exception, he maintained up to his last work.

We know that the canvas *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) **(p. 24)** was initially constituted by horizontal bands painted pink and white, that it was completely painted over in white, then folded and covered with a layer of blue by the Lefranc label. This "Lefranc blue" became Parmentier's favored color in 1966. It would be another four months before he reiterated this gesture. The year began with *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966) and ended with *12 décembre 1966* (December 12, 1966). At the most, some ten canvases were made that year.

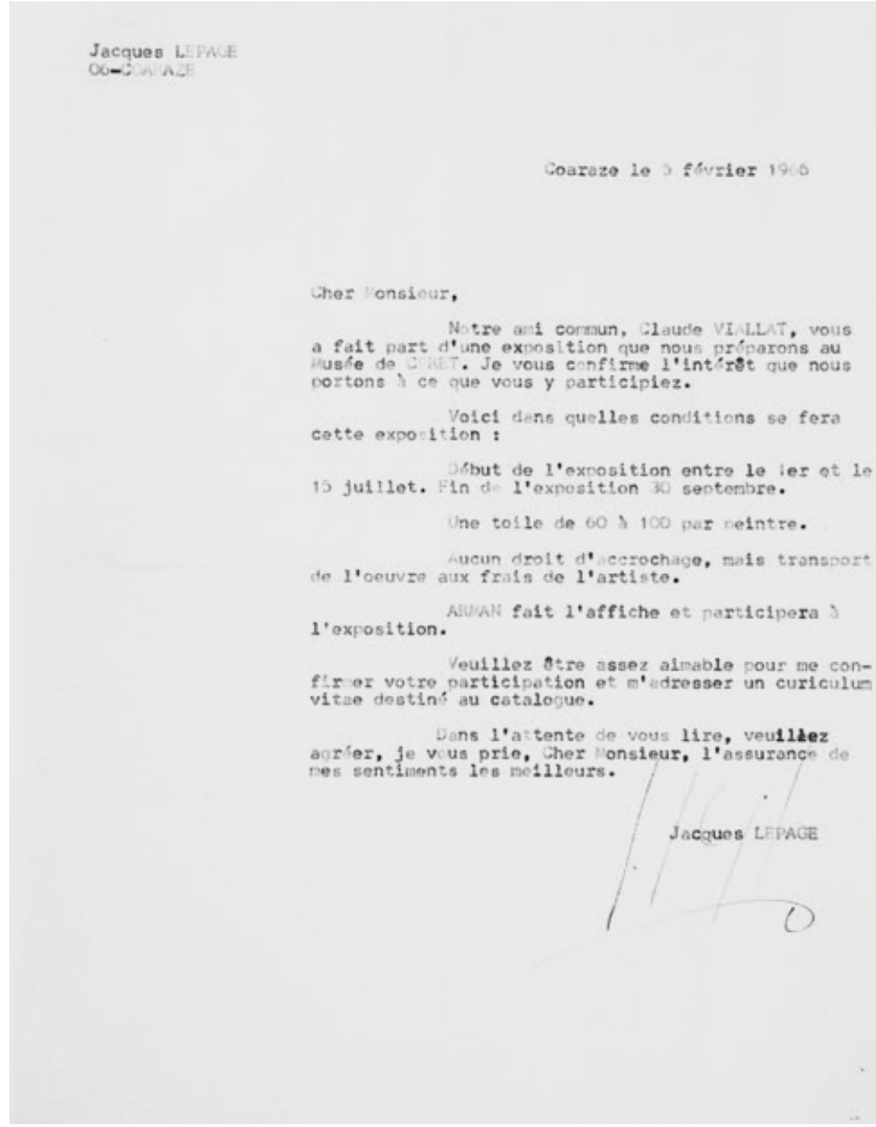
26 First part of "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," organized by Jean Fournier. The planned second and third parts did not take place. This was one of the rare exhibitions in which Daniel Buren and Parmentier exhibited together. The proximity of the works in the hanging recalls their shared positions regarding the conception of the artwork and its content, as well as the active critical position that they intended to maintain with regard to painting.

27 Partial view of the exhibition with, on the left, a work by Jean-Paul Riopelle, in the center, two canvases by Daniel Buren. On the right, a partial view of *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), fixed on a chassis with, at the top, an incomplete band painted blue. Parmentier reportedly exhibited two canvases, side by side, with the same dimensions. In "Naissance de Daniel Buren," Christian Besson states that the two canvases were blue and white: "The oldest canvas of this type, which was reproduced several times, is dated April 5, 1966."[1] He is, however, mistaken, having confused *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) with one or two canvases dating from April 1966.

Pierrette Bloch, a painter and close friend of Parmentier (Bloch followed his work closely), remembers a canvas with pink and white bands on a stretcher (*Peinture N° 15 – 1965* [Painting N° 15 – 1965]), hung beside *Décembre 1965* (December 1965).

We may note that Parmentier had not completely given up showing his work on a stretcher: this problematic was not then on the agenda.

1 See Christian Besson, "Naissance de Daniel Buren," in Annick Boisnard and Daniel Buren (eds.), *Daniel Buren. Catalogue raisonné chronologique, Tome II 1964/1966* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole and Le Bourget: Éditions 11/28/48, 2000), pp. 6-22.



Jacques LEPAGE
06-COARAZE

Coaraze le 5 février 1966

Cher Monsieur,

Notre ami commun, Claude VIALLAT, vous a fait part d'une exposition que nous préparons au Musée de CERET. Je vous confirme l'intérêt que nous portons à ce que vous y participiez.

Voici dans quelles conditions se fera cette exposition :

Début de l'exposition entre le 1er et le 15 juillet. Fin de l'exposition 30 septembre.

Une toile de 60 à 100 par peintre.

Aucun droit d'accrochage, mais transport de l'oeuvre aux frais de l'artiste.

ARMAN fait l'affiche et participera à l'exposition.

Veuillez être assez aimable pour me confirmer votre participation et m'adresser un curiculum vitae destiné au catalogue.

Dans l'attente de vous lire, veuillez agréer, je vous prie, Cher Monsieur, l'assurance de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Jacques LEPAGE

29

29 **Letter from Jacques Lepage to Michel Parmentier, February 5, 1966, organization of the exhibition "Impact" at the Musée de Céret (France), signed mimeographed letter, with "Mongolfier S.M." watermark, 27 × 21 cm.**
[February 5, 1966: Jacques LEPAGE, 06-COARAZE, Coaraze
Dear Sir,

A friend in common, Claude Viallat, has included you in an exhibition that we are organizing at the Museum of CÉRET. I would like to confirm our interest in your participation.

Plans for the exhibition include the following:
The exhibition will open between July 1-15. It closes September 30.

One 60 cm × 100 cm canvas from each painter.

No payment for exhibiting, but artists must pay transportation costs.

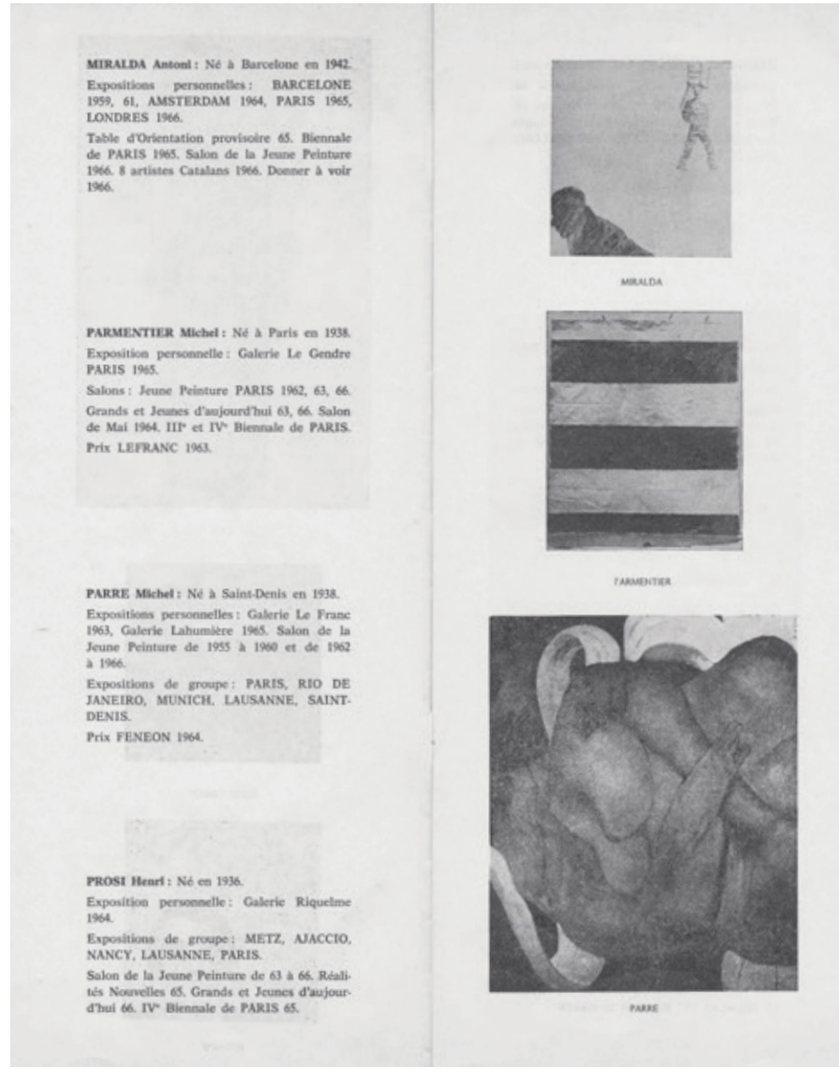
ARMAN will make the poster and participate in the exhibition.

I would be most grateful if you could please confirm your participation and send me a résumé for the catalogue.

In anticipation of hearing from you, I remain sincerely yours
Jacques LEPAGE]

Organized at the initiative of Jacques Lepage and Claude Viallat, the exhibition "Impact" brought together young artists adopting a radical pictorial practice, notably in reaction to the art of the School of Paris.

Claude Viallat knew Parmentier from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1961-1963), where they both frequented the studio of Roger Chastel. Many of the other exhibitors at "Impact" also came from the school, including Daniel Buren, Vincent Bioulès, Pierre Buraglio, Dufo, Joël Kermarrec, François Rouan, and Claude Viallat.



MIRALDA Antoni : Né à Barcelone en 1942.

Expositions personnelles : BARCELONE 1959, 61, AMSTERDAM 1964, PARIS 1965, LONDRES 1966.

Table d'Orientation provisoire 65. Biennale de PARIS 1965. Salon de la Jeune Peinture 1966. 8 artistes Catalans 1966. Donner à voir 1966.

PARMENTIER Michel : Né à Paris en 1938.

Exposition personnelle : Galerie Le Gendre PARIS 1965.

Salons : Jeune Peinture PARIS 1962, 63, 66.

Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui 63, 66. Salon de Mai 1964. IIIe et IVe Biennale de PARIS.

Prix LEFRANC 1963.

PARRE Michel : Né à Saint-Denis en 1938.

Expositions personnelles : Galerie Le Franc 1963, Galerie Lahumière 1965. Salon de la Jeune Peinture de 1955 à 1960 et de 1962 à 1966.

Expositions de groupe : PARIS, RIO DE JANEIRO, MUNICH, LAUSANNE, SAINT-DENIS.

Prix FENEON 1964.

PROSI Henri : Né en 1936.

Exposition personnelle : Galerie Riquelme 1964.

Expositions de groupe : METZ, AJACCIO, NANCY, LAUSANNE, PARIS.

Salon de la Jeune Peinture de 63 à 66. Réalités Nouvelles 65. Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui 66. IVe Biennale de PARIS 65.

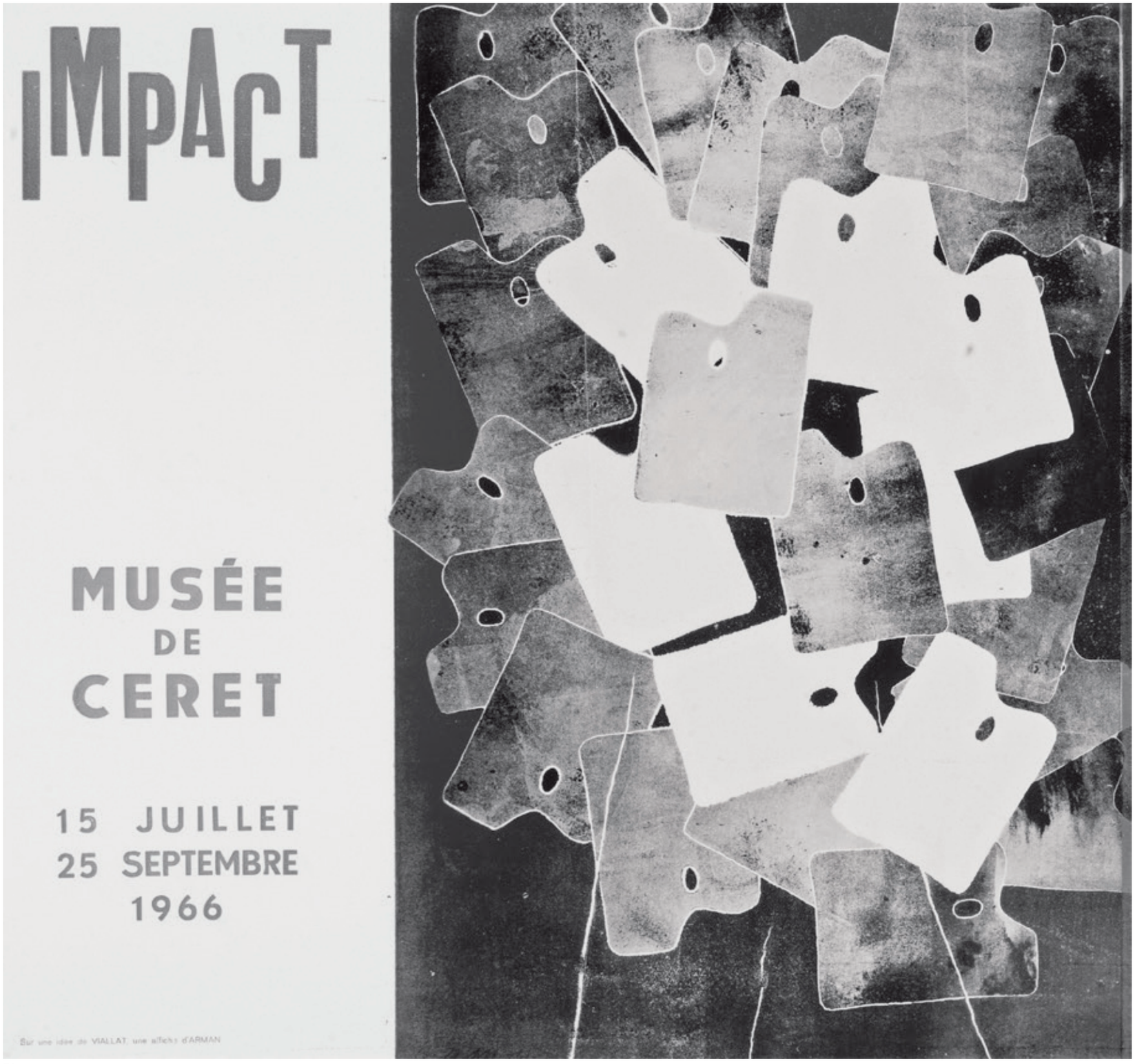
MIRALDA

PARMENTIER

PARRE

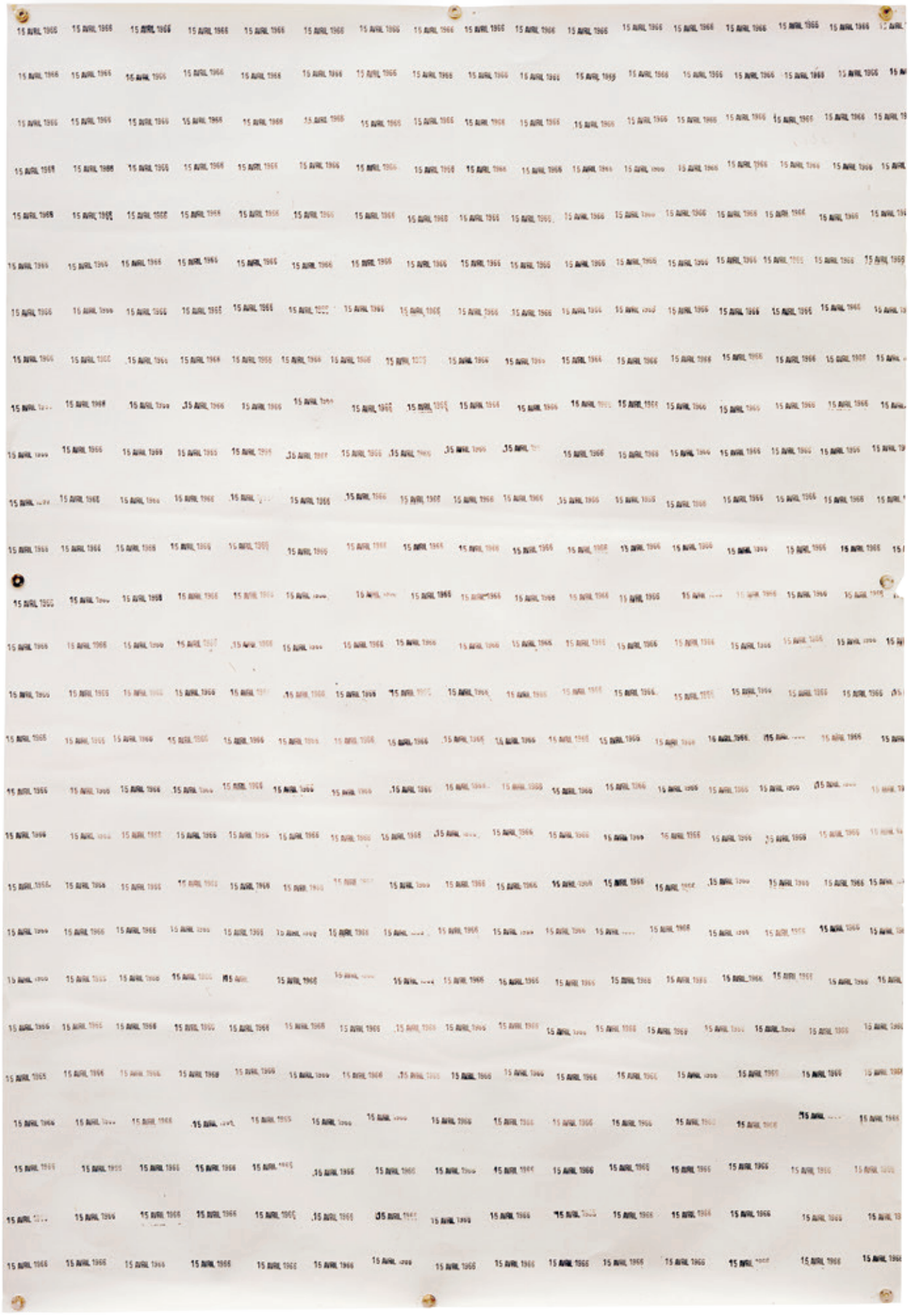
30

30 **Catalogue of the exhibition "Impact," Musée de Céret, (France) July 15 – September 25, 1966, Musée de Céret/PO [Pyrénées-Orientales], 1966, unpaginated, cover and double page, 27.5 × 11 cm.**
Décembre 1965 (December 1965) is the same work photographed in black and white by Bernard Boyer in Daniel Buren's studio in 1966 **(see fig. 4, p. 20)**. Claude Viallat, who owned *3 novembre 1966* (November 3, 1966), which was given to him by Parmentier, claims that this work was exhibited in "Impact." He is mistaken: the exhibition was held at a date before the creation of the work in question. The exhibition was held in Céret, in the south of France, from July 15 to September 25, 1966. Just as *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), reproduced in the exhibition catalogue, was not the work that was exhibited, so it could not be simultaneously present in two different places. From July to September 1966 it was in Paris, hanging at Galerie Fournier in the show "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque" **(fig. 27, pp. 42-43)**.



31

31 **Poster for Impact, "After an idea by Viallat, a poster by Arman." Exhibition at the Musée de Céret, Céret (France), July 15 – September 25, 1966, 55.5 × 59.8 cm.**



15 avril 1966 (April 15, 1966)

Date stamp papers
or dated/recorded painting

Independently of the folded canvases, several works – four in total – were made with date stamps on paper of varying sizes.

25 septembre 1965 (September 25, 1965): the date stamp marks are staggered, repeated at regular intervals. They are combined with a dark gray rectangular surface partially covered with brushstrokes of white paint, scrawlings, and hatching in lead, partially erased.

15 octobre 1965 (October 15, 1965): the date stamp marks are repeated from left to right and from top to bottom. They form irregular vertical bands that are blurred by a rectangular surface drawn and scrawled in partially erased graphite.

15 avril 1966 (April 15, 1966) (left): the date stamp marks form regularly spaced horizontal lines, repeated from one edge to the other, and cover all the paper.

15 mai 1967 (May 15, 1967): the date stamp marks are repeated at regular intervals – the space between them being the width of a date stamp – from left to right and top to bottom, over the entire surface to be covered.

5 avril 1966 (April 5, 1966)

1965

1966

1967 [gray]

As of early 1967, painting is made to serve a common critical cause; the manifesto painting of a group of four founded by the duo Daniel Buren/Michel Parmentier, who were joined by Niele Toroni and, later, Olivier Mosset.

The last three months of 1966 are spent preparing and publicizing a group show that, by devising a series of actions, will present a critical perspective on Parisian art salons. On the occasion of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, a protocol or scenario pre-established by the group envisages the making of works in public.

Parmentier takes with him his square canvases, prepared in advance, and covered in white cellulose paint by Lefranc.[1] In public, he methodically folds and staples his canvases to the floor or wall. Instead of a spray gun, he uses spray cans of "dove gray" paint by Krylon. Once the canvases are painted, they are unfolded and stapled to the wall.[2] Parmentier executes at least four canvases during the opening. Above the space set aside for the works, a banner is hung, bearing the names of the four artists: "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni." Under this, four canvases are lined up from left to right, by Parmentier, Buren, Toroni, and Mosset. Before the end of the opening, the canvases are taken down from their position and a second banner is positioned below the first, bearing the words "n'exposent pas" (are not exhibiting) (Manifestation 1).

At 20h15, an open mimeographed letter is then sent to journalists signed by the four artists (Manifestation 2).

Between March and May, Parmentier produces four other gray canvases whose dimensions are close to those of the blue canvases from 1966: *15 mars 1967* (March 15, 1967), *20 mars 1967* (March 20, 1967), *18 avril 1967* (April 18, 1967), and *21 mai 1967* (May 21, 1967).

In June, for "Manifestation 3," on the stage in the auditorium of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Parmentier presents *21 mai 1967* (May 21, 1967) alongside the three other works, forming a checker pattern and fastened together. After this presentation, a pamphlet is handed out with the words: "On a canvas measuring 2.50 m × 2.50 m alternating gray (3) and white (4) horizontal bands measuring 0.38 m × 2.50 m. The seventh (and last) band is partial, measuring 0.22 m × 2.50 m /(PARMENTIER)." In the notes: "(3) Krylon dark dove gray. (4) Lefranc cellulose White" (fig. 42, p. 63).

For the 5th Biennale de Paris at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, from September 30 to November 5, 1967 ("Manifestation 4"), Parmentier exhibits a canvas fixed to a stretcher, a canvas (200 × 200 cm) made for "Manifestation 1," which he re-exhibits for the occasion. The four canvases are exhibited in a checker pattern, each one fixed to the wall.

Before the end of 1967, a final four canvases are executed: *20 septembre 1967* (September 20, 1967), *8 novembre 1967* (November 8, 1967), *15 novembre 1967* (November 15, 1967), and *16 novembre 1967* (November 16, 1967).

1 The number of visible horizontal bands 38 cm wide is proportional to the height of the canvas. The division of the canvases into bands, which all measure 200 × 200 cm, produces five horizontal bands, three of which are painted and two not, with an unpainted partial band either at the top and/or at the bottom. *3 janvier 1967* (a) (January 3, 1967 (a)) and *3 janvier 1967* (b) (January 3, 1967(b)) **(pp. 72-73)**.

Four folds (with two inward and two raised) are vital to obtaining five bands of 38 cm. Several methods are possible: for *3 janvier 1967 (a)* (January 3, 1967 (a)), two raised folds on either side of the width of the central gray band are slipped toward the edges, one from the top and the other from the bottom, in order to delimit this. In contrast, for *3 janvier 1967 (b)* (January 3, 1967 (b)) the two raised folds, located below the first gray band and above the third gray band, are slipped down towards the interior, one from the top downward, the other from the bottom upwards, in order to delimit the horizontal gray band at the center. The white partial bands are refolded upwards or downwards below the gray bands.

2 The space provided for hanging the works consisted of three walls plus an access opened on the fourth side. It was from the latter position that most of the photographs of "Manifestation 1" and "Manifestation 2" were taken.

1968 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999

1965

1966

1967 [gray]
Manifestations 1-4

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

Manifestation 1

18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France
January 3-25, 1967
Group Exhibition

In December 1966, after numerous discussions initiated in July 1965, four artists — Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni — seeking to interrogate painting at its limits, decided together to organize a series of "Manifestations." The first will take place during the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture.

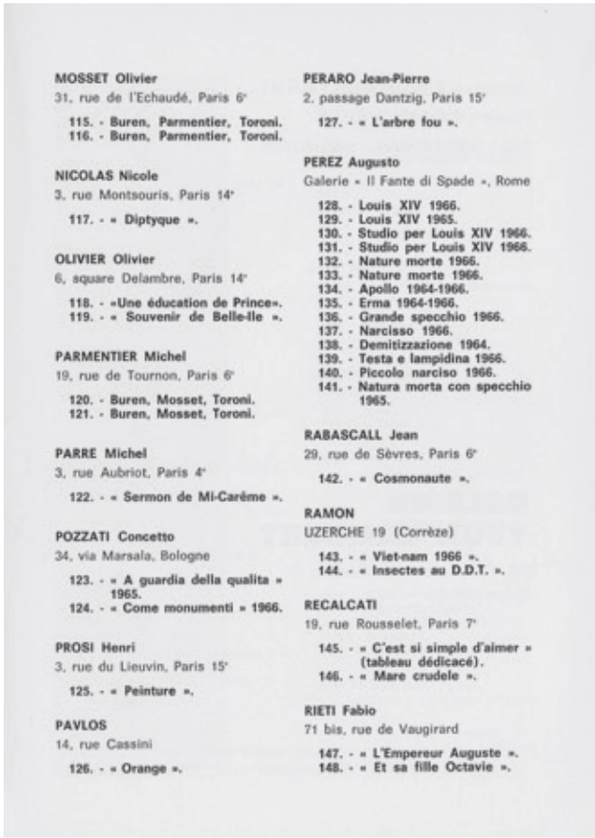
A handwritten and/or typewritten invitation signed by the four artists was sent by post as of December 23, 1966, to some friends, museums, galleries, journalists, magazines, and various acquaintances, accompanied by a printed tract, dated January 1, 1967, which will also be distributed at the opening on January 3, 1967.

During the opening, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni will gather in the same space, painting their works in the middle of the public and hanging them up as they go along. The number of works made by each artist differs according to the rhythm in which they work.

At the same time, a text recorded in endless loop on a soundtrack — in French, Spanish, and English in succession — will be broadcast through loudspeakers as loudly as possible: BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI
ADVISE YOU TO BECOME INTELLIGENT.

Source: http://catalogue.danielburen.com - Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972, Daniel Buren Archives and Association Michel Parmentier (AMP) - Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels.

32



MOSSET Olivier
31, rue de l'Echaudé, Paris 6e
115. - Buren, Parmentier, Toroni.
116. - Buren, Parmentier, Toroni.

NICOLAS Nicole
3, rue Montsouris, Paris 14e
117. - « Diptyque ».

OLIVIER Olivier
6, square Delambre, Paris 14e
118. - «Une éducation de Prince».
119. - « Souvenir de Belle-Ile ».

PARMENTIER Michel
19, rue de Tournon, Paris 6e
120. - Buren, Mosset, Toroni.
121. - Buren, Mosset, Toroni.

PARRE Michel
3, rue Aubriot, Paris 4e
122. - « Sermon de Mi-Carême ».

POZZATI Concetto
34, via Marsala, Bologne
123. - « A guardia della qualita » 1965.
124. - « Come monumenti » 1966.

PROSI Henri
3, rue du Lieuvin, Paris 15e
125. - « Peinture ».

PAVLOS
14, rue Cassini
126. - « Orange ».

PERARO Jean-Pierre
2, passage Dantzig, Paris 15e
127. - « L'arbre fou ».

PEREZ Augusto
Galerie « Il Fante di Spade », Rome
128. - Louis XIV 1966.
129. - Louis XIV 1965.
130. - Studio per Louis XIV 1966.
131. - Studio per Louis XIV 1966.
132. - Nature morte 1966.
133. - Nature morte 1966.
134. - Apollo 1964-1966.
135. - Erma 1964-1966.
136. - Grande specchio 1966.
137. - Narcisso 1966.
138. - Demitizzazione 1964.
139. - Testa e lampidina 1966.
140. - Piccolo narciso 1966.
141. - Natura morta con specchio 1965.

RABASCALL Jean
29, rue de Sèvres, Paris 6e
142. - « Cosmonaute ».

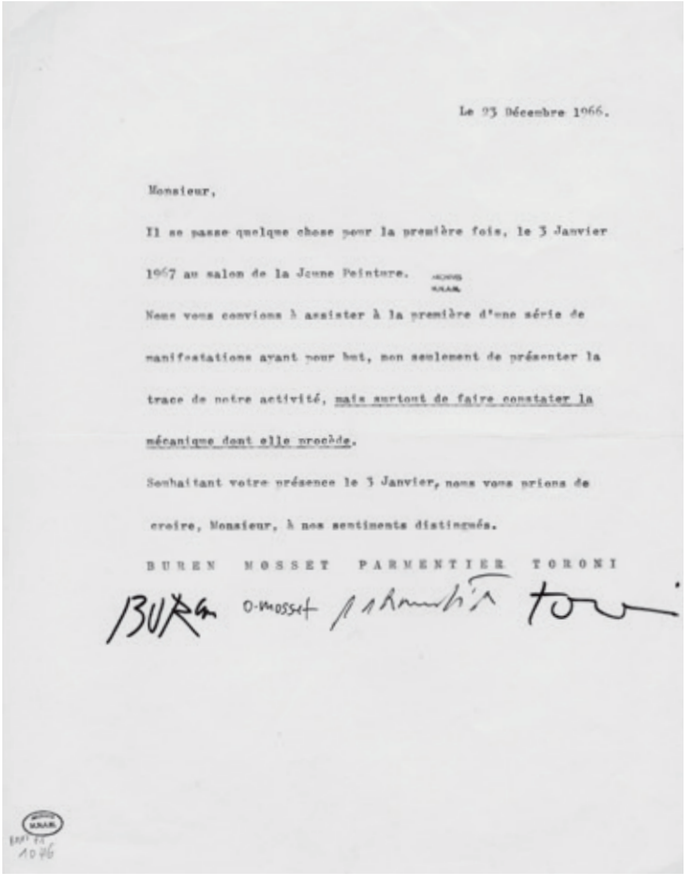
RAMON
UZERCHE 19 (Corrèze)
143. - « Viet-nam 1966 ».
144. - « Insectes au D.D.T. ».

RECALCATI
19, rue Rousselet, Paris 7e
145. - « C'est si simple d'aimer » (tableau dédicacé).
146. - « Mare crudele ».

RIETI Fabio
71 bis, rue de Vaugirard
147. - « L'Empereur Auguste ».
148. - « Et sa fille Octavie ».

34

32 **Catalogue of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 3-25, 1967. No place or date. Cover and double page, unpaginated, 18.5 × 13 cm.**
"Manifestation 1" had been carefully prepared. In the catalogue of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, rather than the title of their work, each artist mentioned the names of the three others.



Le 23 Décembre 1966.

Monsieur,

Il se passe quelque chose pour la première fois, le 3 Janvier 1967 au salon de la Jeune Peinture.

Nous vous convions à assister à la première d'une série de manifestations ayant pour but, non seulement de présenter la trace de notre activité, mais surtout de faire constater la mécanique dont elle procède.

Souhaitant votre présence le 3 Janvier, nous vous prions de croire, Monsieur, à nos sentiments distingués.

BUREN MOSSET PARMENTIER TORONI

33

Puisque peindre c'est un jeu.
Puisque peindre c'est accorder ou désaccorder des couleurs.
Puisque peindre c'est appliquer (consciemment ou non) des règles de composition.
Puisque peindre c'est valoriser le geste.
Puisque peindre c'est représenter l'extérieur (ou l'interpréter, ou se l'approprier, ou le contester, ou le présenter).
Puisque peindre c'est proposer un tremplin pour l'imagination.
Puisque peindre c'est illustrer l'intériorité.
Puisque peindre c'est une justification.
Puisque peindre sert à quelque chose.
Puisque peindre c'est peindre en fonction de l'esthétisme, des fleurs, des femmes, de l'érotisme, de l'environnement quotidien, de l'art, de dada, de la psychanalyse, de la guerre au Viet-Nam.

NOUS NE SOMMES PAS PEINTRES.

Constatez-le, le 3 janvier 1967, 11, avenue du Président-Wilson.

Paris, le 1er janvier 1967.
Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni.

35

33 **Open letter signed by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, "Something is happening for the first time on January 3, 1967 at the salon of Young Painters." December 23, 1966. Typed pamphlet, 500 copies, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[Dear Sir,
Something is happening for the first time on January 3, 1967 at the salon de la Jeune Peinture. We invite you to attend a series of "manifestations" whose aim is not only to present a trace of our activity but above all to record the mechanism from which this activity proceeds.
In the hope that you will attend on January 3, yours sincerely.
BUREN MOSSET PARMENTIER TORONI]

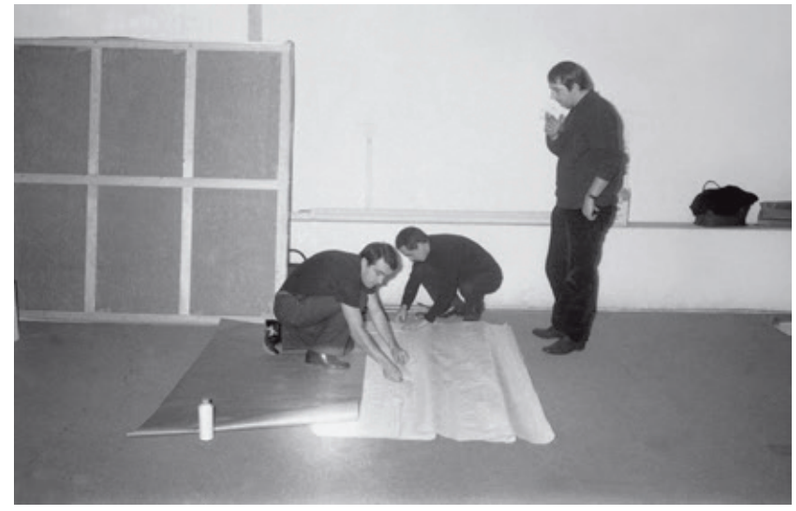
Letter-cum-tract announcing the forthcoming "Manifestation 1."

34 **Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni." View of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 3, 1967 (detail).**
Parmentier in action, spraying a canvas during the opening.

35 **Printed pamphlet: "We are not painters." January 1, 1967, 21 × 13.5 cm.**
[Since painting is a game.
Since painting is to match or mismatch colors.
Since painting is the application (whether consciously or not) of rules of composition.
Since painting is the valorization of gesture.
Since painting is to represent the exterior (or interpret it, or appropriate it, or contest it, or present it).
Since painting is to propose a springboard for the imagination.
Since painting is to illustrate interiority.
Since painting is a justification.
Since painting serves something.
Since painting is to paint as a function of aestheticism, flowers, women, eroticism, the everyday environment, art, dada, psychoanalysis, and the war in Vietnam.
WE ARE NOT PAINTERS.
Hereby declared, January 3, 1967, 11, avenue du Président Wilson, Paris, January 1, 1967, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni.[1]

1 Sections of the tract were previously translated in Michel Claura, "Paris Commentary" *Studio International* 177 (no. 907) (January 1969): 47; Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 30; and Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 850. Translator's note].

36

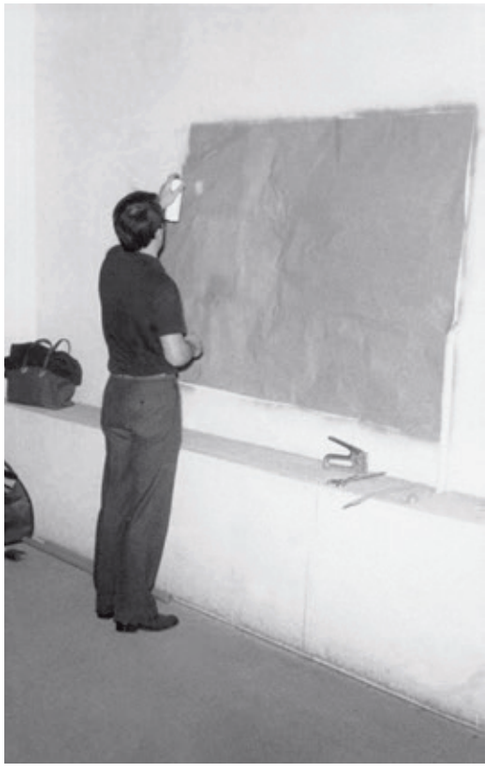


36 **Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni." View of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 3, 1967 (details).**
A banner is hung up beforehand with the names "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni." At the same time, a woman's voice (that of Lucie Scheler) saying the words "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni advise you to become intelligent" in English, Spanish, and French, is played on a loop.

During the opening, from 11 am to 8 pm, Parmentier executes at least four canvases in public, alternately on the wall and on the floor.

First canvas by Parmentier hung below the banner.


The Brand With Demand




BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENT


BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI.

37


BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI

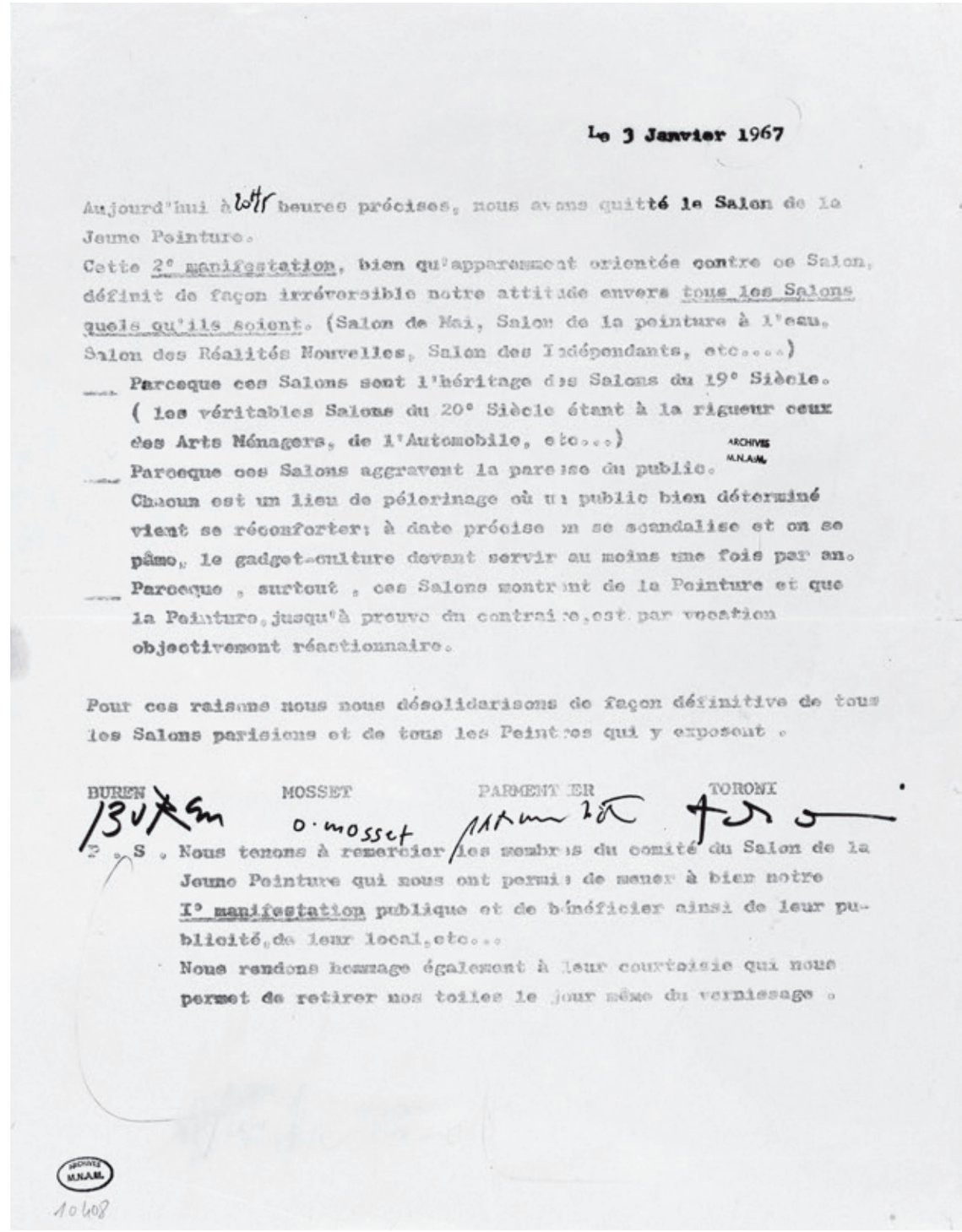

BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI
N'EXPOSENT PAS

Manifestation 2

18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Salle Wilson, Paris, France.
January 3, 1967
Group Exhibition

At 20 H 15, an open mimeographed letter is then sent to journalists signed by the four artists - taking a stand against Parisian salons.

Source: http://catalogue.danielburen.com - Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972, Daniel Buren Archives and Association Michel Parmentier (AMP) - Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels.



Le 3 Janvier 1967

Aujourd'hui à 20h15 heures précises, nous avons quitté le Salon de la Jeune Peinture.

Cette 2° manifestation, bien qu'apparemment orientée contre ce Salon, définit de façon irréversible notre attitude envers tous les Salons quels qu'ils soient. (Salon de Mai, Salon de la peinture à l'eau, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Salon des Indépendants, etc....)

— Parceque ces Salons sont l'héritage des Salons du 19° Siècle. (les véritables Salons du 20° Siècle étant à la rigueur ceux des Arts Ménagers, de l'Automobile, etc...)

— Parceque ces Salons aggravent la paresse du public. Chacun est un lieu de pélerinage où un public bien déterminé vient se réconforter: à date précise on se scandalise et on se pâme, le gadget-culture devant servir au moins une fois par an.

— Parceque , surtout , ces Salons montrent de la Peinture et que la Peinture, jusqu'à preuve du contraire, est par vocation objectivement réactionnaire.

Pour ces raisons nous nous désolidarisons de façon définitive de tous les Salons parisiens et de tous les Peintres qui y exposent .

BUREN MOSSET PARMENTIER TORONI

P . S . Nous tenons à remercier les membres du comité du Salon de la Jeune Peinture qui nous ont permis de mener à bien notre I° manifestation publique et de bénéficier ainsi de leur publicité, de leur local, etc...

Nous rendons hommage également à leur courtoisie qui nous permet de retirer nos toiles le jour même du vernissage .

38

37 **Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni." View of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), January 3, 1967 (details).**
Hanging of a second banner (extending the first), taking the places of the canvases after they were taken down.

Bottom left: on the right, stapled on the wall, a folded canvas by Parmentier before being sprayed with "Krylon dove gray" lacquer paint.

Bottom right: below the banner "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni are not exhibiting," on the wall to the right: overflows and traces of paint form a frame, a halo: consecutive traces of the covering of a folded canvas using spray paint.

38 **Open letter signed by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni: "Today at 8.15 pm precisely we left the Salon de la Jeune Peinture." "Manifestation 2," January 3, 1967, mimeographed leaflet with handwritten time and signatures, 27 × 21 cm.**
[January 3, 1967

Today, at 20h15 precisely, we walked out of the Salon de la Jeune Peinture.

Although it was seemingly directed against this Salon, this 2nd "Manifestation" is defined by our irrevocable attitude towards each and every Salon (May Salon, Salon for Watercolors, Salon for New Realities, Salon of Independents, etc.).

— Because these Salons are part of the heritage of nineteenth-century Salons. (At a pinch, the real twentieth-century Salons, if any, would be those of Ideal Home exhibitions, Automobile shows, etc.)

— Because these Salons exacerbate public laziness.

Each of them is the site of a pilgrimage where a specific public seeks to console itself. On a precise date, they become scandalized and swoon, a culture of gadgets which ought to serve at least once a year.

— Because, above all, these Salons show Painting and Painting, until shown proof to the contrary, is by vocation objectively reactionary.

For these reasons, we break definitively with all the Parisian Salons, as well as with all the Painters who exhibit there.

BUREN MOSSET PARMENTIER TORONI

P.S. We would like to thank all members of the Committee of the Salon de la Jeune Peinture who allowed us to complete successfully our 1st public "Manifestation" and thus to benefit from their publicity, their locale, etc.

We would also like to pay tribute to their courtesy for allowing us to withdraw our work on the day of the opening.]

The Three Days of the rue de Sèvres

"The Three Days of the rue de Sèvres," in one of the stores on rue de Sèvres, Paris, France, from May 29 – June 1, 1967. Invited to participate in this temporary exhibition by the store-owners on rue de Sèvres — making their store-windows available to the invited artists — covering over the outside of the entire window of one of the shoe stores with posters of "Manifestation 3" so nothing could be seen inside the window.

Source: http://catalogue.danielburen.com – *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972*, Daniel Buren archives and Association Michel Parmentier (AMP) – Michel Parmentier archives, Brussels.

39

39 **Photo-souvenir: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, rue de Rennes, Paris (France), 1967, contact sheet: Paris, Bernard Boyer, 30.3 × 19.8 cm.**

Manifestation 3

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), Paris, France.
June 2, 1967
Group Exhibition

At the end of May 1967, posters plastered on street walls in Paris showing head-shots of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni — like posters of missing persons — and hand-written stenciled invitations signed by the four artists, convoking the public to "Manifestation 3" on June 2 at 21h at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Admission: 5 francs.

On the stage, before the public arrives, four square paintings with the same dimensions, one by each artist, have been hung together forming a large square. The spectators wait for around forty-five minutes for an impending performance. Marcel Duchamp, Otto Hahn, Jackie Monnier, Jean-Pierre Raynaud, and Niki de Saint Phalle are among the audience.

The only "spectacle" consists of looking at the works offered to be looked at — a proposal underlined in the printed pamphlet signed Buren-Mosset-Parmentier-Toroni and distributed to the spectators as they leave.

Source: http://catalogue.danielburen.com - Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972, Daniel Buren Archives and Association Michel Parmentier (AMP) - Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels.

40

40 **Poster for "Manifestation 3," Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), Paris (France), June 2, 1967, 59.7 × 40.1 cm.**

41

41 **Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), Paris (France), June 1967, contact sheet: Paris, Bernard Boyer, 30.3 × 19.8 cm.**

IL NE S'AGISSAIT ÉVIDEMMENT QUE DE REGARDER DES TOILES DE

BUREN–MOSSET–PARMENTIER–TORONI

Il faut y voir :

Une toile de 2,50 m x 2,50 m divisée en 29 bandes égales et verticales, rouges et blanches, dont les deux extrêmes sont recouvertes de blanc. (BUREN).

Un cercle (1) noir au centre d'une toile (2) blanche. (MOSSET).

Sur une toile de 2,50 m x 2,50 m des bandes horizontales alternées grises (3) et blanches (4) de 0,38 m x 2,50 m. Partielle, la septième (et dernière) bande mesure 0,22 m x 2,50 m.
(PARMENTIER).

85 empreintes bleues d'un pinceau plat (n° 50), à intervalles de 30 cm, sur une surface blanche de 2,50 m x 2,50 m. (TORONI).

C'ÉTAIT MANIFESTATION 3.
2 JUIN 1967

BUREN – MOSSET – PARMENTIER – TORONI.

(1) Diamètre intérieur 4,5 cm, diamètre extérieur 7,8 cm.
(2) 2,50 m x 2,50 m.
(3) Gris palombe foncé Krylon.
(4) Blanc cellulosique Lefranc.

Imp. Lescaret - Paris

42

42 **Tract: "Obviously, it was simply a question of looking..." June 2, 1967, distributed at the end of "Manifestation 3," 21 × 13.5 cm.**
[OBVIOUSLY, IT WAS SIMPLY A QUESTION OF LOOKING AT THE CANVASES OF BUREN-MOSSET-PARMENTIER-TORONI

Here is what must be seen:

A canvas of 2.50 m × 2.50 m divided into 29 equal and vertical red and white stripes, whose outer edges are covered in white paint. (BUREN).

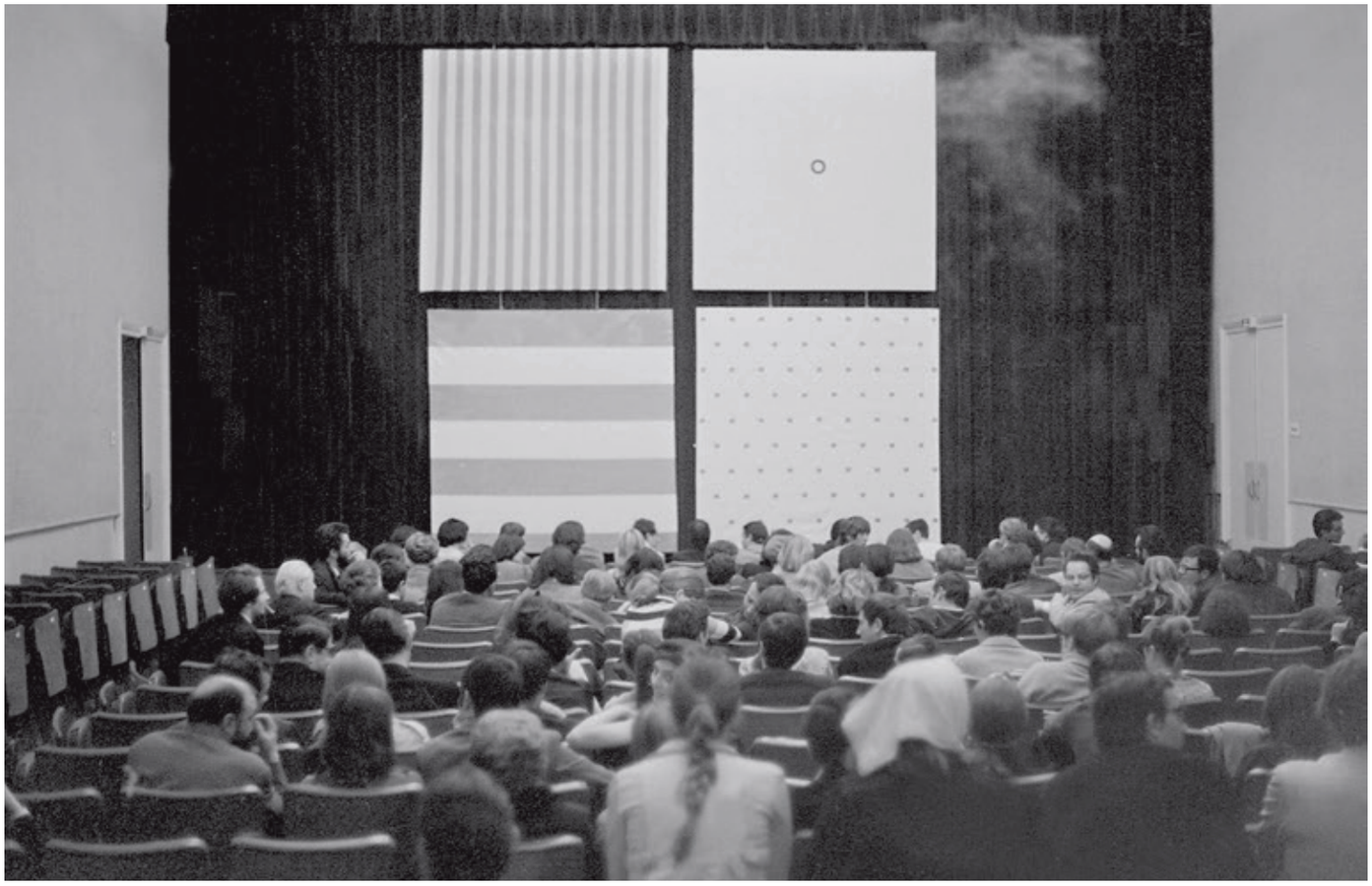
A black circle (1) in the center of a white canvas.(2) (MOSSET).

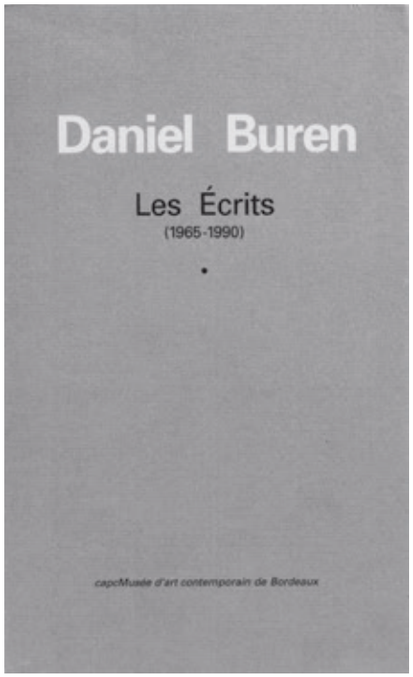
Horizontal, alternating gray (3) and white (4) 0.38 m × 2.50 m bands on a 2.50 m × 2.50 m canvas. Incomplete, the seventh (and last) band measures 0.22 m × 2.50 m. (PARMENTIER).

85 blue imprinted marks from a flat brush (N° 50) at 30 cm intervals on a 2.50 m × 2.50 m. white surface. (TORONI).

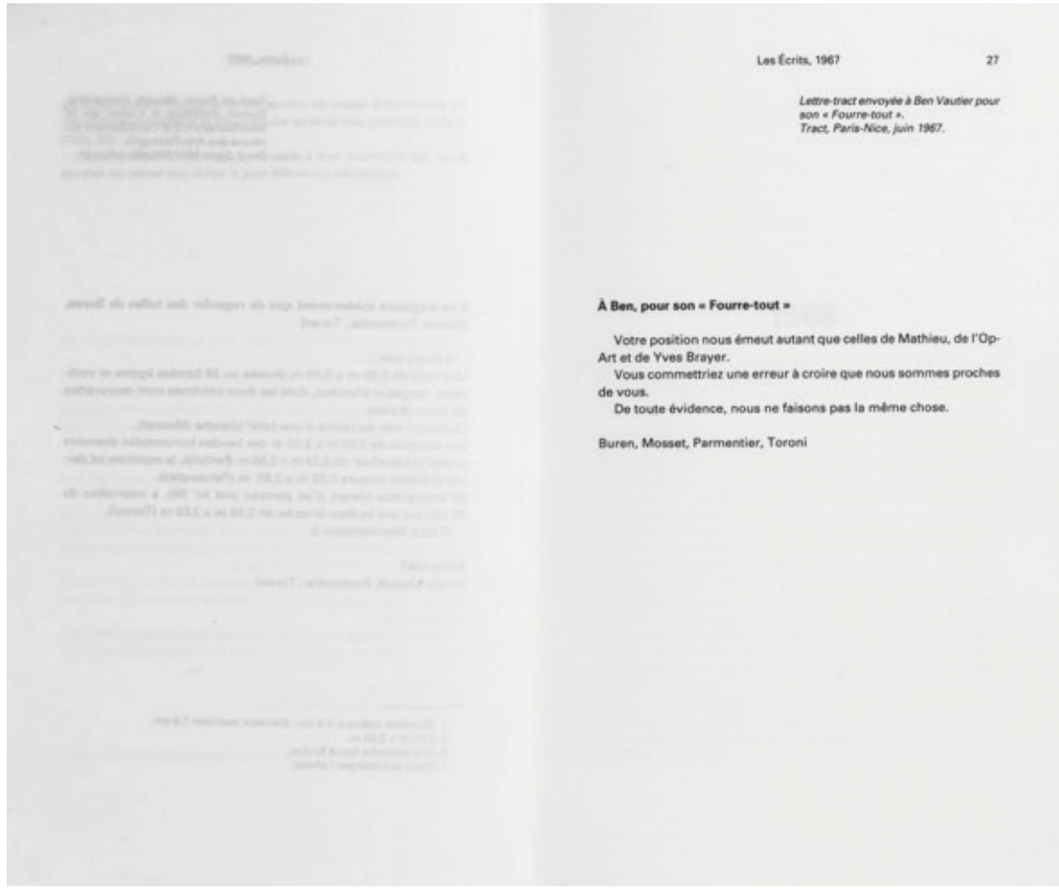
THIS WAS MANIFESTATION 3.
JUNE 2, 1967
BUREN-MOSSET-PARMENTIER-TORONI
(1) Interior diameter of 4.5 cm, exterior diameter of 7.8 cm.
(2) 2.50 m × 2.50 m.
(3) Krylon Dark Dove Gray.
(4) Lefranc Cellulose White.]

43





44



Les Écrits, 1967 27

Lettre-tract envoyée à Ben Vautier pour son « Fourre-tout ».
Tract, Paris-Nice, juin 1967.

À Ben, pour son « Fourre-tout »

Votre position nous émeut autant que celles de Mathieu, de l'Op-Art et de Yves Brayer.

Vous commettriez une erreur à croire que nous sommes proches de vous.

De toute évidence, nous ne faisons pas la même chose.

Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni

43 **Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), Paris (France), June 2, 1967 (details).**
In the background, the four canvases presented frontally on stage.
From the left: Lucie Scheler, Toroni, Parmentier, Mosset, and Buren sitting in the front row of the audience for "Manifestation 3."

44 **Photo-souvenir: Cover of Daniel Buren, *Les Écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976*, Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.) (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991).**
Photo-souvenir: letter-cum-tract, "À Ben pour son 'Fourre-tout,'" ("To Ben for his "Fourre-Tout") June 1967, in Daniel Buren *Les Écrits (1965-1990)*, p. 27.
[Paris-Nice, June 1967
To Ben for his "Fourre-Tout"[1]
Your proposition touches us as much as those by [George] Mathieu, Op-Art, and Yves Brayer.
You are making a mistake in believing that we are close to you.
Evidently, we are not doing the same thing.
Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni

1 The reference is to the artist Ben Vautier (b. 1935) who was co-editor with Anne Vautier of a Fluxus-inspired journal named *Fourre-Tout*, a term variously translated into English as grab bag, holdall, or catchall. Translator's note.]

Answer to Ben after his call for participation in issue no. 2 of his journal *Fourre-Tout*, Ben Vautier, Nice, June 1967.

Manifestation 4

Cinquième Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, France
September 30 – November 5, 1967
Group Exhibition

During the Fifth Paris Biennale, four canvases by Buren-Mosset-Parmentier-Toroni, one by each artist and each two meters square, are hanging together in alphabetical order, forming a large square on the wall in a corridor near the bar outside the usual exhibition space

In front of the canvases, a leaning elongated cube structure — positioned on the floor and entirely covered in posters from "Manifestation 4" reproducing portraits of the four protagonists — hides a slide projector and tape recorder.

Throughout the entire exhibition, a series of slides is projected onto the ceiling, each with a specific theme, accompanied simultaneously by a loudspeaker broadcasting a didactic text on the illusion of art, followed by the successive illumination of each artist's work, and accompanied sequentially by the voice-over: "Not the painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni."

- slides of Saint-Tropez: "Art is the illusion of a change of scene." Voice-over: "Not the painting of Buren" (spotlight on Buren's canvas) Voice-over: "Mosset" (spotlight on Mosset's canvas) Voice-over: "Parmentier" (spotlight on Parmentier's canvas) Voice-over: "Toroni" (spotlight on Toroni's canvas)
- slides of a zoo: "Art is the illusion of freedom," idem.
- slides of Paul VI: "Art is the illusion of presence," idem.
- slides of Little Red Riding Hood: "Art is the illusion of dreaming," idem.
- slides of a bull-fight: "Art is the illusion of the sacred," idem.
- slides of the Grandes Eaux at Versailles: "Art is the illusion of the extraordinary," idem.
- slides of naked women: "Art is the illusion of escape," idem.
- slides of flowers: "Art is the illusion of nature," idem.

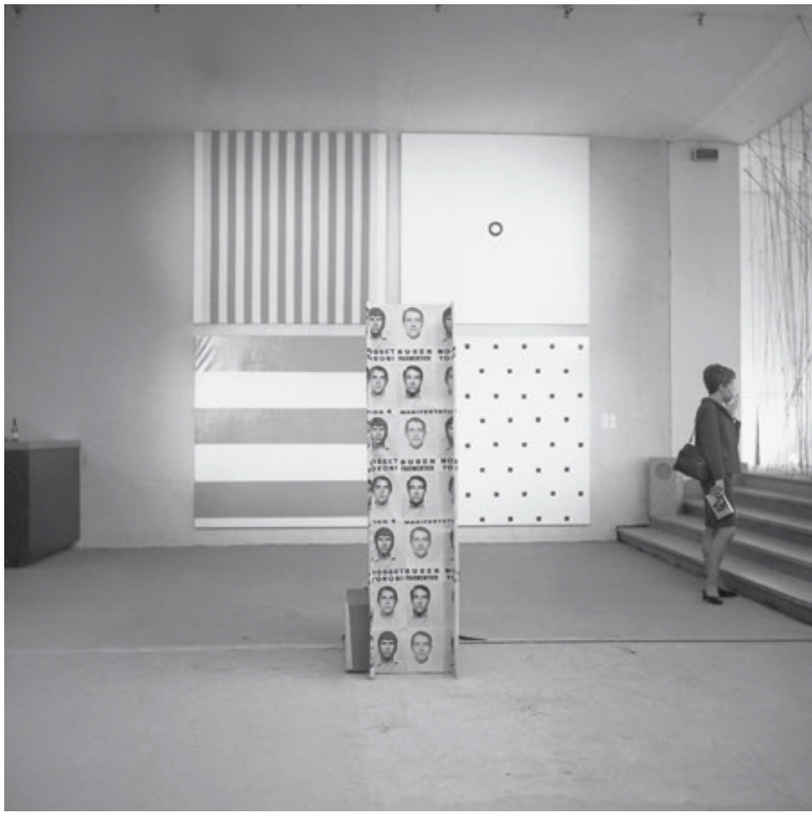
Then, without any projection, in voice-over: Art is distraction, art is false, painting begins with Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni.

The four works remain under illumination for three minutes, then three minutes with no illumination, then the projections start again with the sound for the remaining time of the Biennale.

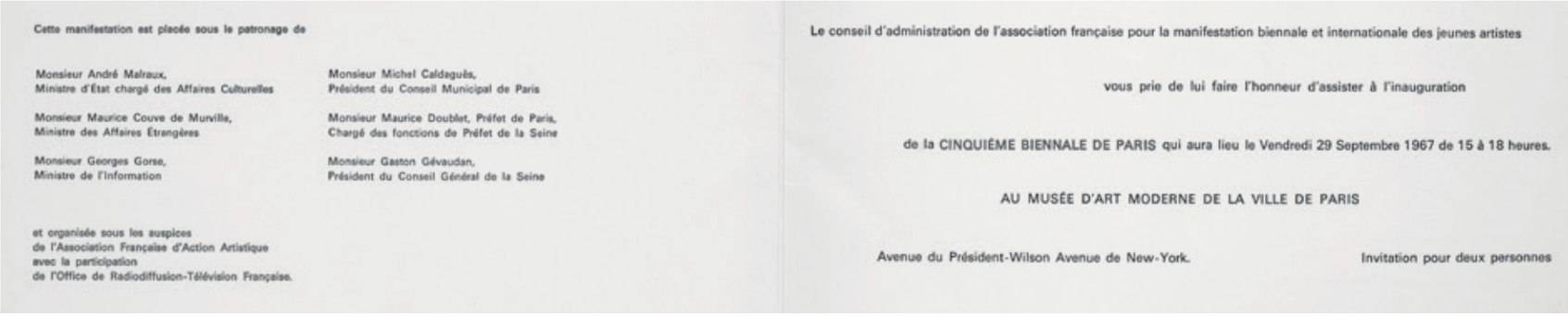
Last "manifestation" in a series of four.[1]

1 Extracts of the text have been previously translated in Lucy Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 30; and in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 28. Translator's note.

Source: http://catalogue.danielburen.com – Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972, Daniel Buren Archives and Association Michel Parmentier (AMP) – Michel Parmentier Archives Brussels,



46



Cette manifestation est placée sous le patronage de

Monsieur André Malraux,
Ministre d'État chargé des Affaires Culturelles

Monsieur Maurice Couve de Murville,
Ministre des Affaires Étrangères

Monsieur Georges Gorse,
Ministre de l'Information

Monsieur Michel Caldagués,
Président du Conseil Municipal de Paris

Monsieur Maurice Doublet, Préfet de Paris,
Chargé des fonctions de Préfet de la Seine

Monsieur Gaston Gévaudan,
Président du Conseil Général de la Seine

et organisée sous les auspices
de l'Association Française d'Action Artistique
avec la participation
de l'Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française.

Le conseil d'administration de l'association française pour la manifestation biennale et internationale des jeunes artistes

vous prie de lui faire l'honneur d'assister à l'inauguration

de la CINQUIÈME BIENNALE DE PARIS qui aura lieu le Vendredi 29 Septembre 1967 de 15 à 18 heures.

AU MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

Avenue du Président-Wilson Avenue de New-York.

Invitation pour deux personnes

45

47

45 **Invitation to the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), September 29, 1967, 9 × 20.7 cm (folded).**

46 **Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 4 : Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," exhibition view at the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de Ville de Paris, Paris (France), September 30 – November 5, 1967 (detail).**
The four works, the posters, the slide projections, and sound devices.

47 **Photo-souvenir: poster for "Manifestation 4," 5th Biennale de Paris (France).**

48 **Catalogue for the 5th Biennale de Paris, 288 pages, 21 × 10.5 cm, cover and pp. 175-177, text by Michel Claura, "Groupe Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," including titles of works given by the artists, pp. 175-176.**
[GROUP BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI
The criteria for art are the same since art has existed: illusion, communication, tension towards an increasingly more perfect expression.

The artist does not share his problems with us.

The artist has no right to claim the role of witness. Nor is he a prophet. And yet, in the course of their existence, those who have gone the furthest in these misguided ways have been considered the true artists. In them, with them, one has always found illusion, distraction, communication.

Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni — the deliberate abandon of a sensitivity which has always been the artist's and the work of art's impetus and force of attraction.

All of Buren's canvases — and this is the same for those by Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni — are identical. There is no longer the idea of perfectibility.

One would seek in vain any illusion suggested by these works. Painting that is so "reductive" is neither everything nor nothing. Their painting seeks neither reassurance nor incomprehension [*malaise*]. There is no communication. The spectator is left alone with him or herself. Contact with the "work of art" has lost its principle quality — **its soothing [émolliente] property.**

Very quickly and obviously, it seems that all the systems of reference which create the language around art are no longer pertinent for Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni. The only thing that can be stated: for Buren, a canvas divided into equal and vertical stripes, whose two outer edges are painted over in white; for Mosset, a black circle in the center of a white canvas; for Parmentier, alternating gray and while horizontal bands, 38 cm in height; for Toroni, marks at regular intervals with a flattened brush.

The painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni is not offered to "disturb" the public. But it is no longer what art has always been — a distraction. It is not a resting place. It is no longer the blindfold that is placed before the spectator's eyes, eyes that allow viewers to escape facing reality, their own reality against that of the world, and the reality of the world against their own.

The painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni is only made to exist.

Michel Claura

Daniel Buren, born in 1938 in Boulogne-sur-Seine (France)
221 1967 (painting, 250 × 250)
Olivier Mosset, born in 1944 in Bern (Switzerland)
222 1967 (painting, 250 × 250)
Michel Parmentier, born in 1938 in Paris (France)
223 1967 (painting, 250 × 250)
Niele Toroni, born in 1937 in Muralto (Switzerland)
224 1967 (painting, 250 × 250)]

Close to Daniel Buren, the art critic Michel Claura wrote regularly on the group of four artists in newspaper articles, magazines, and art journals. Retracing the history of the group, he collaborated on writing and revisiting the various events. This text appeared in the catalogue for the Biennale, which presented the group of four artists and the works exhibited (all identical, the same year, and same formats).

The titles of the works included in Claura's text refer to the identical title — *1967 (painting, 250 × 250)* — that was given by all the artists.

CINQUIÈME
BIENNALE DE PARIS

Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes
du 30 septembre au 5 novembre 1967
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
Avenue du Président-Wilson — Avenue de New York

FRANCE

GROUPE BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI

Les critères de l'art sont les mêmes depuis que celui-ci existe : l'illusion, la communication, la tension vers une expression toujours plus parfaite.

L'artiste n'a pas à nous faire part de ses problèmes.

L'artiste n'a aucun droit à revendiquer le rôle de témoin. Il n'est pas non plus prophète. Pourtant ,de tous temps, ceux qui sont allés le plus loin dans ces errements ont été considérés comme les véritables artistes. En eux, avec eux, on a toujours trouvé l'illusion, la distraction, la communication.

Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, c'est l'abandon délibéré de la sensibilité qui a toujours été l'élément moteur et la force d'attraction de l'artiste et de l'œuvre d'art.

Toutes les toiles de Buren — et il en est de même pour celles de Mosset, pour celles de Parmentier, pour celles de Toroni — sont identiques. Il n'y a plus de notion de perfectibilité.

On chercherait vainement l'illusion qu'ils nous proposent. Une peinture aussi « réduite » n'est ni le tout ni le rien. Ni réconfort ni malaise ne sont à quêter dans leur peinture. Il n'y a pas de communication. Le spectateur est laissé seul avec lui-même. Le contact avec l'« œuvre d'art » a perdu sa « qualité » principale : **sa propriété émolliente.**

Il apparaît très vite, et d'évidence, que tous les systèmes de références qui forment le langage autour de l'art ne trouvent plus leur place avec Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni. Il n'y a qu'à constater : pour Buren, une toile divisée en bandes égales et verticales dont les deux extrêmes sont recouvertes de blanc ; pour Mosset, un cercle noir au centre d'une toile blanche ; pour Parmentier, des bandes horizontales alternées grises et blanches, de 38 centimètres de hauteur ; pour Toroni, des empreintes d'un pinceau plat, à intervalles réguliers.

La peinture de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni ne se propose pas de venir « troubler » le public. Mais elle n'est plus ce qu'a toujours été l'art : une distraction. Elle n'est pas un reposoir. Elle n'est plus le bandeau que l'on met devant les yeux du spectateur, qui permet à celui-ci de ne pas se retourner sur la réalité, la sienne contre celle du monde et celle du monde contre la sienne.

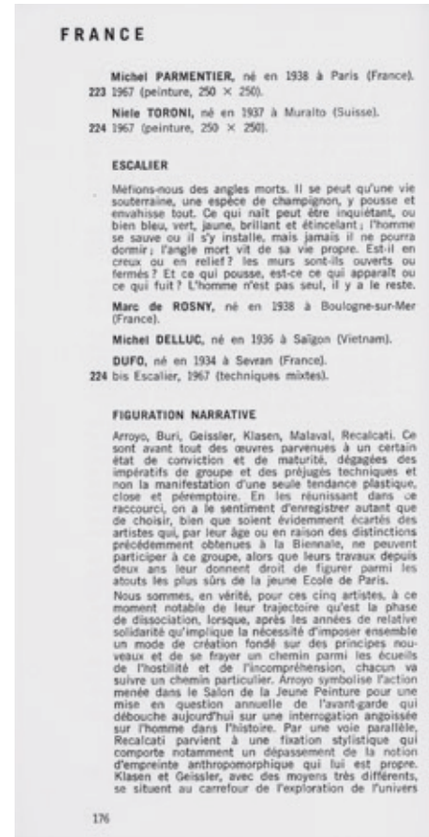
La peinture de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni ne fait qu'exister.

Michel Claura.

Daniel BUREN, né en 1938 à Boulogne-sur-Seine (France).
221 1967 (peinture, 250 × 250).

Olivier MOSSET, né en 1944 à Berne (Suisse).
222 1967 (peinture, 250 × 250).

175



FRANCE

Michel PARMENTIER, né en 1938 à Paris (France).
223 1967 (peinture, 250 × 250).

Niele TORONI, né en 1937 à Muralto (Suisse).
224 1967 (peinture, 250 × 250).

ESCALIER

Méfions-nous des angles morts. Il se peut qu'une vie souterraine, une espèce de champignon, y pousse et envahisse tout. Ce qui naît peut être inquiétant, ou bien bleu, vert, jaune, brillant et étincelant ; l'homme se sauve ou il s'y installe, mais jamais il ne pourra dormir ; l'angle mort vit de sa vie propre. Est-il en creux ou en relief ? les murs sont-ils ouverts ou fermés ? Et ce qui pousse, est-ce ce qui apparaît ou ce qui fuit ? L'homme n'est pas seul, il y a le reste.

Marc de ROSNY, né en 1938 à Boulogne-sur-Mer (France).

Michel DELLUC, né en 1936 à Saïgon (Vietnam).

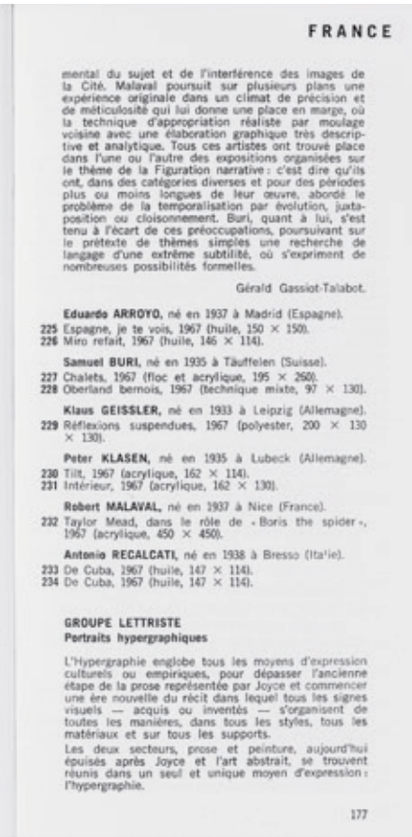
DUFO, né en 1934 à Sevran (France).
224 bis Escalier, 1967 (techniques mixtes).

FIGURATION NARRATIVE

Arroyo, Buri, Geissler, Klasen, Malaval, Recalcati. Ce sont avant tout des œuvres parvenues à un certain état de conviction et de maturité, dégagées des impératifs de groupe et des préjugés techniques et non la manifestation d'une seule tendance plastique, close et péremptoire. En les réunissant dans ce raccourci, on a le sentiment d'enregistrer autant que de choisir, bien que soient évidemment écartés des artistes qui, par leur âge ou en raison des distinctions précédemment obtenues à la Biennale, ne peuvent participer à ce groupe, alors que leurs travaux depuis deux ans leur donnent droit de figurer parmi les atouts les plus sûrs de la jeune Ecole de Paris.

Nous sommes, en vérité, pour ces cinq artistes, à ce moment notable de leur trajectoire qu'est la phase de dissociation, lorsque, après les années de relative solidarité qu'implique la nécessité d'imposer ensemble un mode de création fondé sur des principes nouveaux et de se frayer un chemin parmi les écueils de l'hostilité et de l'incompréhension, chacun va suivre un chemin particulier. Arroyo symbolise l'action menée dans le Salon de la Jeune Peinture pour une mise en question annuelle de l'avant-garde qui débouche aujourd'hui sur une interrogation angoissée sur l'homme dans l'histoire. Par une voie parallèle, Recalcati parvient à une fixation stylistique qui comporte notamment un dépassement de la notion d'empreinte anthropomorphique qui lui est propre. Klasen et Geissler, avec des moyens très différents, se situent au carrefour de l'exploration de l'univers

176



FRANCE

mental du sujet et de l'interférence des images de la Cité. Malaval poursuit sur plusieurs plans une expérience originale dans un climat de précision et de méticulosité qui lui donne une place en marge, où la technique d'appropriation réaliste par moulage voisine avec une élaboration graphique très descriptive et analytique. Tous ces artistes ont trouvé place dans l'une ou l'autre des expositions organisées sur le thème de la Figuration narrative : c'est dire qu'ils ont, dans des catégories diverses et pour des périodes plus ou moins longues de leur œuvre, abordé le problème de la temporalisation par évolution, juxtaposition ou cloisonnement. Buri, quant à lui, s'est tenu à l'écart de ces préoccupations, poursuivant sur le prétexte de thèmes simples une recherche de langage d'une extrême subtilité, où s'expriment de nombreuses possibilités formelles.

Gérald Gassiot-Talabot.

Eduardo ARROYO, né en 1937 à Madrid (Espagne).
225 Espagne, je te vois, 1967 (huile, 150 × 150).
226 Miro refait, 1967 (huile, 146 × 114).

Samuel BURI, né en 1935 à Täuffelen (Suisse).
227 Chalets, 1967 (floc et acrylique, 195 × 260).
228 Oberland bernois, 1967 (technique mixte, 97 × 130).

Klaus GEISSLER, né en 1933 à Leipzig (Allemagne).
229 Réflexions suspendues, 1967 (polyester, 200 × 130 × 130).

Peter KLASEN, né en 1935 à Lubeck (Allemagne).
230 Tilt, 1967 (acrylique, 162 × 114).
231 Intérieur, 1967 (acrylique, 162 × 130).

Robert MALAVAL, né en 1937 à Nice (France).
232 Taylor Mead, dans le rôle de « Boris the spider », 1967 (acrylique, 450 × 450).

Antonio RECALCATI, né en 1938 à Bresso (Italie).
233 De Cuba, 1967 (huile, 147 × 114).
234 De Cuba, 1967 (huile, 147 × 114).

GROUPE LETTRISTE
Portraits hypergraphiques

L'Hypergraphie englobe tous les moyens d'expression culturels ou empiriques, pour dépasser l'ancienne étape de la prose représentée par Joyce et commencer une ère nouvelle du récit dans lequel tous les signes visuels — acquis ou inventés — s'organisent de toutes les manières, dans tous les styles, tous les matériaux et sur tous les supports.

Les deux secteurs, prose et peinture, aujourd'hui épuisés après Joyce et l'art abstrait, se trouvent réunis dans un seul et unique moyen d'expression : l'hypergraphie.

177

48

49

50 →

49 **Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 4: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," view of the exhibition at the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France), September 1967.**
A selection from a large number of images, slides projected onto the ceiling, accompanied by a sound text on "the illusion of art."
From left to right, top to bottom of page:
- Image of a religious ceremony: "Art is the illusion of presence."
- Image of Little Red Riding Hood, "Art is the illusion of dreaming."
- Image of a bullfight: "Art is the illusion of the sacred."
- Image of the Grandes Eaux in Versailles: "Art is the illusion of the extraordinary."
- Image of a naked woman: "Art is the illusion of escape."
- Image of flowers: "Art is the illusion of nature."
- Image of Saint-Tropez: "Art is the illusion of a change of scene."
- Image of a zoo : "Art is the illusion of freedom."

50 **Photo-souvenir: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, Paris (France), September 1967.**
Mosset, Buren, Parmentier, and Toroni at a café.


PLAT DU
JOUR

51

LA V ème BIENNALE DE PARIS

ANTHOLOGIE DES GROUPES

A la différence des Biennales précédentes, des groupes, formés à l'initiative de critiques d'art ou des artistes eux-mêmes, sont venus se joindre aux œuvres sélectionnées ou choisies par les jurys. Chacun de ces groupes se caractérise par des préoccupations communes ou parallèles, une conception esthétique relativement homogène. Par l'impact de leur manifestation, ils ne manqueront pas d'introduire quelque ponctuation dans le contexte présent, peut-être même l'ébauche d'une syntaxe nécessaire à la mise à jour et au déchiffrement de tout ce qui est en train de naître.

Raoul-Jean Moulin.

1

MOSSET peint un cercle noir (rayon intérieur 4,5 cm, rayon extérieur 7,8 cm) au centre d'une toile blanche carrée.

TORONI applique à intervalles réguliers, sur une surface blanche, un pinceau plat n° 50, chargé de couleur.

PARMENTIER peint des bandes horizontales alternées blanches et grises de 38 cm.

BUREN recouvre de blanc les deux bandes extrêmes d'une toile rayée verticalement.

52

LES ARTS AU JOUR LE JOUR - LES ARTS AU JOUR

Les jeunes peintres de la Biennale

CETTE année, la peinture reprend une place importante dans la Biennale.

L'éventail des tendances s'est encore élargi : figuration traditionnelle, expressionnisme fondé sur une destruction organique, abstraction lyrique et géométrique, figuration narrative et animée.

Philippe Derome peint une conversation au Flore à la manière de Godard, et Maglione une page de journal avec des personnages en négatif et fragmentés. Alexandre Bonnier présente un nu semblable à un paysage, Breyten un être hybride mi-homme mi-zèbre, Criton une pyramide de corps humains, Dufo des malles ouvertes et fermées en toile plastifiée.

On trouve l'influence du peintre anglais Bacon chez beaucoup de jeunes comme Darotcheche, Doublier, Lekarsky, et celle des promoteurs d'un art mécanique dans la « Parade bleue 3251 » de Farhi. Juan Romero se distingue par sa poésie orientale. Skira se montre inquiétant et Risos s'épanouit dans un paysage blanc et rouge.

Parmi les envois de la province, ceux de Nice et de Bordeaux ont retenu l'attention des jurys. Etant donné l'importance de la participation bordelaise, le président Chaban-Delmas a tenu à recevoir au Palais-Bourbon les huit artistes sélectionnés dont Alain Lestie, qui expose quatre toiles représentant des parcelles d'objets et de corps, de gens et de choses.

Quelques artistes, groupés par affinités esthétiques ou formés par des critiques engagés, présentent leurs recherches et leurs expériences. Ceux du groupe Automat veulent concilier la figuration et le mouvement en animant leurs œuvres.

Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni existent par leur représentation du néant. Les lettristes proposent des portraits hypergraphiques ou des photos de pin-up s'intégrant dans les signes.

La figuration narrative présentée par Gassiot-Talabot situe l'homme dans l'histoire, raconte un événement social, veut avoir une signification politique et plastique, voire l' « Hommage à la Révolution cubaine », de Recalcati. Quant au groupe cinétique, il prolonge l'éblouissante exposition « Lumière et Mouvement » présentée dans ce même musée.

Le Colombien Botero nous ravit avec le portrait de la grosse dame parée de renard et de serpent, et son « Massacre des Innocents », plein d'humour noir.

Les Belges ont une bonne équipe avec les jeux d'ombre d'Axell, les paysages féeriques de Chemay et fantastiques de Herregodts, les reliefs optiques de Leblanc.

L'Allemand Richter impose son Emma nue descendant un escalier, alors que le Suisse Farner se complaît dans un érotisme provoquant.

Les artistes du Mexique, du Brésil et de la plupart des pays d'Amérique du Sud s'expriment violemment par la couleur et les Espagnols douloureusement par des figures angoissées.

Le Turc Aksoy peint la solitude avec intensité et Golonu résume Istanbul dans une vision poétique. Le Roumain Marginean nous fait oublier les cris et les lumières de la Biennale avec le charme naïf et enchanteur de ses paysages aux quatre saisons.

En revanche, les Italiens ont rompu avec toute tradition pour expérimenter des nouvelles techniques d'images et les Japonais présentent un monde imaginaire.

Les artistes russes, moins préoccupés de l'évolution du monde moderne, se contentent de peindre la guerre et les loisirs sous la forme de soldats défilant et de moissonneurs pique-niquant. Quand à l'Américain Kaufman, il semble obsédé par les carrosseries de voitures aux couleurs électriques.

Jeanine Warnod.

AUJOURD'HUI

MUSEE D'ART MODERNE. — 13, 15 heures : Musique enregistrée ; 12, 15, 17 heures : Cinéma, longs métrages ; 16 heures: Cinéma, courts métrages; 18 h. 30: Jeunes poètes : langages poétiques contemporains en France.

STUDIOS DES CHAMPS - ELYSEES. — 21 heures : Compagnie Jérôme Savary : oratorio macabre du Radeau de la Méduse.

GALERIE DEBRET (28, rue La Boétie). — 18 heures : Vernissage de l'exposition « Dessins » (Services culturels de l'ambassade du Brésil).

GALERIE CLAUDE LEVIN (9, rue du Mont-Thabor). — 18 heures : Vernissage de l'exposition « Estampes 67 ».

51 **Raoul-Jean Moulin, "La Vᵉ Biennale de Paris. Anthologie des groupes," *Opus International*, no. 3, October 1967, cover and pp. 70-71, 27 × 18 cm.**
[THE Vᵗʰ PARIS BIENNALE, ANTHOLOGY OF GROUPS
Different from previous Biennales, groups of artists formed through an initiative suggested by art critics and artists themselves have joined up with works selected or chosen by juries. Each of these groups is characterized by common or related concerns, by a relatively uniform aesthetic conception. Through the impact of what they are showing [*manifestation*], they necessarily introduce a certain punctuation into the present context, perhaps even the first signs of a syntax necessary for exposing and laying the groundwork for everything that is in the process of emerging.
Raoul-Jean Moulin[1]
[photo] MOSSET paints a black circle (interior radius 4.5 cm, exterior radius 7.8 cm) in the center of a square white canvas.
[photo] TORONI applies a flattened brush (N°50) loaded with paint onto a white surface at regular intervals.
[photo] PARMENTIER paints alternating 38 cm horizontal gray and white bands.
[photo] BUREN covers the two outer stripes of a vertically striped canvas with white paint.
[1] Raoul-Jean Moulin (1934-2014) was an art critic and curator who helped organize the 5ᵗʰ Paris Biennale. Translator's note.]

The photograph of Parmentier was reprinted in the exhibition catalogue "Douze Ans d'Art Contemporain en France 1960-1972," 1972 **(see p. 97)** (photo: Bernard Boyer). Edited by Georges Fall in Paris, France, *Opus International* was a quarterly journal devoted to contemporary art and literature. Appearing between 1967 and 1995 (125 issues), it's editor-in-chief was Jean-Clarence Lambert.

52 **Jeanine Warnod, "Les jeunes peintres de la biennale" (The young painters at the Biennale), *Le Figaro*, October 3, 1967, " Les arts au jour le jour" (The arts from day to day) section. Press cutting, 16.3 × 14.5 cm.**
Warnod remarks from "Manifestation 4": "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni exist through their representation of nothingness..."
Jeanine Warnod was a journalist writing at the time for the French newspaper *Le Figaro*.

53

Les Arts

sual laboratory » les projections de Mark Boyle, Joan Hills et John Claxton. Batterie Taczinswi (vendredi soir, le soir où P. A.-L. est là, dans les coulisses puisque comme vous savez les invitations pour la presse, c'est le b. (désordre) comme a dit la jeune fille du bureau). *Danseuses Christine Chabot, Claudie Jaouen, Anne Lecoureur, Tony Marshall, Jackie Verdreit, Graziella Martinez, Martine Barat. Danseur Andrew Cranware. La troupe orientale El Gill. Eclairage régie : Y.* (comme Yoran) *Cazac, J. Savary.* (C'est celui d'hier, du Radeau de la Méduse ?) *A Zion*, etc.

— Boites et maillots : C. Buri.
— Combinaisons flottantes : C. Bailly.
— Salopettes et pantalons : Michèle Rozier.
— Cylindre mouvant : Nicolas.
— Poupée rayée : Gamara.
— Monstre rose et sa partenaire : A.
— Costumes et meubles gonflables : Quazar.
— Cinéma mobile : F. Arnal.

Les autres costumes sont de *Graziella Martinez.*

Détail des frais

Dernières dépenses :

— Collants danse	620
— Toboggan	450
— Acier (tubes, visses, cage)	400
— Vélo	50
— Soutiens-gorge	296
— Baignoire	80
— Transport baignoire	70
— Collants Repetto	240
— Pantalons plastiques (3)	210
— Corset	50
— Chapeaux (60 + 50)	110
— Tubes acier visses pour la cage	260
— Matériaux pour les recherches de costumes, (Couleurs tissus mousse, etc.)	400
— « Musicien arabe »	600
— Heures supplémentaires	
— TOTAL	

Tous les artistes *participent gratuitement* à ce spectacle et les peintres ont payé eux-mêmes leur matériel.

Réalisation et organisation : Martine Barat.

Manifestation IV

En attendant que l'auditorium occupé par la manifestation « Humour à dessein » soit libéré pour être remplacé par un colloque sur les revues d'art.

P. A.-L. a vu : Une colonne Morris d'un nouveau genre, avec, à l'affichage, quatre bambins qui vous regardent bien en face : Buren, Parmentier, Mosset, Toroni. Et une voix dans un haut parleur qui vous accroche : *Dans leur série « Nous vous conseillons de devenir intelligents », Buren...* (une diapositive apparaît au plafond qui vous le montre en couleur) *Parmentier...* (de même) *Mosset...* (de même) *Toroni...* (de même), *présentent : Manifestation Quatre.*

L'art est illusion de dépaysement... (au plafond, s'allument Versailles, le Moulin Rouge ou la place de la Concorde) *pas la peinture de Buren*, égrène une voix grave alors que s'éclaire, sur le mur d'en face l'œuvre correspondante, un grand format carré avec des rayures verticales, *Mosset* (même processus éclairant un format identique avec seulement au centre un petit rond), *Parmentier* (idem, sous Buren, des rayures horizontales), *Toroni* (des pointillés)...

Un temps de silence, celui de la réflexion, agrémentée de quelques projections diapositives et à nouveau :

L'art est illusion de liberté... pas la peinture de Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... L'art est illusion de présence... pas la peinture de Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... L'art est illusion de rêve... pas la peinture de Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... L'art est illusion de sacré... pas la peinture de Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... L'art est illusion de merveilleux... pas la peinture de... (à quel moment, celui du sacré ou celui du merveilleux, sont apparues les femmes nues ? En tout cas, Tartempion est positif, il en est apparu).

(*Suite page 28*)

53 **Marc Albert-Levin, "Le journal de la Biennale de Paris. Au Luna-Park de l'art contemporain,"** ***Les Lettres françaises*****, no. 1203, October 11, 1967, "Les Arts" section, p. 27, press cutting, 43.5 × 14.8 cm.**

["Manifestation 4"
Waiting for the auditorium reserved for the "Humor in Drawing" event to empty so that it can be used for a colloquium on art magazines.

P[aul] A[ntoine]-L[evin] has seen: A new genre of [Robert] Morris style column with posters of four toddlers staring you in the face: Buren, Parmentier, Mosset, Toroni. And a voice coming from a loudspeaker which captivates you: *In their series "We advise you to become intelligent," Buren...* (a slide appears on the ceiling which shows you a Buren in color). *Parmentier...* (the same) *Mosset* (the same) Toroni... (the same) *present: Manifestation Four.*

Art is the illusion of a change of scene... (Versailles, The Moulin Rouge, or Place Concorde are illuminated on the ceiling) *not the painting of Buren*, a serious voice tells us one by one, while a large square format with vertical stripes is illuminated on the wall facing the corresponding work, *Mosset* (same process illuminating an identical format, with only a small circle at the center), *Parmentier* (idem., under the Buren, with horizontal bands), *Toroni* (dots)...

A moment of silence, of reflection, livened up with a few slide projections and again:

Art is the illusion of liberty... not the painting of Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... Art is the illusion of presence... not the painting of Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... Art is the illusion of dreaming... not the painting of Buren... Mosset... Parmentier...Toroni... Art is the illusion of the sacred... not the painting of Buren... Mosset... Parmentier... Toroni... Art is the illusion of the extraordinary... not the painting of... (at what moment did the nude women appear?—that of the sacred or the extraordinary? In any case, even John Doe is positive; he appeared).]

Les Lettres françaises was a weekly literary journal edited by Louis Aragon between 1953 and 1972 in Paris, France. It devoted a section to the visual arts entitled "Les Arts".

Notre temps

Le journal de la Biennale de Paris

Au Luna-Park de l'art contemporain

PAUL ANTOINE-LEVIN, critique d'art de son état (voir *les Lettres françaises* n°° 1.202 et 1.203), étant tombé amoureux d'une artiste cinétique de deux ans son aînée (née en 1939 à Tres Arroyos, Argentine) et s'étant fait traiter par elle d'esprit du XIX° siècle, il demande au lecteur une semaine de répit pour mettre de l'ordre dans ses émotions. Il a assisté néanmoins :

● Mercredi 11 octobre, au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, au *Grand cérémonial* d'Arrabal. Il a beaucoup apprécié la scène où l'on voit un fils faire plus ou moins symboliquement l'amour avec sa mère, mais d'accord avec son voisin, lecteur comme lui de Freud en livre de poche, il a déploré un réalisme dans les dialogues qui friserait presque le manque d'imagination.

● Jeudi 12, au musée d'Art moderne, il a participé au vote du « Prix des critiques » qui a été attribué cette année, pour la peinture, à Juan Romero, et pour la sculpture, à Antoine-Pierre Grand. Ses candidats ayant récolté peu de suffrages, il s'est rangé à l'avis de son voisin de gauche, le critique d'art à *L'Express* Otto Hahn, qui votait pour Dufo (peintre Pop de cravates en trompe-l'œil), et pour Yvaral, fils de Vasarely, pape de l'Op, responsable de la grande roue blanche et noire qui accroche les yeux dès l'entrée. Il a même articulé cette pensée profonde qu'entre deux académismes, il valait mieux choisir le plus récent. Mais sa philosophie n'était pas celle de la majorité.

● Vendredi 13, il a assisté, au musée d'Art moderne, à la représentation des *Constructeurs*, d'Henri Michaux, mise en scène de Halle-Halle. Les spectateurs étaient pris en charge par des infirmiers qui les conduisaient à leur place pendant qu'un haut-parleur annonçait qu'ils se trouvaient dans la salle des loisirs d'un hôpital psychiatrique, que les malades n'étaient pas dangereux, masi qu'ils étaient priés néanmoins de ne pas les déranger par leur présence.

● Samedi, il a interpellé Parmentier, Buren, Mosset, Toroni, qui lui ont dit ne vouloir faire aux yeux de la critique qu'un seul homme, ne plus vouloir peindre désormais qu'une seule toile, la même, qui est « ce qu'elle est et rien d'autre ». Ils ont admis que la simple description de leur *Manifestation 4*, par P. A.-L., était le plus bel hommage critique qu'on pouvait leur rendre, et pour autant qu'ils puissent souscrire à un quelconque jugement, ils s'accordent à trouver juste ces lignes écrites à leur sujet et publiées dans le catalogue de la Biennale : « *On chercherait vainement l'illusion qu'ils nous proposent. Une peinture aussi réduite n'est ni le tout ni le rien. Ni réconfort ni malaise ne sont à quêter dans leur peinture. Il n'y a pas de communication. Le spectateur est laissé seul avec lui-même, le contact avec l'œuvre d'art a perdu sa qualité principale : sa propriété émolliente.*

(1) Emollient, e (*Petit Larousse*) : adj. et n. m. (du lat. emolliere, amollir), qui relâche, détend et amollit : *emplâtre émollient.*

Marc Albert-Levin

Note de lecture

Dr JAMES LARTIZIEN
Sous le vent des bêtes sauvages
(Flammarion)

LE Dr (?) James Lartizien nous prévient : *L'Afrique, ce n'est pas pour les mauviettes.* Mais cette Afrique-là, c'est le brave nègre un peu bêbête, le Blanc condescendant et supérieur. Des animaux qui trainent leurs tripes à terre après avoir reçu des balles explosives. On n'a guère envie de continuer la lecture de cet ouvrage. Cependant, si l'on persiste, on trouve des réflexions de ce genre : *Je pique un nouveau départ pour filmer l'agonie du deuxième buffle* ; et *Je retrouve cette fièvre de la chasse, sentiment atténué du plaisir de la guerre.*

Les « alibis » du Dr (?) Lartizien (qui est *l'incurable tendre de l'équipe*) sont les films et les fusils-médicaments pour la capture des grands fauves. Ces captures sont des fiascos finalement pleins de cruauté.

On en vient à être heureux quand « la grosse bête » tue son homme, dit l'auteur. Nous aussi.

C. de N.

54

54 **Marc Albert-Levin, "Le journal de la Biennale de Paris. Au Luna-Park de l'art contemporain," Les Lettres françaises, no. 1203, October 25, 1967, press cutting, 26.9 × 15.6 cm.**

[Our Time: The Journal of the Paris Biennale, At the Luna-Park of Contemporary Art

PAUL ANTOINE-LEVIN, art critic by profession (*see Lettres françaises no. 1.202 and 1.203*), [...]

Saturday, he interviewed Parmentier, Buren, Mosset, Toroni, who told him that they wanted to be seen as a single person in the eyes of the critic, from now on only wanting to paint one single painting, the same, which is "what it is and nothing else." They admitted that the simple description of their "Manifestation 4" by P[aul] A[ntoine]-L[evin] was the most beautiful critical homage that could be made of them, and inasmuch as they might subscribe to some form of judgment, they agree about the justice of these lines written about their work and published in the Biennale catalogue: *"One would seek in vain any illusion suggested by these works. Painting that is so reductive is neither everything nor nothing. Their painting seeks neither reassurance nor incomprehension* [malaise]. *There is no communication. The spectator is left alone with him or herself. Contact with the "work of art" has lost its principle quality* — its soothing [*émolliente*] property."

Emollient, e (*Petit Larousse*): adj. and masc. n. (from Latin *emolliere*, to soften), which slackens, stretches, and softens: *softened* [émollient] *plaster.*
Marc Albert-Levin]

3 janvier 1967 (a) (January 3, 1967 (a))

3 janvier 1967 (b) (January 3, 1967 (b))

1965

1966

1967

[gray]
December 6
“The Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni Group no longer exists”

Parmentier dissociates himself from an exhibition bringing together Buren, Mosset, and Toroni with Jeanine de Goldsmith, at Galerie J, 8 rue de Montfaucon, Paris (France), and declares the group dissolved in a pamphlet.

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

55

La position affichée par Daniel BUREN, Olivier MOSSET, et Niele TORONI le 5 Décembre, 8, rue de Montfaucon, marque publiquement la fin du groupe BUREN - MOSSET - PARMENTIER - TORONI.

Bien que séduisante, elle représente à mon avis un recul important par rapport à un certain nombre de points que nous défendions ensemble.

Cette position, à savoir : l'un quelconque d'eux trois peut faire les toiles des deux autres, ce qui n'est pas nouveau, et la revendiquer totalement, ce qui l'est. (Car « revendiquer », mot usé, prend ici quelque sens : ce qu'on considérait comme une toile de Buren avant le 5 décembre n'est plus un Buren mais aussi bien un Mosset ou un Toroni ; quand Toroni peint désormais on ne sait en principe pas si sa toile va être un rond noir ou des empreintes de pinceau régulièrement alignées ou encore une toile rayée verticalement. Le mot « revendication » veut ici dire quelque chose ; ceci si nous prenons l'attitude de B.M.T. au sérieux.)

Mais la question se pose : **doit-on ou ne doit-on pas les prendre au sérieux ?** Je commence par la seconde alternative.

— B.M.T. ne font que jouer sur les mots, pour mettre en évidence **l'idée** de « dépersonnalisation » de leur peinture. Pour valoriser une **attitude** ils dévalorisent — ou essayent de le faire — leur acte « peindre » (les attitudes et les mots étant plus accessibles au public que la peinture même à laquelle ils se réfèrent ; B.M.T. sont bien placés pour le savoir, moi aussi).

Ils jouent sur les mots, rien n'est changé, **Buren peint strictement un Mosset quand il peint un rond noir, un Toroni quand il aligne les impacts de pinceau.** Les empreintes en quinconce restent un Toroni, il n'y a pas identité entre les empreintes et lui mais c'est la proposition peinte neutre que nous connaissons depuis près de deux ans signée Toroni. **C'est un Toroni.**

L'attitude n'est neuve en rien, Buren fait des faux. Car s'il n'y a pas de faux possible quand Buren peint un Toroni que Toroni signe (Corot authentifiait déjà de cette façon les faux Corot), un Toroni peint par Buren et présenté comme un Buren devient un faux Toroni signé Buren. Peut-être devrait-on alors conseiller à B.M.T. de redevenir sérieux, de continuer à peindre chacun leurs propres toiles, et, faux pour faux, de faire des Utrillo ou des Arman pour les raisons qui animent généralement les faussaires.

Tout ceci dans le cas où on ne les prend pas au sérieux, ou leur « attitude » n'est qu'une série de mots vides.
Mais la première alternative ? Celle à laquelle je crois presque.

— Ils sont sérieux. Nous devons alors admettre que Toroni peignant les bandes extrêmes d'une toile rayée, le cercle, les empreintes alignées, peint bien chaque fois un vrai Toroni.

Et là, commence quelque chose de très grave qui n'est plus l'abus de langage de l'alternative précédente. **Cette fois l'attitude est régressive, essentiellement.**
En effet, les deux points les plus importants de ce que proposait notre groupe étaient, du moins je le crois :

— **1°** stricte évidence du propos peint (c'était des bandes, verticales ou horizontales, des points, un cercle, **et ce n'était que cela,** non allusif, ne portant de message, ne racontant rien de leur auteur ;

— **2°** refaire toujours la même toile (« toutes les toiles de Buren, il en est de même pour celles de Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, sont identiques. Il n'y a plus de notion de perfectibilité ». Michel Claura in-Catalogue de la Biennale de Paris.)

Or, identiques elles ne le sont plus chez Toroni, ni chez Mosset, ni chez Buren, **ils ont trois traces chacun.** Même si on admet que de l'une à l'autre toute notion de « perfectibilité » est exclue, il y a pour le moins **variante.** Selon sa fantaisie (sinon pourquoi ?) chacun d'eux fera l'une ou l'autre ou la troisième.
Maintenant quand Toroni passe de la trace qu'on connaît de lui à une autre (qu'elle soit **équivalente** n'empêche pas qu'elle soit **autre,** radicalement), il donne une signification à la trace qu'il abandonne et aussi à la trace qu'il lui substitue, ne serait-ce que provisoirement ; **car il a opéré un choix,** celui de changer.

Passer d'une trace à une autre c'est donner beaucoup d'importance à l'une et à l'autre : elles sont liées à la volonté de « faire autrement ». Le mécanisme n'existe plus. Un Buren était neutre, s'il est signé Mosset (ou Toroni) il devient équivoque.

B.M.T. se trouvent maintenant étrangers au véritable mécanisme de la répétition, étrangers au « non choix ».

(« Non-choix » : à un moment de notre travail de « peintres-comme-les-autres » nous avons spontanément chacun de notre côté, il y a un peu plus de deux ans, débouché avec la seule peinture, sans conscience préalable, sur une trace que nous avons reconnue acceptable, vide de message, d'images, vide de cette communication qui rend complices habituellement, artistes et amateurs ; une trace qui ne parle que d'elle, sans digressions. Dès lors que cette trace peinte est reconnue on ne cherche plus, on répète. Je fois des bandes qui représentent des bandes et puis encore des bandes qui signifient : des bandes et puis encore des bandes qui ne sont que des bandes, etc... Je ne choisis plus.)

Le Groupe Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni n'existe plus

Buren, Mosset, Toroni abandonnant la répétition stricte, se situent de façon régressive par rapport à cette position morale. Ils sont **en-deçà,** ils sont **ailleurs,** comme sont ailleurs les gens « in » qui font des multiples.

Je sais que chez B.M.T. il y a un relatif sérieux, je ne confonds pas.

Je me désolidarise pourtant entièrement de leur nouvelle attitude, elle me semble rétrograde.

Paris, le 6 Décembre 1967.

Michel PARMENTIER.

P.S. — Mes toiles continuent d'être toutes les mêmes : des bandes alternées horizontales, égales, de 38 cm de large, cette année blanches et grises. (Chaque année la couleur change pour éviter qu'une éventuelle signification puisse être donnée à une couleur unique préférentielle voire obsessionnelle ou symbolique.)

M. P.

55 **Pamphlet by Michel Parmentier, "Le Groupe Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni n'existe plus" (The Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni group no longer exists), December 6, 1967, 48 × 22 cm.**

[The position expressed by Daniel BUREN, Olivier MOSSET, and Niele TORONI on December 5 at 8 rue de Montfaucon marks publically the end of the group BUREN – MOSSET – PARMENTIER – TORONI.

Although seductive, to my mind it represents a significant step backwards in relation to a certain number of points that we defended together.

This position is the following: any of the three artists can do the canvases of the two – which is not new – and then claim them [*revendiquer*] complete, which is new. ("*revendiquer*," an old word, takes on a specific meaning here: what was considered to be a canvas by Buren before December 5 is no longer a Buren but also a Mosset or a Toroni; when Toroni paints from this point on, in principle one does not know if his canvas is going to be a black circle, regularly aligned brush-marks, or again a vertically striped canvas. The phrase "claim responsibility [*revendication*]" is significant here — that is, if we take B.M.T.'s attitude seriously).

But the question must be posed: **ought we, or ought we not, take them seriously?** Let me begin with the second alternative.

— B.M.T. are only playing on words in order to highlight the **idea** of the "depersonalization" of their painting. In order to valorize an **attitude**, they discredit — or try to — their act of "painting" (given that attitudes and words are more accessible to the public than the very painting to which they refer; B.M.T. are well positioned to know this, as I am).

Playing on words, nothing has changed; **Buren completely paints a Mosset when he paints a round circle, a Toroni when he aligns the brush-strokes**. The brush-marks in staggered rows remain a Toroni, there is no identity between brush-marks and Toroni, but it is the neutral painted proposition signed by Toroni that we have known for nearly two years. **This is a Toroni**.

This attitude is not new in any way; Buren makes fakes. For if there is no possible fake when Buren paints a Toroni that Toroni signs (Corot already authenticated fake Corots in this way), a Toroni painted by Buren and presented as a Buren becomes a fake Toroni signed by Buren: perhaps one should then advise B.M.T. to become serious, continuing to each paint their own canvases and, fake for fake, make [Maurice] Utrillos or Armans for reasons that usually motivate forgers.

This is when one doesn't take them seriously, or where their "attitude" is only a series of empty words.

But the first alternative, the one which I almost believe?

— They are serious. We should thus admit that Toroni painting the outer bands of a striped canvas, or aligned brush-marks, each time paints a real Toroni.

And it's here there develops something that is very serious, something which is no longer an abuse of language as in the first alternative. **This time the attitude is essentially regressive.**

In fact, I believe the two most important points proposed by our group were:

— **1.** strict evidence of what is painted (vertical stripes or horizontal bands, points, a circle, **and this is only what it was,** without allusion, not carrying any message, telling nothing about their author);

— **2.** always remaking the same canvas ("like those of Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, all of Buren's canvases are identical. There is no longer any idea of perfectibility" — Michel Claura, in the catalogue for the Paris Biennale).

Now, Toroni, Mosset, and Buren's canvases are no longer identical; **each of them has three traces**. Even if we admit that, from one canvas to the next, all notion of "perfectibility" is excluded, there is at least **variation**. According to whim (why otherwise?), each of them will make one or the other, or the third.

Now, when Toroni passes from his well-known trace to another (that it might be **equivalent** doesn't prevent it from being radically **other**), he gives meaning to the trace that he abandons, as well as to the trace that he substitutes for it, if only provisionally: **because in making the choice**, he made a change.

Passing from one trace to another is to give significant importance to both; they are tied to the desire to "do something different." The mechanism no longer exists. A Buren was neutral; if it is signed by Mosset (or Toroni), it becomes equivocal.

B.M.T. now find themselves alienated from the real mechanism of repetition, alienated from a "non-choice."

("Non-choice": at a moment in our work of "painting-like-the-others" a little over two years ago, and without prior awareness, each of us in our own way had spontaneously been led to a trace that, only in painting, we had recognized as acceptable, void of message or images, empty of this communication which usually

renders artists and viewers accomplices; a trace that only speaks of itself, without digression. From the moment that this painted trace is recognized, one no longer seeks something else, one repeats. I make bands that represent bands, and then bands that signify... bands and then again bands that are only bands, etc. I no longer choose.)

The Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni Group no longer exists.

Buren, Mosset, Toroni abandon strict repetition and find themselves in a regressive stance with regard to this moral position. They **fall short** of this moral position, they are **somewhere else**, in the same way that the "in" people who make multiples are somewhere else.

I know that B.M.T. are relatively serious; I recognize the difference.

However, I completely dissociate myself from their new attitude, which seems to me retrograde.

Paris, December 6, 1967

Michel Parmentier

P.S. — My canvases continue to be all the same: alternating equal horizontal bands, 38 cm wide, this year white and gray. (Each year the color changes in order to avoid that any possible signification might be given to a single preferential, obsessional, or symbolic color.)

M.P.]

Pamphlet dated December 6, 1967, the day after the opening of the exhibition, in response to the presentation text by Michel Claura for Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Niele Toroni, "Manifestation 5," Paris, Galerie J, 8 rue de Montfaucon, December 5-25, 1967:

Hitherto, Buren, Mosset, Toroni have always presented "a canvas with vertical bands whose two extremes are covered with white" as "a Buren";
"a black circle in the middle of a white canvas" as "a Mosset";
"flat brush marks in staggered order on a white canvas" as "a Toroni."
Today, each artist is presenting canvases by the other two with his own, signing all three in his own name.

In the structure of art, as it has always existed, a work of art is either authentic (2°) or fake (1°).

1°) To speak of a fake is to refer to an original. In the case of Buren, Mosset, Toroni, where is the original work? Is it because each one of the artists has asserted authorship of, respectively, his bands, his circle, his marks, that they cannot make canvases that are different without making fakes? Who can tell us that, from the start, each one of them was not really making the canvases of the other two? And if we compare all the canvases with vertical bands, all the ones with a centered circle, all the ones with staggered marks, who could distinguish whether Buren or Mosset or Toroni is the author? For there is an *absolute identity* between the canvases of each type, whoever their author.

2°) Might it be that vertical bands remain "a Buren," a centered circle "a Mosset," staggered marks "a Toroni," even if Buren, Mosset, Toroni each make the canvases of the two others?

The work would remain attached to the person who is reputed to have been the first to create it. This would therefore be to establish an identity between Buren and his canvas, Mosset and his canvas, Toroni and his canvas.

But since the work is always identical to itself, whoever its author, it must be deduced that Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, as individuals, are identical! That does not make sense.

"True" or "false" are notions that cannot be adapted to the painting of Buren, Mosset, Toroni.

Buren, Mosset, Toroni each lay claim to "their canvas" and "those of the two others" because each one has, in effect, made the three canvases. This is the only criterion making it possible to appropriate, to "sign," a work when it is a painting by Buren, Mosset, Toroni.

This is hard to accept because the artwork, by definition, is-in-relation (irreducibly in relation to the person who created it).

The painting of Buren, Mosset, Toroni IS.

Since it simply is, it is totally detached from the person who created it.

Since it simply is, anyone who makes it can claim it. This changes nothing of the BEING of the painting, which will always be identical, so that the author cannot project into it in any way.

For the first time, with Buren, Mosset, Toroni, painting is. The experience offered us provides supplementary proof. One could go on forever looking for a work that would lend itself to this demonstration. What is the point? Art exists as it is and it would be vain to establish a comparison between it and the painting of Buren, Mosset, Toroni.

Michel Claura

56

Les livres d'Art de l'année (pages 14 et 15)

LES LETTRES *françaises*

Une rencontre avec André Pieyre de Mandiargues

Un inédit de Georges Sadoul: Gérard Philippe réalisateur

Joseph von Sternberg parle de son métier

56 **Michel Claura, "Buren, Mosset Toroni," *Les Lettres françaises*, no. 1211, December 6-12, 1967, cover and "Les Arts" section, p. 33, 43 × 30 cm.**

[Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni have organized a series of "Manifestations" over the last year, some of which have been covered in *Les Lettres françaises*. The logic which informs these "manifestations" is remarkable. Even if the style they adopt might in some ways call to mind any other artistic manifestation, this approach as a whole is unusually rigorous. In general, the action unfolds on two levels: on the one hand, an attack on art in its entirety (referring to a definition of art would be more accurate), and on the other, a new "other" proposition, constituted by *four canvases that are always identical* — their own.

As of January 3, they have declared that the entire history of art coalesces around a common point: the work of art only exists in relation... The canvases of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni exist in and of themselves. On the level of written discourse, this would demand a lengthy elaboration. On the level of the thing to be looked at, if this is obvious to me, it is not the case for the majority of viewers. To say that viewers don't know how to look would be too easy and false.

Today, three of them, Buren, Mosset, Toroni, are presenting a new exhibition at 8, rue Montfaucon.

Each of them is submitting three canvases.

We have become accustomed to speaking of Buren when we think of vertical stripes, of Mosset when it's about a centered circle, of a Toroni in relation to brush-stokes in staggered rows. *Here, each of them has created their canvas as well as those of the two others, claiming responsibility for the three canvases as their own.*

Never before have they gone so far in demonstrating the "being-in-itself" of their canvases.

Indeed, in a way that is visible and not intellectual, they tend to prove that the canvas is at such a remove from the individual who created it that whoever remakes an identical version can appropriate or claim responsibility for it.

One observes that a canvas from Mosset, made by Buren, is in every way identical to that made by Mosset himself. Thus, one cannot speak of a fake since nothing allows us to distinguish them. To say that a centered circle remains "a Mosset," that brush-stokes in staggered rows are still "a Toroni," is enticing, even if it was Buren who made both canvases. But this comes down to identifying Mosset with his canvas, Toroni with his canvas. If Buren makes one of Mosset's canvases that is absolutely identical to "the original," and a canvas by Toroni under the same conditions, one would come to the conclusion that Buren as an individual is identical to Mosset and Toroni as individuals!

More than ever, this exhibition shows the evidence of the being-in-itself [*l'évidence de l'être en soi*] of Buren's, Mosset's, and Toroni's canvases. Each of the three of them could make the canvas of the two others without anything changing. The canvas is only what it is [*Elle ne fait qu'être*].

To speak of a Buren, a Mosset, a Toroni is only out of convenience, used only for expediency. But in saying that, one cannot mean a work defined in relation to the person who created it, as is the case for all works of art. In daring to say this, Buren, Mosset, Toroni have demonstrated a certain courage.

After a year of "Manifestations," this exhibition is a logical conclusion, the strongest demonstration of the existence of painting whose only "quality" is being.

Michel Claura]

The front page of *Les Lettres françaises* and an article by Claura relating the exhibition at 8 rue de Montfaucon. Claura wrote articles for *Opus International, VH 101,* and the English journal *Studio International*, among others

Les Arts

Est-ce un Buren, un Mosset ou un Toroni ?

Buren, Mosset Toroni

DEPUIS un an, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni ont organisé une série de manifestations, dont certaines ont été relatées dans « les Lettres françaises ». La logique qui a animé ces manifestations est remarquable. Si le style adopté pouvait, par certains côtés, faire penser à n'importe quelle démonstration d'artistes, il était, dans son ensemble, d'une rigueur inhabituelle. L'action se déroulait en général sur deux plans : d'une part, une attaque de l'art dans sa totalité — parler d'une définition serait plus juste — d'autre part, une proposition nouvelle, « autre », constituée par *quatre toiles toujours identiques* : les leurs.

Dès le 3 janvier, ils ont déclaré que toute l'histoire de l'art se retrouvait autour d'un point commun : l'œuvre d'art n'existe que par rapport... Les toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, elles, sont, en soi. Sur le plan du discours écrit cela nécessiterait un long développement. Sur le plan de la chose à regarder, si, pour moi, cela est évident, pour la majorité des regardeurs, ce n'est pas le cas. Dire qu'ils ne savent pas regarder serait trop facile et faux.

Aujourd'hui, Buren, Mosset, Toroni présentent, à trois, une nouvelle exposition, 8, rue Montfaucon.

Chacun propose trois toiles.

Nous étions habitués à parler d'un Buren, lorsque nous pensions à des bandes verticales, d'un Mosset, lorsqu'il s'agissait d'un cercle centré, d'un Toroni à propos d'empreintes en quinconce. Ici, *chacun a réalisé sa toile et celles des deux autres et revendique les trois comme étant siennes.*

Jamais encore ils n'étaient allés aussi loin dans la démonstration de « l'être en soi » de leurs toiles.

En effet, ils tendent à prouver, et ce de façon visible et non intellectuelle, que la toile est à un tel point dégagée de l'individu qui l'a créée que quiconque la refait identiquement peut se l'approprier, la revendiquer.

On note qu'une toile de Mosset, faite par Buren, est en tout point identique à celle que fait Mosset lui-même. On ne peut donc parler d'un faux puisque rien ne permet de les distinguer. Dire qu'un cercle centré reste « un Mosset », que des empreintes en quinconce sont encore « un Toroni », même si c'est Buren qui a fait les deux toiles, est séduisant. Mais cela revient à identifier Mosset et sa toile, Toroni et sa toile. Buren faisant une toile de Mosset absolument identique à « l'original » et une toile de Toroni dans les mêmes conditions, on arriverait à déduire que Buren, en tant qu'individu, est identique à Mosset et Toroni, en tant qu'individus !

Cette exposition démontre plus que jamais l'évidence de l'être en soi des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Toroni. Chacun des trois peut faire la toile des deux autres sans que rien ne soit changé pour celle-ci. Elle ne fait qu'être.

Parler d'un Buren, d'un Mosset, d'un Toroni n'est qu'une commodité, dont on ne peut user que par souci de concision. Mais on ne peut vouloir signifier par là une œuvre définie par rapport à l'être qui l'a créée, comme c'est le cas pour toute œuvre d'art. Buren, Mosset, Toroni font preuve d'une forme certaine de courage en osant le dire.

Après un an de « manifestations », cette exposition est un aboutissement logique et la démonstration la plus forte de l'existence d'une peinture qui n'a que la « qualité » d'être.

Michel Claura

GALERIE ROR VOLMAR
58, rue de Bourgogne (7e) — INV. 95-43
Colette du BARRY, Edouard GRASSIN
Pascal ROUGON, SASMAYOUX
Salle Hypogée : Pierre VUILLET
du 6 au 19 décembre

VILLAND ET GALANIS
27, boulevard Haussmann - BAL. 59-91
CHASTEL
PEINTURES DE 1955 A 1961
du 6 au 25 décembre 1967

GALERIE SAINT-PLACIDE
47, rue Saint-Placide (6e)
JOËL LE FUR
A LA CAVE :
JEAN TECH
du 5 au 18 décembre

GALERIE CAMILLE RENAULT
133, boulevard Haussmann - BAL. 98-26
AKNIN
du 5 au 19 décembre

ATELIER
DE L'ILE DE FRANCE
SON GROUPE
DES ALCHIMISTES
Mairie de Suresnes - 92
jusqu'au 10 décembre

GALERIE DES PEINTRES GRAVEURS
199 bis, bd Montparnasse - DAN. 62-29
Chot PLASSOT
Estampes et dessins
du 8 -12-67 au 6-1-68

GALERIE CLAUDE BERNARD
5 et 7, rue des Beaux-Arts — 326.97-07
6 peintres allemands
à partir du 7 décembre

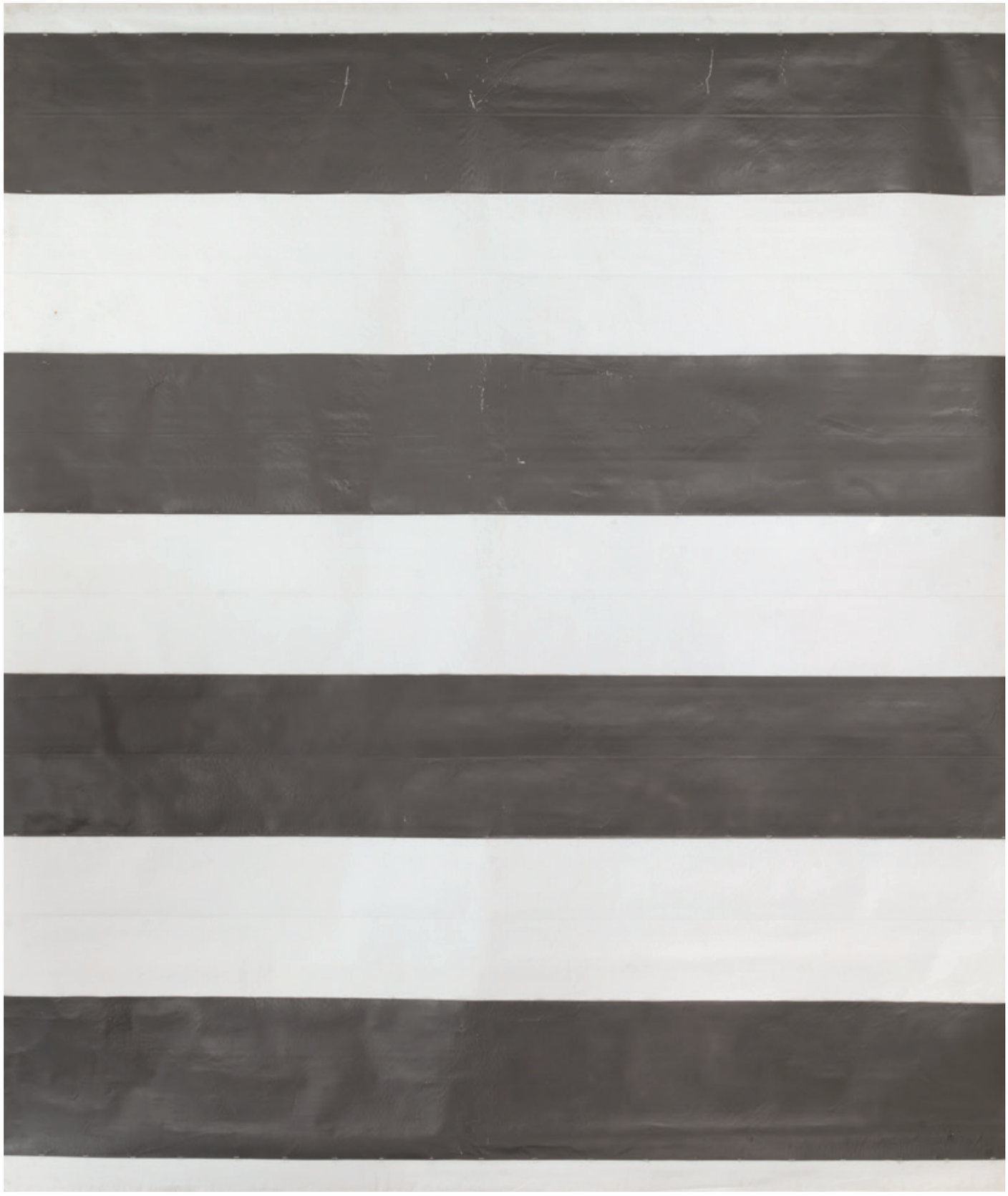
RENTOILAGE - PARQUETAGE
RESTAURATION de TABLEAUX
ATELIER BERTIN
281, rue de Belleville, PARIS (19e)
Tél. 200-80-79

GALERIE FRANÇOIS PETIT
122, bd Haussmann (8e)
DALI
ŒUVRES ANCIENNES
du 1er au 23 décembre

SIMONE BADINIER
13, rue Guénégaud
Bierge G. NILSSON
Clavel Mc CORMICK
Jusqu'au 29 décembre

ADAM
MONTPARNASSE
INCLUSION
SOUS PLASTIQUE
Documentation sur demande
11, boulev. Edgar-Quinet
PARIS (14e)

Page 33



20 mars 1967 (March 20, 1967)

1965

1966

1967

1968 [red]

Parmentier begins this year with *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red])[1] ("poppy red lacquer" by Ripolin), unconnected with the dissolution of the group or the events of May. Some ten canvases at the most conclude the year: from *15 janvier 1968* (January 15, 1968) to the one dated *5 août 1968* (August 5, 1968), after which Parmentier stopped painting.

1 For every exhibition or publication with *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), Parmentier recommended that the following statement be adjoined:
"Michel PARMENTIER: [Rouge], *1968* ([red], 1968)"
"Between 1965 and 1968, I painted horizontal 38 cm wide bands in a single color, which alternated with bands (the same dimension, white) of the canvas protected from the sprayed paint (aerosol or spray-paint) by a preliminary folding, which then comes into appearance through unfolding. This work was repeated exactly the same way between 1965 and 1968, the color only changing arbitrarily from year to year so as not to laden it with preferential or symbolic signification.
This description says everything about the productpainting of which I was the author.
I ceased painting definitively in 1968."
(Open Letter from Michel Parmentier to François Mathey, March 16, 1972; (fig. 66, p. 101).

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

LES ARTS

Structures primaires et art minimal

PAR MICHEL CLAURA

STRUCTURES PRIMAIRES : Nom donné à une tendance de l'art américain, née vers 1960, arrivée à maturité vers 1963, montrée en France cette année. S'intègrent, plus ou moins dans les définitions plus larges du cool-art et du minimal-art.

CARACTERISTIQUES. Pièces, blocs, œuvres tridimentionnels. S'inscrivent dans l'espace où ils sont présentés, par rapport à cet espace ; différence d'avec la sculpture qui, avant tout, ne fait qu'ordonnancer son espace propre. Pour ne pas parler de « sculpture » à propos des « structures primaires », on donne souvent le nom d' « objets spécifiques » à ces œuvres.

PRESENTATION : Il s'agit généralement d'œuvres monumentales. Certains artistes ont cependant réduit leur production aux dimensions de la galerie. La forme est très simple, « primaire », pour tout dire. Cubes, parallélépipèdes, tubes de néon de type standard, etc. Matériaux utilisés : matériaux modernes ; fibre de verre, contre-plaqué, plexiglas, fer galvanisé, aluminium, néon. La peinture utilisée est de la peinture industrielle, généralement injectée dans le matériau brut.

PRINCIPAUX COMPOSANTS : Robert Morris (que l'on doit voir à la galerie Sonnabend), Tony Smith (présenté galerie Yvon Lambert), Dan Flavin (dont on a vu un néon en 1966, galerie Sonnabend), Mac Cracken (que l'on a vu à la récente Biennale, à la galerie Stadler en 1967, que l'on reverra galerie Sonnabend), Robert Smithson, Ronald Bladen, Carl Andre, Sol Le Witt, Robert Grosvenor, Larry Bell, etc. Nous ne parlerons ici que des Américains.

Nous n'engagerons pas le débat sur la dénomination même de « structure primaire », où l'on pourrait s'interroger sur le caractère primaire d'une structure dès lors qu'elle est mise à jour.

Les intentions

L'objet spécifique apparaît tout d'abord comme étant purement et simplement une forme géométrique simple. Il est là, inerte. Il est imposant. Il ne se laisse appréhender que dans sa totalité.

Ce dernier point rappelle à l'esprit la peinture all-over de Pollock, les quasi-monochromes de Newman, les « monochromes » de Klein. Bien que paraissant situé aux antipodes, l'artiste minimal est l'héritier, à plus d'un titre, de l'expressionnisme abstrait. C'est grâce à celui-ci, notamment, qu'il sait qu'une œuvre ne doit pas nécessairement être composée. Ainsi, c'est comme un tout que l'œil du regardeur la perçoit.

Que représente cette masse, ce monument pour celui qui l'a conçu ?

La plupart des artistes « primaires » viennent de la peinture. Ils l'ont quittée à cause de son principe irréductiblement illusionniste. S'ensuit une théorie sur la faiblesse de l'expression en deux dimensions. On arrive ainsi à la réalité de l'espace en trois dimensions, opposée à l'illusion de l'espace bidimensionnel dans lequel s'inscrit la peinture.

Bien sûr, l'illusion est également autre chose que l'illusion de la troisième dimension, mais si les artistes « primaires », d'autre part, refusent de donner une image, ce n'est pas pour éviter l'illusion de toute représentation, mais par volonté de dépouillement. Ici encore, paradoxalement, on retrouve Newman, et même Pollock, dans la mesure où il se dépouillait dans sa toile. Newman veut « purifier pour intensifier, en purgeant l'œuvre de tous éléments extrinsèques » C'est exactement l'intention de Judd, de Morris, de Smith, de tous.

Dans le désir même de dépouillement réside le choix de formes primaires. A l'origine de cette recherche formelle, on trouve l'architecte Buckminster Fuller qui, dès 1930, proposait le tétraèdre comme étant la figure la plus élémentaire, à savoir la plus « économique », « minimal ». De là allaient naître ses coupoles géodésiques. L'influence de ces recherches architecturales sur la recherche esthétique qui amena les « structures primaires » est très importante.

Dans la même volonté de dépouillement intervient le choix du matériau. Les matériaux modernes, tels la fibre de verre ou le plexiglas, sont purs d'aspect. On les fabrique dans de belles usines très propres. Pour les traiter, en plus, on emploie des peintures industrielles, qui sont des couleurs plus belles que les couleurs naturelles, plus « pures ». Injectées dans la masse, on arrivre ainsi à des objets extrêmement nets, à des surfaces parfaitement unies. C'est un des aspects du dépouillement recherché, c'est l'objet aseptisé.

Dans le même but de dépouillement, la main de l'homme ne doit pas apparaître. Ainsi, Judd prend grand soin à ce que les clous ou vis n'apparaissent pas, lors de l'accrochage de ses tablettes au mur, car ce serait un signe de l'imperfection de la main de l'homme. Celle-ci apparaît d'autant moins, en général, que, quoique chaque œuvre soit le résultat d'un long travail de conception en réduction, les pièces sont fabriquées en usine. De ce niveau, Flavin est le plus « impersonnel », puisqu'il achète ses tubes de néon dans le commerce, comme n'importe qui.

Récapitulons les étapes du dépouillement. La forme doit être élémentaire. Le matériau doit avoir certaines qualités évidentes : translucidité, matité, finesse, souplesse, légèreté, opacité, au choix. La surface doit doit être parfaitement nette et unie (exceptions pour Smith et Bladen).

Ce dépouillement est opéré dans un but très précis. Il s'agit, pour l'artiste « primaire », de créer une œuvre neutre, qui ne puisse se définir que par sa propre spécificité (Judd, Smithson), et qui détermine un environnement (Morris, Bladen, Grosvenor). On quitte alors la recherche purement formelle pour en venir à une nouvelle conception de l'objet, de l'œuvre d'art.

Résultat

Judd refuse que l'on discute d'autre chose que des qualités propres que peut avoir son œuvre ; par exemple, des rapports quantitatifs qui peuvent exister entre les diverses parties d'une pièce (vides, pleins, intervalles), lorsque cette pièce est composée de plusieurs morceaux. Les créateurs des « structures primaires » estiment donner à voir une œuvre qui n'a pas à être interprétée. Elle est là, telle qu'elle est.

Cela est-il vrai ? Sont-ils arrivés à la « réalité » d'une chose ?

Pour Carl Andre, les briques qu'il dispose dans la salle où il expose sont tellement « en soi » qu'il peut les emporter une à une, après l'exposition.

Il y a, dans les structures primaires, une recherche de la neutralité fort intéressante. Disons tout de suite que, du point de vue esthétique, l'aventure est également belle, quoique chargée d'antécédents, de Duchamp à Mondrian, en passant par Malevitch et Newman.

Mais la contradiction, qui se trouve déjà dans les propos que tiennent les artistes « primaires », est flagrante dans l'œuvre elle-même.

Ces monuments, inertes, sont faits pour barrer le passage. C'est une prise de possession de l'espace. On vous agresse dans votre espace vital. Morris conseille à ceux qui désirent le calme de ne pas s'affronter avec ses sculptures. Les « primaires » parlent d'expérience que l'on doit vivre avec leurs œuvres, une sorte d'expérience totale. Cela va jusqu'à un désir de réintégrer le physique et l'intellect. On sent percer Mac Luhan. En quelque façon, il s'agit de vivre l'œuvre. Il semble qu'il y ait là une contradiction flagrante avec le vœu d'un art « qui ne communiquerait aucune émotion », « une chose neutre ». Peut-on appeler neutre un objet qui vous agresse ? Est-ce une chose neutre qu'une œuvre qui s'impose de telle façon ?

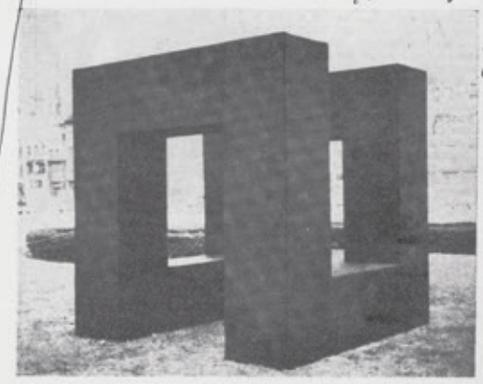
Objet en soi. Objet qui ne soit plus image. C'est là que les artistes « primaires » sont le plus loin de la réalité de leur œuvre, en parlant ainsi.

Une constatation s'impose. Le pop' art est typiquement américain. l'Amérique dans ses boîtes de lessive et ses bandes dessinées. Les structures primaires sont typiquement américaines, l'Amérique dans ses buildings, dans sa monstruosité aseptisée, dans son gigantisme, dans son vide, dans son esthétique industrielle ; enfin, le plus concrètement, strictement dans son aménagement de l'espace vécu. Marcel Duchamp disait, en 1917, que la seule sculpture jamais produite par les Etats-Unis était les ponts. Après cinquante ans, on a fini par transposer ces ouvrages d'art en œuvres d'art. C'est alors que l'on retrouve les piliers d'immeubles de Park Avenue, des portes d'ascenseur aussi, des présentoirs de chaussures, des lumières gueulardes et blafardes tout à la fois, tout cela restant aussi froid, certes, mais mettant en valeur, qu'on le veuille ou non, le côté envoûtant de la « nature » américaine, une nature complètement humanisée, et que, de ce fait, on appelle « inhumaine ». C'est la réalisation de la prophétie de Malevitch qui, à côté d'un art de la campagne, représenté par le chevalet, et des arts appliqués, prévoyait un art de la ville, qui serait possible lorsque serait absorbé le rythme de la ville et la spécificité métallique de l'acier.

Ainsi, l'artiste des structures primaires, au même titre que l'artiste classique, se charge de nous montrer ce qui est beau. De même que la boîte de concentré de tomate devient signifiante lorsque l'artiste pop' se l'approprie, de même le paysage américain devient mystère par le fait même qu'il soit « représenté », tiré au clair par les structures primaires. Parler de neutralité est donc un abus de langage. L'image, que Judd et ses amis de New York et de Los Angeles voulaient supprimer, est évidemment présente dans leurs œuvres : l'image de l'espace américain.

En France, nous ne faisons que commencer à connaître ce genre de « paysage ». Aussi, ces artistes américains feront-ils figure de prophètes. Aux Etats-Unis, où même les hippies s' « aseptisent » aujourd'hui, les structures primaires représentent bel et bien une « ambiance » qui existe déjà, dans la rue, dans les usines, dans les restaurants. Encore une fois, il est à craindre que l'artiste n'arrive, après coup, pour nous montrer l'étrange beauté d'une mutation dès à présent opérée dans la réalité.

(Suite page 30.)



Tony Smith. - « We Lost », 1966

57 **Michel Claura, "Structures primaires et art minimal" (Primary structures and minimal art), *Les Lettres françaises*, no. 1222, February 21, 1968, "Les Arts" section, pp. 29-30, handwritten annotations by Michel Parmentier, 43 × 30 cm.**
[translation **see p. 82**]

Parmentier wrote his response directly on Claura's text.

Les Arts

(Suite de la page 29)

Structures primaires

Il me semble même que ces structures primaires, en admettant qu'elles ne soient qu'une constatation froide d'un état de fait, sont finalement une acceptation du monde une « admiration » étonnante de la réalité américaine. Non seulement, alors, ces objets spécifiques seraient une représentation de l'Amérique actuelle, dans son aménagement de l'espace, mais, plus grave, également une acceptation explicite de la société. Nouveau point commun avec le pop'art. Ces deux tendances de l'art ressemblent trop à un acquiescement de la société, faisant, l'une du détail, l'autre du gigantisme, un symbole fort séduisant.

Derrière la simplicité apparente, une culture fort complexe se dissimule mal. On comprend que Robert Smithson voie dans cette « école » une forme de « sarcasme métaphysique, d'exaltation de la grandeur du vide, de sadisme ». L'artiste n'a pas abandonné son rôle de montreur de la réalité, témoin d'un « monde substantiellement sans vie ». C'est bien là que l'artiste « primaire » nous propose encore, comme tout autre artiste, l'illusion de ses problèmes personnels. Admettons qu'il soit mal à l'aise dans ce monde, cette nature américanisée. Il n'hésite pas à venir nous le dire. Nous enregistrons, et voilà que nous « redécouvrons » cet espace dans lequel nous vivons. Et finalement, nous sommes fiers, à voir la beauté intransigeante qui s'en dégage, lorsque ce sont les artistes qui se chargent de nous ouvrir les yeux. C'est pourquoi le malaise qui découle de ces œuvres, ou qui les fait concevoir, peut prêter à caution. On sent, là-dessous un dandysme équivoque, qui rappelle celui de Truman Capote ; une espèce de froideur qui, malgré elle sans doute, se met au service d'une société telle qu'elle est, une froideur qui acquiesce.

Revenons-en au problème de l' « image » que les artistes des structures primaires refusent.

Tout d'abord, donc, il est déjà évident que leur œuvre est imagée, en ce sens qu'elle est l'image de l'Amérique. Notons, à ce propos, qu'il est dommage que ce qui pourrait passer pour une nouvelle conception de l'art soit ainsi si localisable, presque provincial, rappelant l'esprit de clocher du précisionnisme.

Les artistes « primaires » ont oublié quelque chose, dans leur opération de dépouillement. Ils n'ont pas pensé qu'il leur fallait oublier leur sensibilité. S'ils y ont pensé, c'est un échec. Nouvelle « image ».

Il apparaît clairement que leurs sensibilités respectives souffrent toutes d'un mal commun : l'agoraphobie. Que ce soient les cubes de Bell, les parallélépipèdes de Judd, les néons de Flavin, les blocs de Mac Cracken, les construction de Le Witt, ces pièces statiques semblent pourtant l'aboutissement d'un mouvement qui les a « retirées du monde ». Elles se mettent loin de la foule, au besoin elles écartent la foule, simplement de par leurs qualités spécifiques. Remarque : la volonté de communiquer ne disparaît pas pour autant puisque, dans le même temps, ces objets spécifiques « imposent » leur présence.

En plus de cette première marque de sensibilité commune à tous ces artistes, chacun a sa propre forme de sensibilité, purement transmise à l'œuvre. C'est la sensibilité exacerbée de Flavin, c'est la sensibilité réprimée, la froideur feinte de Judd, c'est le geste parlant, en filigrane dans les planches de Mac Cracken, c'est le côté tragique de Morris, etc.

Ainsi, sous les apparences d'une forme froide, ces œuvres sont « chargées » d'images « chargées » comme des œuvres d'art. Elles nous reportent à quelque chose d'autre qu'elles-mêmes. Elles ne sont donc pas neutres. D'abord, on vient troubler le regardeur. Ensuite, on lui montre l'Amérique, de manière d'autant plus séduisante qu'elle est troublante. Déjà, à ce stade, la sensibilité de l'artiste entre en jeu. Enfin, l'individu-créateur pale de sa personne en se mettant, sans même peut-être le savoir, dans son œuvre. En effet, ce n'est pas parce que l'artiste fait faire son œuvre par un autre, ou par une machine, que l'œuvre devient automatiquement neutre. L'œuvre réalisée en usine, par des spécialistes de la fibre de verre ou du fer galvanisé, est un aspect intéressant. Il permet d'éviter le bricolage d'artiste. Mais l'intervention de la machine n'empêche pas nécessairement la projection de l'artiste dans son œuvre. Les structures primaires en sont la preuve.

Tout cela donne une œuvre d'art impressionnante, surtout pour des Européens qui ne connaissent pas le paysage urbain et industriel américain, qui ne sont pas encore habitués à l'aseptisation. De même, ils étaient impressionnés par la mythologie américaine, publicité, bandes dessinées et conditionnement, en découvrant le pop'art.

C'est une « nouvelle esthétique », comme le disait le titre d'une exposition à la Washington Gallery of Modern Art. L'esthétique industrielle. L'usage fait, par exemple, du néon et du plexiglas est tout de même plus intéressant que celui qu'en pourrait faire un nouveau Matisse, ce qu'on prendrait, en France, pour de l'avant-garde. Mais ces qualités formelles sont en même temps la limite absolue des structures primaires.

Nous sommes loin de l'objet autonome. Nous n'y sommes pas du tout. Nous sommes dans l'art. L'artiste n'oublie pas qu'il est là pour s'exprimer, et que c'est même pour cela qu'il est artiste. Et chacun vient nous donner sa solution à ses problèmes, ou ses problèmes tout court. Lorsqu'il y a communauté d'intentions et parenté formelle, on en fait une nouvelle tendance de l'art moderne. Le spectateur vient, s'interroge et repart. Il s'est distrait.

On doit apprécier les créateurs des structures primaires mais ou car, ce sont des artistes et ils n'ont pas remis l'art en question.

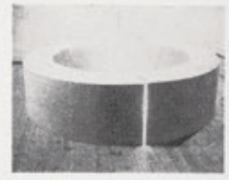
Les artistes français qui seraient tentés par les structures primaires ont le choix, pour leur inspiration, entre l'aménagement de la Défense et la maison individuelle à un quart d'heure de Paris par l'autoroute du Sud.

M. C.

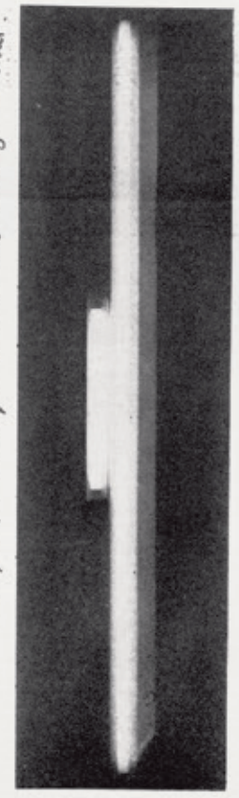
Donald Judd. - Sans titre, 1965

Larry Bell. - Sans titre, 1965

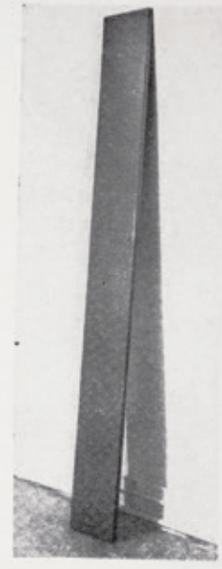
Sol le Witt. - Sans titre, 1966



Robert Morris.
Sans titre, fibre de verre, 1965



Dan Flavin. - Sans titre, 1963-66



John McCracken. - Planche bleue, 1966

p. 80 57 [**Primary Structures and Minimal Art**[1]
by Michel Claura

PRIMARY STRUCTURES: Name given to a tendency in American art, created around 1960, coming of age around 1963, shown in France this year. Integrated more or less into the broader definitions of cool-art and minimal-art.

CHARACTERISTICS: works of art, blocks, three-dimensional works. Part of the space in which they are presented, in relation to this space; difference from sculpture which above all only arranges itself in its own space. In order not to refer to "sculpture" in relation to "primary structures," one often gives the name specific objects to these works.

PRESENTATION: In general, it concerns monumental works. However, certain artists reduce their production to the dimensions of the gallery. The form is very simple, in other words, "primary." Cubes, oblong cubes, ordinary fluorescent bulbs, etc. Materials used: modern materials — fiberglass, plywood, Plexiglas, galvanized steel, aluminum, neon. The paint used is industrial paint, usually injected into the untreated material.

PRINCIPLE ENTITIES: Robert Morris (who one ought to see at the Sonnabend Gallery), Tony Smith (presented at Yvon Lambert Gallery), Dan Flavin (there was a fluorescent strip at Sonnabend in 1966), McCracken (who could be seen at the recent Biennale, at the Stadler Gallery in 1967, and who can be seen again at Sonnabend), Robert Smithson, Ronald Bladen, Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Robert Grosvenor, Larry Bell, etc. We are only referring here to the Americans.

We won't address the debate concerning the use of the very name "primary structure," in which one could interrogate the primary character of a structure at the moment it is exposed.

Intentions

The specific object initially appears as being purely and simply a basic geometrical form. It is there, inert. It is imposing. It can only be apprehended in its totality.

This last point recalls the spirit of Pollock's all-over painting,[2] Newman's quasi-monochromes, Klein's "monochromes." Even though they seem situated at extreme opposites, the minimal artist is the heir of abstract expressionism in more ways than one. It is notably thanks to the latter that he knows that the work doesn't necessarily have to be composed. It is thus as a whole that the viewer's eye perceives it.

What does this mass or monument represent for the person who conceives it?

The majority of "primary" artists come from painting. They abandoned painting because of its irreducibly illusionistic aim. A theory then ensued on the weakness of expression in two dimensions. One thus arrived at the reality of space in three dimensions, opposed to the illusion of two-dimensional space in which painting is inscribed.

Of course, illusion is also something different than three-dimensional illusion, but if the "primary" artists refuse on the other hand to offer any image, it is not to avoid the illusion of all representation but through a will to strip away [*dépouillement*]. Paradoxically, one here again finds Newman and even Pollock, insofar as Pollock strips himself away in his canvas. Newman seeks to "purify in order to intensify, purging the work of all extrinsic elements."[3] This is exactly the same intention as Judd, Morris, Smith, and everyone else.

The choice of primary forms resides in the very desire to strip everything away. One finds the architect Buckminster Fuller at the origin of this formal research; since 1930, he proposed the tetrahedron as the most elementary figure, that is, as the most "economic," "minimal." His geodesic domes stem from this. The influence of his architectural research on aesthetic research, which led to "primary structures," is very important.

The choice of materials intervenes in the same desire for stripping everything away. Modern materials such as fiberglass or Plexiglas are pure in appearance. They are fabricated in very clean, beautiful factories. In addition, one uses industrial paints to treat them, which are more beautiful and in "purer" colors than natural colors. Injected into the material, one obtains extremely clear-cut objects with perfectly smooth surfaces. This is one of the aspects of stripping away that is sought — the sterilized object.

Along with the same stripping away, there should be no evidence of the human hand. Thus, Judd takes great care that the nails or screws can't be seen when his stacks are hung on the walls, since this would be a sign of the imperfection of the human hand. In general, even though each work is the result of a lengthy task of conceptual reduction, this sense of touch appears even less since the pieces are designed in a factory. Flavin is the most "impersonal" since he buys commercially available fluorescent tubes the same as anyone else.

To sum up the different steps in this act of stripping away: The form must be elementary. The material must have certain obvious qualities — amongst others, translucency, dullness, finesse, suppleness, lightness, opacity. The surface must be perfectly clean and smooth (with the exception of Smith and Bladen).

This stripping away is undertaken for a very precise goal. For the "primary" artist, it is a question of creating a neutral work which can only be defined by its own specificity (Judd, Smithson) and which determines its environment (Morris, Bladen, Grosvenor). One then leaves aside research that is purely formal in order to arrive at a new conception of the object and work of art.

Result

Judd refuses that anything else except the specific qualities inherent in his work be addressed — for example, the quantitative relations that might exist between the different parts of an object (gaps, solids, intervals) when this object is composed of several pieces. Creators of "primary structures" value that the work of art that is given to be seen is not to be interpreted. It is there, such that it is.

Is this true? Have they attained the thing's "reality"?

For Carl Andre, the bricks that he lays out in the room in which he is exhibiting are so fully "in themselves" that he can take them away one by one after the exhibition.

There is extremely interesting research into neutrality in primary structures. Let us say right away that, from an aesthetic point of view, the adventure, however overloaded with precedents, is just as beautiful as works from Duchamp to Mondrian, passing by Malevich and Newman.

But the contradiction, which is already found in the arguments proposed by "primary" artists, is flagrant in the work itself.

These inert monuments are made to block movement. They take possession of space. They assault you[4] in your lived space. Morris advises those who seek calmness not to come face to face with his sculptures. "Primary" artists speak of the experience that one must have with their works, a kind of totalizing experience. This extends to the desire to reintegrate the physical and the intellectual. One feels like McLuhan's world has been punctuated. In a certain way, it's about living the work,[5] which is in flagrant contradiction with the desire of art "which communicates no emotion," "a neutral thing." Can one call an object "neutral" which assaults you? Is a work that imposes itself in such a way neutral?

Object in itself. Object that is no longer an image. In speaking this way, this is how the "primary" artists are furthest from the reality of their work.

An observation is necessary. Pop art is typically American, America in its boxes of laundry powder and cartoon strips. Primary structures are typically American, America in its buildings, its sterilized monstrosity, its gigantism, its emptiness, its industrial aesthetic — in short, most concretely and strictly in its organization of lived space. In 1917, Duchamp said that the only sculpture ever made in the United States are the bridges. After fifty years, we have ended up by transposing these works of art into artworks. It is then that we find pillars from apartment buildings on Park Avenue, elevator doors as well as display stands for shoes, garish and pallid lighting all at the same time, all of this certainly remaining just as cold but highlighting, whether one likes it or not, the captivating side of American "nature," a completely humanized nature that, as a consequence, is called "inhuman." This is the realization of Malevich's prophesy which, next to the art of the countryside — represented by the easel and applied arts — predicted an art of the city, which would be possible once the rhythm of the city and the metallic specificity of the factory became assimilated.

Thus, just like the classical artist, the artist of primary structures takes it upon himself to show us what is beautiful. Just as the can of tomato concentrate becomes significant when the pop artist appropriates it, so the American landscape becomes mysterious by the very fact that it is "represented," made all the clearer through primary structures. To speak of neutrality is thus a misuse of language. The image that Judd and his New York and Los Angeles friends want to suppress is obviously present in their works — the image of American space.

In France, we have only just begun to know this genre of "landscapes." These American artists will also become prophetic figures. In the United States, where even the pinball machines are today "sterilized," primary structures well and truly represent an "ambiance" which already exists in the street, in the factories, in the restaurants. Once again, odds are that the artist only arrives belatedly to show us the strange beauty of a transformation only operative until now in reality.

Accepting that these primary structures are only a detached questioning of an existing condition, it seems to me that they are ultimately a way of accepting the world, an astonishing "admiration" of American reality. In this sense, not only would these specific objects be a representation of contemporary America and its organization of space but also more seriously an explicit acceptance of society. This is a new point in common with pop art. These two artistic tendencies resemble too closely forms of social acquiescence — the former through details, the other through gigantism — creating a strongly seductive symbol.

Behind this apparent simplicity, a highly complex culture is badly concealed. One understands that Robert Smithson sees in this "school" a form of "metaphysical sarcasm, of exaltation of the grandeur of emptiness, of sadism." The artist has not abandoned his role as exhibitor of reality, witness of a "world essentially without life." It is precisely in this sense that the "primary" artist, like any other artist, again proposes the illusion of his personal problems. Let's admit that this Americanized character is ill at ease in this world. He doesn't hesitate to tell us. We take it in and in this way, we "rediscover" this space in which we live. And finally, we are proud to see the intransigent beauty which emerges when it is the artists who take care of opening our eyes. This is why the unease which results from these works, or which allows them to be conceived, should be viewed with caution. Beyond an ambiguous dandyism, which recalls Truman Capote, one senses a kind of coldness which, no doubt in spite of itself, places itself in the service of a society as it exists, a coldness which acquiesces.

Let's return to the problem of the "image" that the primary structure artists refuse.

First of all, then, it is already obvious that their work is illustrative, in the sense that it is an image of America. In this regard, note that it is a pity that what might pass for a new conception of art is thus so localizable, almost provincial, recalling in spirit the parochialism of Precisionism.

The "primary" artists have forgotten something in the operation of stripping away. They haven't thought that they had to forget their sensitivity. If they had thought of it, then it would be a failure. A new "image."

It appears clear that their respective sensibilities all suffer from the same evil — agoraphobia. Whether it is Bell's cubes, Judd's oblong forms, Flavin's fluorescent tubes,[6] McCracken's slabs, LeWitt's constructions, these static pieces however seem like the outcome of a movement which has "withdrawn them from the world." They place themselves far from the crowd, when they need they exclude the crowd, simply through their specific qualities. A remark: the willingness to communicate does not disappear for all that since, at the same time, these specific objects "impose" their presence.

Besides this initial mark of sensibility shared by all these artists, each has their own form of sensibility simply transmitted to the work. This is Flavin's exacerbated sensibility, this is Judd's repressed sensibility, his shrewd coldness, this is the expressive gesture implicit in McCracken's planks, this is Morris's tragic side, etc.

Thus, beneath the appearance of a detached form, these works are "laden" with images... "laden" like works of art.[7] They refer us to something other than themselves. Thus, they are not neutral. First of all, they come to disturb the viewer. Then, they show America in a manner that is far more seductive than disturbing. Already at this stage, the sensibility of the artist comes into play. Finally, the creative individual puts himself on the line by putting himself in his work, without perhaps even knowing it. In fact, it is not because the artist has his work made by someone else or by a machine that the work automatically becomes neutral. The work made in a factory, by fiberglass specialists or galvanized steel, is an interesting aspect. It allows one to bypass the DIY craft of the artist. But the intervention of the machine does not necessarily hinder the projection of the artist into the work. Primary structures are the proof.

All of this makes for an impressive work of art, especially for the Europeans who are not familiar with the American urban and industrial landscape, who have not yet grown accustomed to sterilization. Likewise, in discovering Pop art, they were impressed by American mythology, publicity, cartoon strips, packaging.

This is a "new aesthetic," as the title of an exhibition at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art suggests. An industrial aesthetic. For example, the use of fluorescent bulbs or Plexiglas is all the same more interesting than whatever a new Matisse could do, which would be taken in France for the avant-garde. But these formal qualities are at the same time the absolute limit of primary structures.

Here, we are a long way from the autonomous object. A very long way. We are into art. The artist never forgets that he is there in order to express himself and that is exactly why he is an artist. And each one gives us his solution for the problems he poses, or just his problems. When there is a community of intentions and formal affinities, one creates a new tendency in modern art. The viewer comes in, asks questions, and leaves again. He entertains himself.

One ought to appreciate the creators of primary structures but — or because — they are artists and they have not called art into question.

French artists who might be tempted by primary structures have a choice for inspiration between the layout of La Défense and a detached house fifteen minutes from Paris on the highway heading south.

M.C.]

1 Above the title, annotated around the text, Parmentier inserts the following hand-written note: "What is important is to foreground 'non-evocation (communication)': neutrality does not exist, it would be 'non-signification,' impossible concept from the moment there is 'presentation.'"

2 Annotated next to this phrase, Parmentier inserts: "It is not the fact of *painting all-over* which (potentially) calls for a 'global reading,' it is *the drips + the all-over* — in Pollock. All-over, [René] Duvillier, De Kooning are it — Dubuffet (*Hourloupe*) as well."

3 Annotated next to this quotation, Parmentier inserts: "[Barnett] Newman's *Stations of the Cross*? Tied to the duel of verticality >< horizontality always with the advantage over the vertical = religious."

4 Annotated next to this phrase, Parmentier inserts: "... or the opposite."

5 Annotated next to this phrase, Parmentier inserts: "No. 'Living the work' is not to communicate; it is to observe a work which is only its totality, only 'communicates' its existence, and not an emotion."

6 Annotated vertically down the left column of the second page, Parmentier inserts: "Flavin's 'sensibility' is an 'exacerbated sensibility.'

7 Annotated next to this phrase, Parmentier inserts: "One can say the same thing for our canvases. At best, the works only refer back [*renvoient*] to themselves and this is the new task [*charge*]. In our work as well, there would be a task and this task is necessary; it is not the 'task' of works of art, it is the opposite task."

18 février 1968 (February 18, 1968)

1965

1966

1967

1968 1968-1983
"Ceased painting
definitively in 1968"

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

"Not writing is among the effects of writing… He devotes all his energy to not writing, so that, writing, he should write out of failure [*défaillance*], in failure's intensity." Maurice Blanchot

Michel Parmentier: Between Refusal and the Abandonment of Painting

Philip Armstrong

How are we to begin to think Michel Parmentier's refusal to paint between 1968 and 1983? This is the modest task before us. We know that Parmentier ceased to produce paintings between these dates, even if he lent his work to certain exhibitions and wrote several texts during this time. We also know that Simon Hantaï, one of Parmentier's closest colleagues and interlocutors, came to follow a similar itinerary (in his case, between 1982 and 1998), even if these two initiatives should not be conflated with one another and so remain open to accounts that are at once shared but also singular and divergent. More pertinently, it is not that Parmentier ceased to read, write, and think, but that he ceased to *produce* works of art, to make paintings, to play the role of a contemporary artist "managing" a career. Likewise, if all the dates, contexts, and details of this refusal have been well documented, and if we now have a better comprehension of the work that was made and exhibited both before and after these dates, the terms in which Parmentier himself phrased this cessation in his writings nevertheless vary significantly.[1] These variations further suggest a continual revision of the terms and conditions in which this cessation sustained his own thinking, leaving us to speculate why exactly Parmentier would return to rephrase and reiterate this refusal with much insistence but with seemingly little consistency. At the same time, we know in retrospect that this refusal or "arrêt définitif" was not definitive, and that when he took painting up again in 1983 (the series of black striped paintings), he extended and simultaneously displaced the striped canvases that he had ceased making in 1968, sustaining a practice that he leaves behind, repeats, and simultaneously transforms.

The question thus still remains: How are we to begin to broach — to delimit, understand, or interpret — these years when Parmentier refused to paint? Or rather, the initial question here is not how to understand or even justify the decision but to ask how to give voice to this refusal in the first place, and then to ask about the conditions and presuppositions informing this voice. It is as if the task before us also assumes a form of ventriloquizing, a term that is also potentially inscribed by an irreducible and inescapable *violence* (the term seems more than apt, even when it is Parmentier himself, or at least his writings, that are renowned for their alleged violence, aggression, and intransigence)? This is the irreducible and inescapable violence of making his withdrawal from painting speak again, of giving voice to this silence (the genre of "the philosopher and his poor"[2]) — a form of prosopopeia, then, speaking for a moment in Parmentier's life when he refused to acquiesce to certain constraints, conditions, or commitments, certain forms of artistic decorum and the management of a career or reputation, certain avant-garde posturings, or certain expectations regarding artistic behavior or speech.

We will also need to ask how this very problematic of speech, ventriloquizing, and violence relates to painting traditionally understood as mute, or as mute poetry. In other words, in what sense does giving voice to this refusal and silence suggest less a psychological condition or a problem of interpretation (including the so-called "violence" of the hermeneutic circle) than a problematic specific to painting and its history or historicity. This problematic of giving voice to this refusal and withdrawal opens toward and retraces the numerous disquisitions on the nature of painting and language, painting and speech, seeing and saying, which Parmentier will rearticulate as a question of the said and the non-said, or of the said *(le dit)* and saying *(le Dire),* which he also rearticulates as a rapport between questions of trace, gesture, and effacement.[3]

Rather than suggesting that Parmentier's refusal and withdrawal from painting in 1968 was the outcome of some tortured psychological disposition, personal situation, economic choice, or any number of other possible reasons and scenarios — rather than devolving into what, today, one might locate as a calculated mode of artistic self-entrepreneurialism — the proposition I would like to make is how this refusal takes the form of a *decision*. In other words, rather than suggesting that Parmentier's refusal was a response or reaction *to* something — a reaction to the art world, to what we have come to call the artistic "scene," but also, perhaps more pertinently, to the series of "Manifestations" the year before with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni — emphasis on this decision works to defer this sense of a response or reaction to some prior or existing condition. Or it works to displace this sense of a response or reaction to an existing condition from which such a decision then derives its measure or significance, or in relation to which Parmentier then assumes a critical stance or position. No doubt this refusal and withdrawal was in part a reaction to certain past and present conditions, including the collective work of the 1967 "Manifestations." But the emphasis on decision opens toward another register than one of a response or reaction, one that will come closer, as we will see, to an "ethics" (the term is Parmentier's own).

The question broached here — and addressed in a quite preliminary manner — is thus how to think this moment of refusal and the terms that sustain it. How does this refusal make sense for Parmentier as an artist — or rather, for *painting* — when it seems to make so little or less sense for someone who considers himself what the French term a *plasticien,* poet, philosopher, critic, or art historian, not to mention any number of other professions, artistic or otherwise (a problem that concerns those like Parmentier who refuse to phrase and frame their work in terms of a "profession" in the first place)? More pointedly, how are we to begin to characterize this passage of time that is not so much a moment of transition between identifiable dates than a temporality characterized as at once rupture, withdrawal (what the French term *repli*), break, suspension, interruption, silence, *retrait,* estrangement, reticence, rift, intermission, interlude, pause, intermezzo, hiatus, interval, fracture — all terms that must now be thought not in terms of a *measurable* span of time but of a simultaneous continuity and discontinuity, at once finite and infinite? This is not a moment that has a measurable beginning and end (dates notwithstanding) but a movement *between* times or *within* time, and a between (the between of the inter-ruption or inter-lude) whose temporality is not definable in terms of a chronology, a linearity, a narrative, or a (hi)story. In other words, the question addressed is how Parmentier's refusal opens toward a temporality defined by a permanent sense of belatedness, interruption, afterthought, and repetition (*renvoi*). (It is to this same problem of temporality that Parmentier turned with some insistence in his piece, *15 avril 1966* (April 15, 1966) (see p. 48), and then in his later work, notably through the use of the date stamp inscribed on the work itself.)

What I am calling Parmentier's *decision* is thus already inscribed by this sense of temporality, a temporality that implies less a linear progression with a beginning, middle, and end (a refusal that begins in 1968 and ends in 1983) than a cut or an incision — *de-caedere* in Latin already evokes this gesture of cutting. This cut is not so much, in this instance, a cutting *off* or *from* (from a pre-established whole, as in a measured break in Parmentier's career understood in its entirety, or from a pregiven sense of continuity, history, or linear narrative) but a *cutting* ***out***. In short, how does Parmentier's refusal — articulated in and as a decision — at once interrupt and cut out? And how does his cutting out at once open out and disclose this temporality ***in*** and *between* times?

In this sense, Parmentier's *decision* is also the time of abandonment, of an abandonment removed from all pathos usually attached to the word, an abandonment defined as at once cut, interruption, and suspension. On the one hand, this time of abandonment has no permanence, no duration, and does not last. On the other, the time of abandonment never anticipates the future or expects in advance; it forecloses any

dialectical resolution, a closure in which this sense of abandonment finds a measure of itself. This is the temporal insistence of Parmentier's decision, a cut that opens out and suspends itself, refusing not just all determinate negation (subversion, critique) but all closure. Indeed, as I will argue, such decision or abandonment is the mark of an affirmation, not negation.

To be sure, Parmentier's decision — of cutting out — can also be situated within a longer history of refusal, a history that extends beyond the circumscribed domain of artistic practices alone, and a history of which Parmentier, needless to say, was keenly aware. From Paul Lafargue's *The Right to be Lazy* to Raoul Vaneigem's *The Book of Pleasures,* from slackers to autonomists and *operaismo,* refusal has constituted a modality or engagement for thinking about work and labor under capitalist social relations (as in the case of Simon Hantaï, the phrase "grève de la peinture" or "painting strike" has been repeated often). Most pertinent in this context would be Mario Tronti's "Strategy of Refusal" written in 1965, whose tone resonates strongly with Parmentier's own writings.[4] And yet, in whatever ways Parmentier shares Tronti's radicalism, or however tempting to make the rapprochement between their shared *prise de parole,* especially given the historical proximity between Tronti's early writings and Parmentier's own earliest engagements — in other words, however promising this rapport might be in a longer elaboration of Parmentier's own work — this seemingly shared refusal or this stoppage is simply not of the same order, their respective "strategies of refusal" remaining irreducible to one another. Indeed, it is not clear in what sense Parmentier's decision even constitutes a "strategy" in the first place. Some mediation is therefore required and the deceptive, if no doubt appealing analogies or metaphors ("painting strike", etc.) need to be carefully delimited and questioned. Similarly, it remains especially unclear how we might begin to situate the conditions and contexts that make Parmentier's refusal historically specific, conditions that seem all too distant fifty years later. The institutions, the prominent figures against whom he reacts, the critics (or the dearth of critical writing), the artistic "scene," a sense of post-'68 political malaise and the abject failures of Mitterrand's "socialism" — all this remains deeply circumscribed between 1968 and 1983, shaping the ways in which such a refusal takes on its own contemporary as well as historical significance (whether the terms of such a refusal are legible or possible in the same way today poses another question entirely). In other words, this longer series of historical precedents and contexts concerning strategies of refusal, while perhaps critically pertinent to the terms in which Parmentier's decision finds its initial motivation, is too circumscribed and reductive in its manner of explaining — and explaining away — Parmentier's decision to stop painting, his refusal to make and show (to show up) his paintings.[5]

Two initial paths open up here in which we might begin to rethink Parmentier's refusal — his decision regarding painting and its simultaneous abandonment — two paths in which we begin to approach this decision and the sense of affirmation it implies.

In the first, the writings of Guy Debord and the Situationists are said to provide a suitable context for understanding the motivation behind Parmentier's refusal. In this way, Parmentier responds to an art market — indeed, an artistic scene — that has become saturated by the logic of the "spectacle," and so a world whose immersion in its own image of itself has now become insufferable for the artist. Situated in this larger context, Parmentier's refusal would thus become — would find its rationale in — a refusal to acquiesce to the suffocating logic of the society of the spectacle (as Debord famously argues, the spectacle is not simply a collection of images; "it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images"), a systemic logic in which the work of art holds a distinct and privileged place.

The series of "Manifestations" with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni no doubt offer some initial support for the critical relevance of Debord's theses (we recall that *The Society of the Spectacle* was first published in 1967, the same year in which the January, June, and September series of "Manifestations" took place, including "Manifestation 3" that took place on the stage of the "Centre expérimental du spectacle" in the auditorium of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris). These four "Manifestations" from 1967 might even be described more usefully in light of what the Situationists once called "the construction of situations." No doubt the "Manifestations" are never simply illustrations of Situationist theses, and so remain open to a range of interpretive challenges. But the critical relevance of Situationist discourse informing the series of "Manifestations" finds its increased pertinence if it is then assumed that such discourse is itself informed by an interest in artistic (or architectural) vanguardist practices, specifically the Lettriste movement that is often said to underpin and orient Debord's thinking, for which the series of "Manifestations" might then be considered as at once critical extension and homage.

And yet, it is not that Parmentier ceased (as Hantaï did) to *show* his work after 1968 and the series of "Manifestations" — to display it in public, to participate in exhibitions, to sell his work on the market — where the refusal to show, display, demonstrate, or expose the work finds its underlying rationale and logic in relation to Debord's central theses concerning the image and social relations.[6] It is not that Parmentier's engagements did not include a sustained and close reading of Debord, and a deeply sustained attention to the films in particular (from which Parmentier also derived key problems of temporality). Parmentier referenced the writings of Debord and Situationist concepts with some insistence, sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly, and the central theses of Debord's writings on the society of the spectacle are not just something in which he found academic interest or artistic inspiration but something he lived and experienced with acute involvement and even, at times, a debilitating and excruciating passion. But his initial interest and engagement with the theses in terms of his refusal to paint was not around the market, commodity fetishism, and the spectacle of artists and their exhibitions (one might say, these were already givens for Parmentier, or already part of the critical discourse and *dispositifs* that had emerged around and been addressed by the series of "Manifestations"). To repeat, Parmentier's refusal is a refusal concerning the production of the work of art, or a refusal concerning the practice of painting, which is to say, the refusal of a certain inability to situate painting as a mode of *praxis.* In this sense, it seems significant that Parmentier shows absolutely no interest in strategies of "*détournement,*" "*dérive,*" or psychogeography derived from the Situationists, and thus little interest in the "artistic" origins and influences that are said to inform and inflect Debord or the Situationists' thinking in this regard. Or again, Parmentier's refusal hinges on a certain "idea" of art, and specifically the reduction of painting to an idea or image of itself (which would be the larger terms of argument for what is more usually discussed as problems of self-referentiality or form). No doubt this problematic also emerges — or is prompted by — the proposal by Buren, Mosset, and Toroni to each make one another's work, to paint each other's canvases, which prompted "Manifestation 5" in which Parmentier did not participate. It was this proposal (which entails its own form of ventriloquizing) that initiated his specific rupture with the group, notably through his tract "The Group Buren-Mosset-Parmentier-Toroni no longer exists."[7] The primary impulse and reticence in Parmentier's tract thus turns on the "idea of *'depersonalization'*"[8] that characterizes the other artists' proposal, which is also an idea of, in, or for painting, so that Parmentier's refusal turns on an artistic practice or *praxis of painting* that becomes reduced not just to an image (and the social relations inscribed there) but to an "idea," which lends itself to — is then invariably appropriated as — a form of conceptual art.[9]

If I recall Debord's writings in this context, it is also because references to "spectacle" have become a little too easily cited (not just historically but perhaps increasingly so today) in order to situate, understand, and justify certain artistic positions and practices. Indeed, the frequency and convenience with which Debord's theses are recalled and mobilized tend more often to short-circuit the argument than define its contours and challenges, even as such a reference gives the argument a degree of political legitimacy, topicality, or even a posture of resistance. The claim I thus want to make is that Debord's or the Situationists' theses regarding the society of the spectacle do not serve to explain Parmentier's refusal to paint between 1968 and 1983, whatever their initial pertinence, and whatever Parmentier's more general political sympathies (starting with their shared militancy concerning Algeria). Nor does mobilizing these same theses justify Parmentier's decision or offer a motivation. It is not that the theses are not relevant. But the argument I want to propose here is that Parmentier's withdrawal from painting should also be read, at least in part, if not as a critique, then as a careful and cautious

delimitation of the very discourse of the society of the spectacle from which it appears to draw its initiative. Indeed, it is precisely through this rethinking of Situationist discourse and its presuppositions that a sense of affirmation in Parmentier's own practice becomes discernible. At the very least — this is our initial claim or provocation — Parmentier's refusal opens up an essential tension, conflict, even aporia within this very discourse.

In order to support this claim and elaborate briefly on its implications, a brief detour is required. In some evocative passages in *Being Singular Plural,* Jean-Luc Nancy turns to Debord and the Situationists' theses on the society of the spectacle, to this society that is fascinated and absorbed by the seemingly endless play of self-mirroring, self-appropriation, and self-reflection — a world of endless illusion, image, and appearance — which then establishes "a generalized equivalence of all the representations of itself" that a society "gives itself to consume."[10] In light of this initial characterization, Nancy argues that the Situationists' critique nevertheless remains inscribed by a metaphysics it seeks to overcome, which would be another way of suggesting how, situated within various forms of Marxist critique, the Situationist critique "obscured, *in statu nascendi,* the correctness of its own intuition"[11]:

> "The various critiques of 'spectacular' alienation are, in the end, grounded on the distinction between a good spectacle and a bad spectacle — [this is true] whether they like it or not. Within the good spectacle, the social or the communitarian being presents its proper interiority to itself, its origin (which is itself invisible), the foundation of its rights, the life of its body, and the splendor of its fulfillment. (For the Situationists, then, a certain idea of 'art' almost always plays the role of the good spectacle, and it is no accident that the [bad] 'spectacle' for them is first and foremost the falsification of art.) In the bad spectacle, the social being imagines the exteriority of interests and appetites, of egotistic passions and the false glory of ostentation. At the most basic level, this Manichean division not only supposes a distinction between the represented objects, but it also supposes an opposition within the status of representation: it is what is now in interiority (as manifestation, expression of the proper), now in exteriority (as image, reproduction). As such, the fact that these are intertwined is ignored: there is no 'expression' that is not [already] given in an 'image,' no 'presentation not already [given] in 'representation'; there is no 'presence' that is not presence to one another."[12]

In this sense, Situationist discourse turns around the seemingly endless substitution of the spectacle for "authentic presence," so that "appearance is understood here, in the most classical way, as 'mere appearance' (surface, secondary exteriority, inessential shadow), and even as 'false appearance' (semblance, deceptive imitation)."[13] Or rather, as Nancy further argues:

> "The denunciation of mere appearance effortlessly moves within mere appearance, because it has no other way of designating what is proper — that is, nonappearance — except as the obscure opposite of the spectacle. Since the spectacle occupies all of space, its opposite can only make itself known as the inappropriable secret of an originary property hidden beneath appearances. This is why the opposite of deceitful 'imagery' is creative 'imagination,' the model for which is still something like the Romantic genius. According to such a model, the artist plays the part of the productive-subject..."[14]

As Nancy recalls, the structural implication of an "idea of art" within Situationist discourse not only recalls its inheritance from certain artistic movements but "a paradigm of artistic creation that is nonaesthetic or maybe even antiaesthetic."[15] More pertinently, this same discourse tends to presuppose a belief in an authentic or creative imagination, even the posturing of "Romantic genius," itself covered over and alienated by the world of spectacle, even as this more authentic imagination passes by way of the creation of "situations" or "the appropriating event [*événement dérobé*] abruptly moved from the logic of the spectacle."[16]

No doubt Parmentier does not need Nancy to understand this. And he clearly phrases these concerns in his own manner. But the argument shares for us a similar initiative, impulse, and propensity, which Parmentier will turn into a refusal of what precisely informs the Situationists' philosophical, artistic, and systemic assumptions and presuppositions, which is to say, its own unavoidable avant-gardism, against which Parmentier will offer us his most virulent responses and invectives. In the end, what Parmentier will refuse is the dialectic organizing and sustaining the argument, a dialectic that remains complicit, in the end, with a profound *belief* in art, a belief that there exists such a thing as "good" or authentic art. Or what he will refuse is a discourse of art that turns around issues of falsification, which in turn privileges "the inappropriable secret of an originary property hidden beneath appearances" (as his tract around "Manifestation 5" intimates, refusing to paint another artist's canvas had nothing to do with some surreptitious belief in the authenticity and "original property" of the work of art and its authorship). In short, it is precisely this surreptitious appeal to "an originary property" of the work of art that Parmentier's thinking seeks to dismantle, unravel, and cut apart, in both his writings and practice as a painter.

Parmentier's own response to these problematics thus has little to do with the endless musings on the role of art in society, or the work of art's potential for critique, or the exchanges between aesthetics and politics. For what he tracked down and laid bare, with a fierce and ruthless insistence (this becomes evident in the interview with Bernard Blistène given in 1986, shortly after the moment in which he takes painting up again) are the underlying schemas, models, presuppositions, and dialectics informing this fundamentally Nietzschean-Platonic problematic, including the complacency of those discourses that claim its irrelevance or its lack of critical implication and consequence. Which is also to say that Parmentier, in drawing us closer to the work of art's "nonpresuppositions," refuses those discourses in which the model of the Romantic genius subtly reintroduces and inscribes itself, even when the postures and claims for the work of art's contemporaneity or social and political relevance appear to take their distance from the very Romanticism that continues to inform such postures and claims in the first place. (In the end, isn't this what Parmentier's writings show us? Whatever the invective and hostility against contemporary opportunism, these same writings reveal someone repeatedly haunted by the pull of Romanticism, someone struggling to overcome its deep and residually avant-gardist seductions, someone seeking to understand the rapport between the Romanticism that shapes the image of the artist (as imaginative genius, as creative individual) and a Romanticism that circumscribes what we call the work of art, and so someone seeking to touch those limits where Romanticism folds into something that remains unnamable, without identity, and beyond measure. And isn't this, finally, what Parmentier shares with both Hantaï and Buren, even if they each seek to respond to these problematics in ways that are at once common and irreducibly different?

At once with and against Debord and the Situationists, Parmentier will thus return again and again to this problem of "nonappearance," to the problem of how to think and continue his practice as a painter outside the logic, dialectical appropriation, and closure that Nancy outlines here. Or again, his concern is how to work through not just a certain "idea of *art*" but also a certain "*idea* of art" that responds to or does justice to the paradoxes, double binds, and aporias defining the force of this "nonappearance." And he will insist — acknowledging with disarming honesty the conflicts, contradictions, paradoxes, and aporias that sustain such thinking — that it is only through a praxis of *painting* that this underlying dichotomy or Manichean struggle between good and bad art will come to undo and displace itself. One might suggest that the time in which Parmentier refuses to paint is that time in which he was working through the impossible role of painting in this very undoing and displacement, struggling to articulate how exactly "nonappearance" is to be thought within the terms opened up by Debord and the Situationists. For painting is not something for Parmentier that will resolve this dialectic and its ultimate coherence. Nor does it offer an alternative or a solution. It itself — its self — is not something that can offer itself as a medium or mediation in which its eventual identity or self-identity is secured. Or it offers *nothing* that resolves the Manichean division or dialectic it brings into relief and exposes, *nothing* that does not withdraw or subtract itself from the terms and conditions that continue to sustain its simultaneous coming into visibility and effacement. In other words, the insistence and inconsistency with which Parmentier phrases his refusal to paint — the insistence and necessary inconsistency with which he addresses the force of paintings' "nonappearance" — stems

in large part from this working through of the very problematics he inherits from Debord and the Situationists, which is to say, his willingness to assume — to acknowledge and work through — an impossible inheritance.

In the second path (which might be read here as the underside of the first), Simon Hantaï once suggested in personal conversation the relevance of a text by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe for a reading of Parmentier's work. The text in question is Lacoue-Labarthe's "Talks," a text whose ostensible subject is to address the writings of Jean-François Lyotard.[17]

In the concluding paragraphs of his text, Lacoue-Labarthe argues that under the general problematic of the "unpresentable" in Lyotard's writings there exists a more formidable question, which remains "antecedent" to any distinctions that can be made within art. It is a question, Lacoue-Labarthe argues, that "touches upon the very existence of art" — which is not, "what is art?" or "what can be called art?" (these are the questions posed by the avant-gardes), but "why art?" or "why is there the need of art?" Lacoue-Labarthe then continues (in a passage that no doubt provoked Hantaï to think of Parmentier):

> "The works that no longer play with but undergo [*qui font l'épreuve*] (in a sad or gay manner, it matters little) what is wanting [*ce qui défaille* — what fails or falters] today in this 'il faut' appear to me truly unprovided [*démunies* — destitute], and not only bereft of all knowledge, but even any anticipation of a response. They ask: how is it that nothing (the unpresentable in effect) obliges to make art? And above all, why? Why does nothing happen in art?"[18]

As if responding to Lyotard's frequent appeals to the event in terms of its "happening," and as if insisting on the irreducible, immeasurable, and unresolvable conflict sustaining the question of thinking art as the "place" where *nothing happens,* Lacoue-Labarthe argues that one does not respond to such questions: "It is by definition impossible," he says, "and art is perhaps nothing other than this impossible response." Indeed, what these questions point to for Lacoue-Labarthe, what they open toward "obscurely," is "the place in art where an archi-obligation is at stake. If not the fact that art, henceforth, is the place of the archi-obligation."[19] In short, as Lacoue-Labarthe concludes, if there exists a *différend* between him and Lyotard, it does not devolve into an ethical order but bears upon how to think this ethical or "archi-obligation" in the first place. Or as he also phrases it (recalling our references to Debord and the Situationists above), if there is an obligation at stake, it remains "to attack the *semblance* of a world that is made and handed down to us."[20]

The terms of the argument are no doubt Heideggerian, in the sense that it is Heidegger who gives us to think (in Lacoue-Labarthe's own terms): "that *nothing* would be in fact 'nothing' (anything at all), if it did not *oblige* to give it a place in which it is attested that in being *there,* it is not evidently there [Lyotard would say: "remaining unpresented in this very presentation"] by which and according to which there opens, let us say, a possible 'habitation.' Without this," Lacoue-Labarthe concludes, "without this absolutely paradoxical injunction of the *nothing* (emanating from nothing), and without acquiescence, our own, to this impossible injunction (no more powerful *double bind*), we have the *abject* [*l'immonde*]. And the abject is what today we must refuse to serve — to accomplish and go along with."[21]

In their own manner, and according to a scansion of thinking quite different from Lacoue-Labarthe's, Parmentier's writings turn with passionate insistence on refusing this same abjection. And they turn, with an equally passionate insistence, on the double binds opened up by this "impossible injunction" (Parmentier will share this emphasis on the impossible through references to Bataille, des Forêts, Blanchot, and Levinas). In his last written text, Parmentier will also rephrase this as an "ethics," where the reference to Heidegger that shapes Lacoue-Labarthe's argument is instead informed by references to Debord, Beckett, and Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" (a phrase Blanchot addresses in *The Writing of the Disaster* in light of questions of "refusal").[22] But this impressive range of philosophical and literary references, while also acknowledged and pursued by Parmentier himself, tends to both accompany and conceal precisely what he works through in his refusal and withdrawal from painting, and what he works through when he takes up painting again in 1983 (in part, of course, in conversation with Hantaï) — how does *nothing happen* in painting?

How exactly this question becomes pertinent to Parmentier's work after 1983 is not the task here. The more modest suggestion is that Parmentier's refusal and withdrawal from painting is his manner of working through a series of decisive problematics in which this question comes to resonate and take form. No doubt there exists a range of sources and references through which Parmentier draws inspiration — including other artists, notably Hantaï's own work as well as the proximities and differences between his work and Buren's (as explored in their exchanges in the *Propos délibérés* interview with Anne Baldassari), but also the Roland Barthes of *Writing Degree Zero* or the death of the author, and all of Blanchot (including the writings on *désoeuvrement* or "unworking" or the neuter).[23] Parmentier's writings and interviews are always wonderfully instructive and engaging in this regard. At the same time, this insistence on how nothing happens in painting is the refusal of anything that might constitute painting as representation or the representation of painting, the discourse, no less prominent today, where painting is often little more than an image of painting, of painting mesmerized by the scene of painting, of painting endlessly recalling painting through the knowing play of pastiche and quotation, endlessly re-citing itself. But the decisive problematic still remains beneath the contempt — how does painting expose the difference between nothing (including the non-painted) and negation? Or how is painting itself — painting as praxis — at once exposed and abandoned in this very difference?[24]

Parmentier's refusal and withdrawal from painting is also the refusal of any dialectical ***relève*** or sublation of this difference — that if negation exists in painting, it has nothing to do with what negation *means* or *does* or how it signifies or remains determinate, but how it *appears.*[25] In the interview with Blistène, he will equally refuse what he calls all "*anagogic* reading"[26] of his work, insisting instead that "research into pictorial specificity perhaps has the same sense as a shattering of all categories [*l'éclatement catégoriel*]."[27] Such a shattering of categories through which the specificity of painting is exposed is also the point — more specifically, the temporal condition — at which *nothing happens,* which is also the point at which the abandonment of painting also comes into (non)appearance. The abandonment of painting, then, understood as at once an abandonment from painting, the abandonment of painting, and the abandonment to painting, in the sense of the abandonment of painting from, to, by, and in painting. Parmentier's refusal and withdrawal from painting was thus also a way of discerning — of deciding — how the abandonment from painting cannot be separated from painting's own sense of abandonment (including its abandonment of sense or meaning). "Pour rien, mais là" ("For nothing, but there") he concludes his interview with Blistène, shortly after he resumes painting again — this affirmation in which it is attested that in the very being-there of painting, nothing happens. Each time.

1 It is certainly necessary to refer in this context to Parmentier's own published writings (now meticulously gathered in one volume thanks to Aristide Bianchi), but it is always a little too convenient to redeploy and recite the writings, whatever their burning lucidity, to explain the work or lack of work, or a little too convenient to redeploy the same writings to justify and explain such and such a refusal, even as there exist superb texts (including unpublished texts) devoted precisely to this problem, starting with the "Lettre ouverte à François Mathey." See *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens,* ed. Aristide Bianchi (Paris: Blackjack éditions, 2014), pp. 51-55; translated as "Letter to François Mathey" **(see fig. 66, p. 101)**

2 See Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor,* trans. Andrew Parker, Corinne Oster, and John Drury (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

3 In *The Writing of the Disaster*—a book Parmentier recalls with some insistence and published shortly before he resumed painting again — Blanchot writes: "writing without placing itself above art, supposes that one not prefer art, but efface art as writing effaces itself." See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 53. Such might constitute the initial terms with which to approach Parmentier's own work.

4 The text was written in 1965 as part of the "Initial Theses" in Tronti's *Operai e Capitale* ("Workers and Capital") (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), pp. 234-252, available at http://libcom.org/library/strategy-refusal-mario-tronti.

5 Nowhere is this reduction more evident than in Benjamin Buchloh's disingenuous argument that Parmentier's refusal and withdrawal from painting stemmed from a typically naive form of French political militancy. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Formalisme et historicité - Autoritarisme et régression: Deux essais sur la production artistique dans l'Europe contemporaine* (Paris: Éditions Territoires, 1982), p. 40 (see the exchange between Parmentier and Benjamin Buchloh on p. 90).

6 Georges Didi-Huberman refers briefly to Hantaï's own rapport with the concept of the "society of the spectacle" *in L'Étoilement: Conversation avec Hantaï* (Paris: Galilée, 1998), pp. 10-11. Several of Jean-Luc Nancy's exchanges with Hantaï turn around the artist's dealings with this same problematic, to which Nancy shows certain reservations. See Simon Hantaï and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Jamais le mot créateur...: (Correspondance 2000-2008)* (Paris: Galilée, 2013).

7 See "Le Groupe Buren-Mosset-Parmentier-Toroni n'existe plus," reprinted in *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens*, pp. 43-46; translated as "Tract" **(see p. 76)**.

8 Ibid. p. 76.

9 Parmentier's exchanges with Buren in *Propos délibérés* offer a wonderfully compelling riposte to the ways in which their work has been repeatedly reduced to conceptual art (we note that the series of "Manifestations" are still frequently quoted or situated in anthologies of conceptual art). The interview with Buren is reprinted in *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens*, 133-259.

10 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 49.

11 Ibid, p. 52.

12 Ibid, p. 68.
13 Ibid. p. 52.
14 Ibid. pp. 51-52.
15 Ibid. p. 50.
16 Ibid.
17 See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Où en étions-nous?," in *La Faculté de juger*, eds. Jacques Derrida et al. (Paris: Minuit, 1985), pp. 165-193; trans. Christopher Fynsk as "Talks," *Diacritics* 14:3 (Fall 1984): pp. 24-37. I extend here an argument previously taken up in "Impossibilities: Painting Between Jean-François Lyotard and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe," in Anaël Lejeune, Olivier Mignon, and Raphaël Pirenne, eds., *French Theory and American Art* (Berlin: Sternberg and (SIC): Brussels, 2013), pp. 268-283.
18 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Talks," p. 42.
19 Ibid. p. 43.
20 Ibid. p. 44.
21 Ibid. p. 45.
22 See Michel Parmentier, "Did You Say 'Ethics'?" trans. Anthony Allen in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen Melville, eds., *As Painting: Division and Displacement* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press; Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), pp. 231-232 **(reprinted pp. 208-209)**; *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens*, pp. 266-269.
23 See Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) and "The Death of the Author," trans. Richard Howard in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977), pp. 142-148.
24 Hantaï writes: "To come out of nothing, or nothing (res. the thing) as raw material, not a sleight of hand, but a real material, bringing 'itself' out, forming itself out of itself: is it not what you wanted to let itself fold unfold?" See Simon Hantaï with Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, *La connaissance des textes: Lecture d'un manuscrit illisible* (Paris: Galilée, 2001), p. 151. Again, this motif of painting "coming out of nothing" constitutes one of the decisive aspects of Nancy's exchanges with Hantaï in *Jamais le mot créateur...: (Correspondance 2000-2008)*. In one of his letters to Nancy in the *Correspondance*, Hantaï himself refers to an exchange with Parmentier in 1984 around Parmentier's "desire to take up the question of painting again starting out from this nullity, toward this nullity" (86). Molly Warnock has since published an incisive discussion of the relation between Michel Parmentier and Simon Hantaï that addresses this same problematic of the "nothing." See "Michel Parmentier, Painting for Nothing" **(reprinted pp. 222-227).**
25 One might argue that the question of negation raised here returns us once again to Debord. As Jason Smith argues, it is precisely this issue of negativity that Debord's films continue to pose. See Jason Smith, "Debord, Filmmaker," in *Grey Room 52* (Summer 2013): 7-15, as well as the essay by Jacques Rancière, "When We Were on the Shenandoah," included in the same volume (originally published as "Quand nous étions sur le Shenandoah" in *Cahiers du cinéma 605* (October 2005): 92-93).
26 See "Entretien avec Bernard Blistène" in *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens*, p. 81, translated as "Interview with Bernard Blistène" **(reprinted pp. 132-134).**
27 Ibid.

Letter from Michel Parmentier to Mr .B. Buchloh.
In 1982, Parmentier wrote a letter to Benjamin Buchloh, a German art historian, in response to Buchloh's discussion of Parmentier in a recent book. Buchloh wrote a response to Parmentier on a postcard (the picture on the postcard was an in situ work by Daniel Buren). The exchange is translated below.

July 22, 1982 : Michel PARMENTIER, c/o galerie DURAND-DESSERT, 3 rue des Haudriettes, 75003 PARIS [to] Mr. B. BUCHLOH c/o Lawler 407, Greenwich Street, N.Y. 10013
Sir,
Reading your essay, "Formalism and Historicity," in its French version[1], it appears that you thought (owing, no doubt, to bad information) that you might attribute to me (on page 40) an attitude that I do not in fact possess. I certainly won't take this occasion to discuss your views and choices (at times, they often happen to be close to my own thinking), but it seemed to me useful to bring to your attention <u>that, up to now, I have ceased all pictorial production, which serves nothing</u>.

I have been and remain no more politically active than Buren, Mosset, or Toroni (I refer to them because it is in relation to our former shared pursuits that your essay refers to me). When I stopped painting, I also experienced the "events of May '68" as spectator/actor just like thousands of others — <u>without militancy</u>. Besides, Buren — who was close to the highly active "Movement of 22 March"[2] (he told me this himself) — and Mosset — a militant of the V.L.R. ("Long Live the Revolution")[3] — were certainly both more "engaged" than I was at the time, commitments which of course are entirely legitimate and to which nobody, to my knowledge, thinks of confining them. One of the principal organizers of the V.L.R. was (and remains) a very close friend, but I didn't respond to his invitations for me to join him, given that I can't stand militancy. I'm thus somewhat surprised that it is precisely me who finds himself subject to your reductive phrasing. In any event, it seems to me that you might seriously reassess this.

You will find attached a text[4] (atrociously printed, hence the handwritten corrections) which might be able to help you formulate a more judicious idea of my situation.

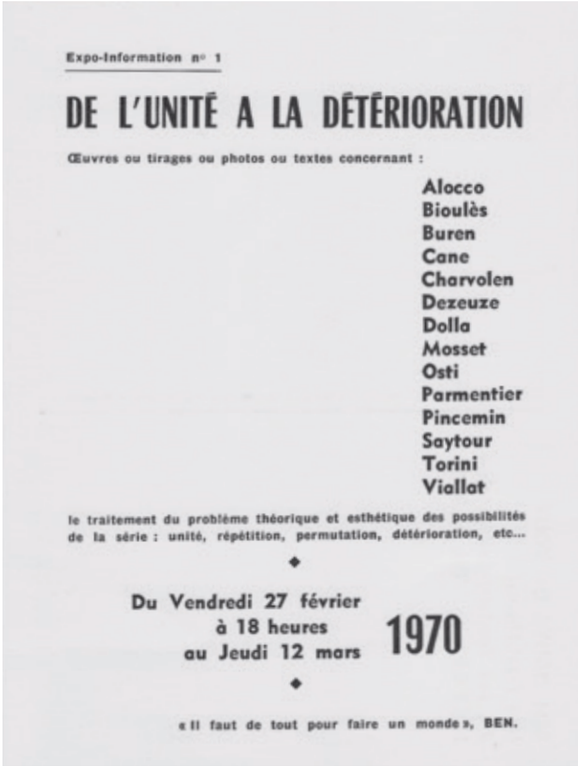
...<u>Certainly</u>, I am <u>not</u> critical in the name of a "political" view of things.

Yours respectfully, Michel Parmentier

P.S. It should go without saying that even if "the opinions of the authors are not that of *Artistes*," the general content of *Artistes* does not interest me.

1 Parmentier is referring to an argument proposed at the beginning of Buchloh's introduction to the work of Niele Toroni: "Along with Daniel Buren only Niele Toroni from the original BMPT group continued to maintain and develop his artistic work. The other two, Parmentier and Mosset, had abandoned this group, which was founded in 1966, after two years — the first by actively participating in radical politics, the second by joining the world of fashion and interior design. Both ways seem to be typical Parisian attempts to escape the problems and dilemma of art and its contradictions." See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Formalisme et Historicité), in *Formalisme et historicité–Autoritarisme et régression: Deux essais sur la production artistique dans l'Europe contemporain* (Paris: Editions Territoires, 1982), p. 40. The book was distributed through the Galerie Durand-Dessert, which represented Michel Parmentier. The essay was first published in English as "Formalism and Historicity–Changing Concepts in American and European Art Since 1945," trans. Barbara C. Flynn in the exhibition catalogue *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 1977, p. 104. The English version is reprinted in *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), p. 86 n. 64. In the latter, the reference to Parmentier is removed to a footnote where, in a slightly modified translation, exactly the same argument is made that Parmentier's assumed involvement in "radical politics" and Mosset "joining the world of fashion and interior design" are both "typical Parisian attempts to escape the problems of artistic production and its contradictions." Translator's note.
2 "Mouvement du 22 Mars" or "Movement of 22 March" was a student movement founded on that date in 1968 at the University of Nanterre, widely known for its occupation of the University's administration building. It played a prominent role in the events of '68. Translator's note.
3 V.L.R. was a Maoist-Libertarian group that emerged in part out of the "Movement of 22 March." Translator's note.
4 The text in question is Parmentier's "B.M.T., Me, and the Others: A Modest Contribution to the Fourteenth Anniversary Commemorative Ceremonies, January 1967 – January 1981," published in *Artistes: Revue Bimestrielle d'Art Contemporain 11* (June-July 1981): 27-30 (reprinted **pp. 112-113, translated pp. 121-122)**.

Letter from B. Buchloh to Michel Parmentier.
Sir — I have just received your letter. With much interest, I read that the information I received in 1977 was, in effect, either misrepresented or misunderstood. I received it from a former member of BMPT — without verifying it. I will certainly correct it in any new version of the text. Please accept my apologies, even if I believe that the proximity between artistic activity and political activity in those days is no cause for regret.
best
Benjamin Buchloh



Expo-Information n° 1

DE L'UNITÉ A LA DÉTÉRIORATION

Œuvres ou tirages ou photos ou textes concernant :

Alocco
Bioulès
Buren
Cane
Charvolen
Dezeuze
Dolla
Mosset
Osti
Parmentier
Pincemin
Saytour
Torini
Viallat

le traitement du problème théorique et esthétique des possibilités de la série : unité, répétition, permutation, détérioration, etc...

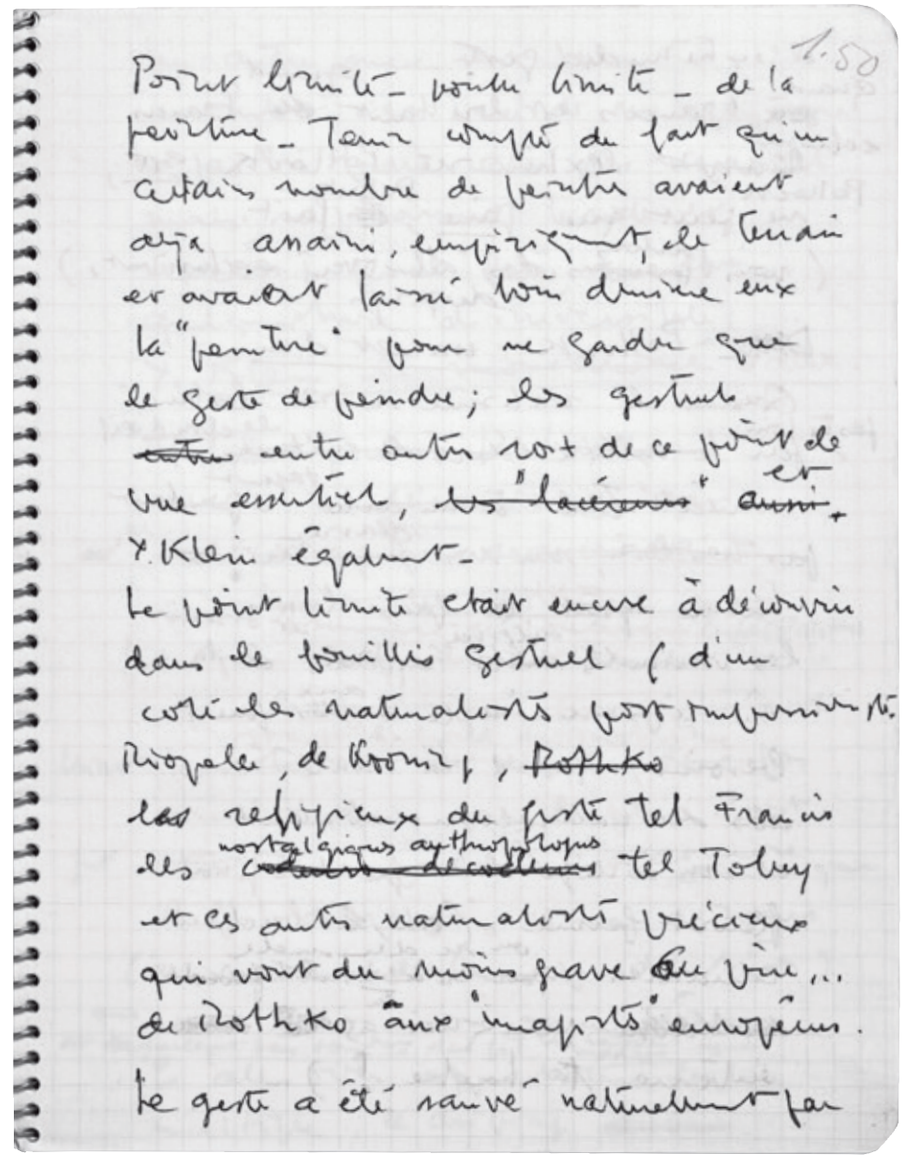
◆

Du Vendredi 27 février
à 18 heures
au Jeudi 12 mars
1970

◆

« Il faut de tout pour faire un monde », BEN.

58



1.50

Point limite – point limite – de la peinture – Tenir compte du fait qu'un certain nombre de peintres avaient déjà assaini, empiriquement, le terrain et avaient laissé bien derrière eux la "peinture" pour ne garder que le geste de peindre ; les gestuels ~~entre~~ entre autres sont de ce point de vue essentiel, ~~les "lacéreurs"~~ et ~~aussi~~ Y. Klein également –

Le point limite était encore à découvrir dans le fouillis gestuel (d'un côté les naturalistes post impressionnistes Riopelle, de Kooning, ~~Rothko~~ les religieux du geste tel Francis les ~~[illegible]~~ nostalgiques anthropologues tel Tobey et les autres naturalistes précieux qui vont du moins grave au pire... de Rothko aux "magistes" européens.

Le geste a été sauvé naturellement par

59

58 **Invitation to the exhibition "De l'unité à la détérioration" (From unity to deterioration) Galerie Ben doute de tout, Nice (France), February 27 – March 12, 1970, 14 × 10.5 cm.**
Group show organized by Ben Vautier. The canvas *3 novembre 1966* (November 3, 1966) was lent by Claude Viallat — also an exhibitor — and was exhibited unbeknownst to Parmentier.

The invitation was accompanied by a presentation text by Ben Vautier, "À propos de l'exposition: De l'unité à la détérioration à la galerie Ben doute de tout," and, on the back, a text by Marcel Alocco, "Point de vue de M. Alocco," February 1970, Brussels, AMP – Fonds Michel Parmentier (AMP inventory: 03321-1).

Ben Vautier had announced the dissolution of the group: "I have received notification that the group PARMENTIER, MOSSET, BUREN, and TORONI has been dissolved. Good, it's better for things to change," in Ben and Annie, *TOUT* no. 1 (February 1968), 27.9 × 21.6 cm, "Compte-rendu divers," Brussels, AMP – Fonds Michel Parmentier (AMP inventory: 16033).

59 **Handwritten texts by Michel Parmentier, "Point limite...," "La démonstration de Claura... .," "VH 101... ," late 1971 – early 1972, spiral-bound orange-yellow notebook, 22 × 17 cm (closed).**
[Limit point — intended point — of painting. Taking into account the fact that a certain number of painters had already sanitized the terrain empirically, and had left "painting" far behind them in order to retain only the gesture of painting: the gestural painters among others are essential from this point of view, and Y[ves] Klein as well.

The limit point remained to be discovered in a gestural hodgepodge (on the one side, the post-impressionist naturalists [Jean-Paul] Riopelle, [Willem] de Kooning, the clergymen of gesture like [Sam] Francis, the nostalgic anthropologists like [Mark] Tobey, and the other precious naturalists, from the less serious to the worst... from [Mark] Rothko to the European "Imagists." Obviously, gesture has been saved by gesture's extreme limit...).[1]

1 The complete handwritten text (unpublished during the artist's lifetime) has been transcribed and published by Aristide Bianchi in Michel Parmentier, "Trois brouillons fin 1971-début 1972," in *La Part de Œil* 20 (dossier "Ouvrir le support") (2005): 67-70.

In this notebook Parmentier made rough drafts of his articles.

Paris le 2 Mars 1971

Cher Monsieur,

J'apprends que mon nom figure toujours parmi ceux des peintres de votre galerie; j'en suis surpris puisqu'-il y a trois ans j'ai cessé de peindre et ce, définitivement.

Je n'ai évidement pas publié de texte pour annoncer ma décision de quitter la peinture (cela aurait été encore une manifestation culturelle), mais je ne doute pas que vous soyiez parfaitement au courant de ma position puisque j'en avais parlé à votre collaboratrice et que, de toutes façons, Claude VIALLAT n'a vraisemblablement pas manqué de vous en faire part.

Il me semble donc que ce ne peut être qu'oubli de votre part que de continuer à me faire de la publicité.

Le fait ne serait pas grave en soi si d'ex-confrères, que ladite publicité autorise à me considérer (ou feindre de me considérer) comme faisant encore partie de la famille, ne me sollicitaient pour participer à des expositions, pour signer des pétitions ou me mêler à d'autres activités aussi désuètes; or, je tiens à la tranquillité-de-ma-petite-retraite-bien-méritée (comme on lit dans PARIS-JOUR).

Il me serait donc très agréable que vous fassiez, dans la liste de vos peintres, la mise à jour qui me mettrait, une fois pour toutes, "en dehors du coup".

Je compte d'autant plus sur vous que je suis sûr que vous me comprendrez.

Avec mon meilleur souvenir.

Parmentier

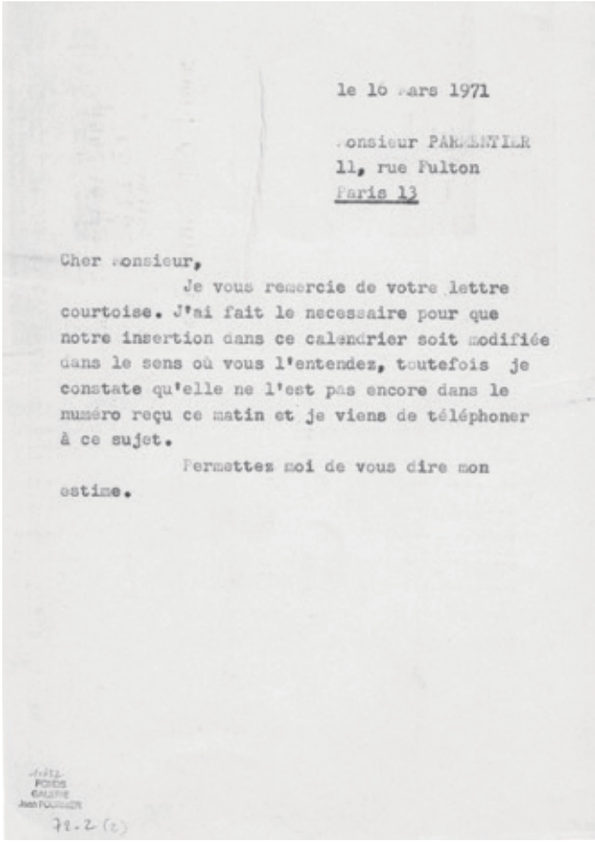
Michel PARMENTIER
II, rue Fulton
PARIS I3e

Je joins un double de cette lettre à mon réponse à Dezeuze

M. P.

60

60 **Letter from Michel Parmentier to Jean Fournier, March 2, 1971, recto and verso, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[Dear Sir,
I have learned that my name still figures among the list of painters in your gallery. I am surprised by this since I ceased painting three years ago, and this was definitive.
Obviously, I didn't publish a text to announce my decision to quit painting (that would have still been a cultural event), but I have no doubt that you were perfectly aware of my decision since I spoke about it to your assistant and that, regardless, Claude VIALLAT in all likelihood told you about it.
It thus seems to me that you can only have forgotten about this when continuing to publicize me.
The fact wouldn't be serious in itself if former colleagues — that this same publicity allows them to consider me (or pretend to consider me) as being still part of the family — hadn't solicited me to take part in exhibitions, sign petitions, or get involved in other equally obsolete activities. Now, I hold on to the tranquility-of-my-well-earned-little-retirement (as one reads in PARIS-JOUR).
In consequence, it would be a real pleasure if you could update the list of your painters, which would put me "out of the loop" once and for all.
I count on you all the more since I am sure that you understand me.
In fondest memory
Michel Parmentier , 11, rue Fulton, Paris 13th
I'm attaching a copy of this letter in my response to [Daniel] Dezeuze. M.P.]



le 16 mars 1971

Monsieur PARMENTIER
11, rue Fulton
Paris 13

Cher Monsieur,

Je vous remercie de votre lettre courtoise. J'ai fait le necessaire pour que notre insertion dans ce calendrier soit modifiée dans le sens où vous l'entendez, toutefois je constate qu'elle ne l'est pas encore dans le numéro reçu ce matin et je viens de téléphoner à ce sujet.

Permettez moi de vous dire mon estime.

61

61 **Letter from Jean Fournier, replying to Michel Parmentier, March 16, 1971, 21 × 15 cm.**
[March 16, 1971: Mr. Parmentier, 11, rue Fulton, Paris 13th
Dear Sir,
I thank you for your courteous letter. I have taken the necessary steps to make sure that the gallery schedule is changed in the way you asked. However, I notice that it still hasn't been made in the gallery guide that I received this morning. I have just telephoned about this.
Allow me to express my admiration.]

62

Michel Claura
Actualité

Manifestations

Le 2 janvier 1967, pendant toute la durée du vernissage du Salon de la jeune peinture, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni travaillent en public. Un magnétophone poussé au maximum de sa puissance répète toute la journée en trois langues :

« Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni vous conseillent de devenir intelligents. »

Un tract est distribué dans lequel il est dit :

« Puisque peindre c'est un jeu,

Puisque peindre c'est accorder ou désaccorder des couleurs,

Puisque peindre c'est appliquer (consciemment ou non) des règles de composition,

Puisque peindre c'est valoriser le geste,

Puisque peindre c'est représenter l'extérieur (ou l'interpréter, ou se l'approprier, ou le contester, ou le présenter),

Puisque peindre c'est proposer un tremplin pour l'imagination,

Puisque peindre c'est illustrer l'intériorité,

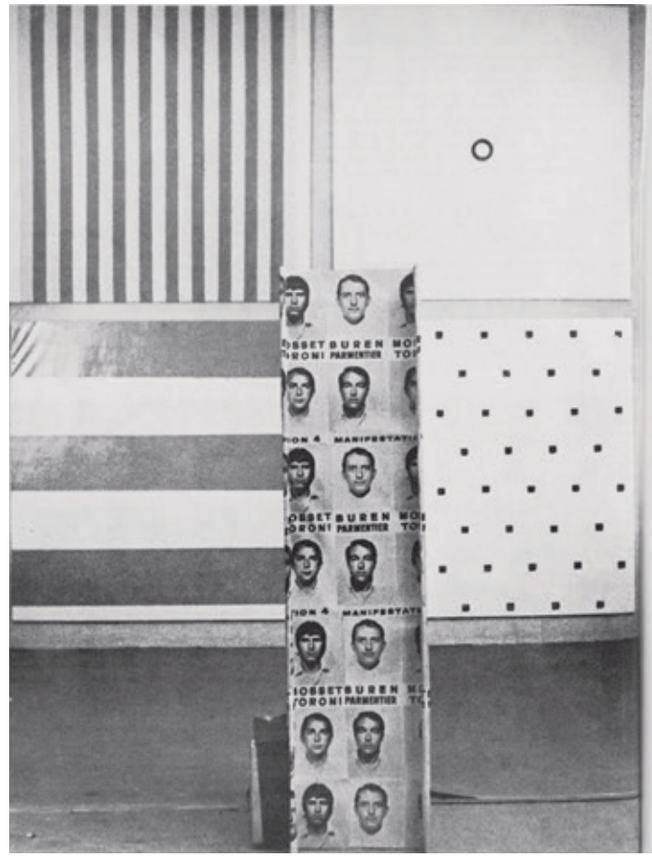
Puisque peindre c'est une justification,

Puisque peindre sert à quelque chose,

Puisque peindre c'est peindre en fonction de l'esthétisme, des fleurs, des femmes, de l'érotisme, de l'environnement quotidien, de l'art, de dada, de la psychanalyse, de la guerre du Viêt-nam,

NOUS NE SOMMES PAS PEINTRES. »

41



Au mois de septembre 1967, à la Biennale de Paris, les toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni sont présentes. Un projecteur envoie des photos, par séries (vues de Saint-Tropez, pape, femmes nues, animaux, etc.). Une bande magnétique synchronisée accompagne le passage des séries de photos et l'on peut entendre ainsi une série de définitions : l'art est illusion de dépaysement, illusion de liberté, illusion de présence, illusion de sacré, illusion de nature... Après chaque série de photos, un spot est braqué sur les toiles et l'on entend : « pas la peinture de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni ». A la fin du passage, une seule phrase reste à dire : « L'art est distraction, l'art est faux. La peinture commence avec Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni. » Cela durera tout le temps de la Biennale.

C'est la dernière manifestation du cycle à quatre.

Au mois de décembre 1967, rue de Montfaucon, Buren, Mosset, Toroni présentent chacun ce qui est habituellement « son » travail et celui des deux autres, après avoir effectivement réalisé les trois.

A quelque temps d'intervalle, Buren et Toroni présentent leur travail à Lugano sous le titre : « Buren, Toroni ou n'importe qui ». Ils invitent quiconque à faire le même travail qu'eux-mêmes car ce travail n'a pas plus de rapport avec Buren ou Toroni qu'avec quiconque d'autre, dans la mesure où il ne fait pas advenir un quelconque individu-créateur (artiste-individu).

En février 1968, à Lyon, chez Guillaumon et Guinochet, Buren, Mosset et Toroni présentent chacun une toile dans une pièce.

Au mois de décembre 1968, Buren et Toroni participent au festival de Palerme. Leur travail est visible à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur, par terre et sur les murs. A la suite d'un tract dans lequel l'art est globalement défini comme « réactionnaire », leur salle est définitivement fermée.

En septembre 1969, à la Biennale de Paris, Buren et Toroni sont invités et, après avoir obtenu un espace suffisamment important, cèdent leur place à un troisième peintre : Ristori.

Intrusion

A l'origine, quatre peintres se retrouvant, à partir de quatre travaux distincts, autour d'options communes, décident de s'associer afin de mettre en pratique ces options critiques tout en montrant un travail qui est lui-même critique. Ils se garderont de donner un nom à leur association, conscients du danger qu'il y a à se définir par un label. Il ne s'agit pas de former un groupe mais de mener une action. Cette action se déroulera à de nouveaux niveaux, mais sans jamais perdre de vue la cohérence nécessaire (à l'efficacité). Cela veut dire que l'action que l'on a pu dire « terroriste » n'est jamais dissociée, ni dissociable, de l'action productrice au niveau de la peinture.

C'est pourquoi, lorsque certaines failles irrémédiables apparaîtront, à l'occasion de la mise à jour approfondie et « détaillée » de la pratique picturale, dans la proposition de certains (se révélant dramatique ou mécaniste), l'association du départ sera dissoute.

On notera que le premier cycle, celui des manifestations à quatre, est délimité par deux phrases : 2 janvier 1967 : «... nous ne sommes pas peintres » ; septembre 1967 : « La peinture commence avec Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni. » Ce paradoxe était l'assertion de la rupture. Il faut croire que le travail de certains ne permettait pas ce que le travail des autres allait permettre : l'approfondissement d'une réflexion sur la peinture qui continue d'être pratiquée, toujours fondée sur les prémices manifestes de la rupture.

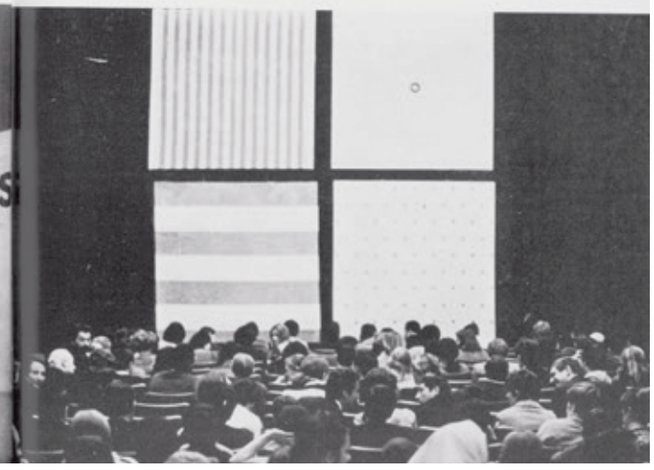
Le 2 janvier 1967, l'agression constituée par le hurlement du magnétophone et la teneur du tract ne peut pas être appréhendée indépendamment de la démonstration en cours.

45

Le soir du 2 janvier, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni se retirent du Salon, faisant savoir qu'ils remercient les organisateurs pour leur hospitalité mais qu'ils refusent de rester dans ce Salon, pas moins que dans un autre, pour ce qu'il n'est que la continuation des aberrations du dix-neuvième siècle et le réceptacle à peinture qui, « jusqu'à preuve du contraire, est, par vocation, objectivement réactionnaire ».

Le 2 juin 1967, dans la salle de spectacle du musée des Arts décoratifs, cent cinquante personnes sont assises, après avoir payé cinq francs d'entrée. Sur scène sont accrochées quatre toiles, celles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni. De neuf heures à dix heures du soir, le public attend que quelque chose se passe. A dix heures et quart, un tract est distribué dans lequel il est dit qu' « il ne s'agissait évidemment que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni.

« Il faut y voir :
« Une toile de 2,50 m × 2,50 m divisée en 29 bandes égales et verticales, rouges et blanches, dont les deux extrêmes sont recouvertes de blanc.
« Un cercle noir au centre d'une toile blanche.
« Sur une toile de 2,50 m × 2,50 m des bandes horizontales alternées grises et blanches de 0,38 m × 2,50 m. Partielle, la dernière bande mesure 0,22 m × 2,50 m.
« 85 empreintes bleues d'un pinceau plat, à intervalles de 30 cm sur une surface blanche de 2,50 m × 2,50 m. »



Cette démonstration consiste :
• à démontrer le mécanisme de l'acte de peindre en tant qu'acte **strict** de poser de la peinture sur une surface ;
• à montrer une neutralité picturale défiant la pratique individuelle ;
• à manifester un anonymat au niveau du produit (et déjà à cette occasion le travail est pratiquement effectué en commun) ;
• à dénoncer la valorisation mécaniste du geste ;
• à présenter le travail sur le support qui s'y peut prêter (toile au sol, à même le mur, sur châssis) ;
• à répéter un même travail qui n'est plus la répétition de l'art ;
• à accumuler le travail considérable qui peut être ainsi rendu dans une journée, déjouant de la sorte la supercherie de la rareté en art.

Le départ, le soir même, de cette exposition, en même temps qu'il est une prise de position politique, laisse pour seule présence dans le musée l'absence générale de l'art dans les autres salles.

La soirée au musée des Arts décoratifs apparaît à plus d'un comme étant un vol ; d'abord l'entrée est payante, ensuite rien ne se passe. Et pourtant, c'est bien le travail qui est à voir. On ne fait rien d'autre que demander à l'artiste de montrer quelque chose à voir et lorsque celui-ci ne fait précisément que cela, on le prend pour un escroc. En effet, pour celui qui ne sait pas voir, rien n'est à « retirer » du travail présenté. C'est précisément en cela que se pose la question de la visualité de la peinture [1]. Mais elle ne peut atteindre celui qui a le regard mort d'un veau.

A chaque occasion, manifestation, c'est toujours au travail que l'on reporte l'assistant ou le lecteur, car il est bien certain que, sans ce travail, qui reste à voir, tout ce qui semble provocation verbale ne serait que verbe creux.

La manifestation de Buren et Toroni à Palerme procède du même report au travail présenté et les organisateurs en apportent la preuve lorsqu'un manifeste reportant, lui, à l'art en général comme étant « réactionnaire », c'est bien le travail de Buren et Toroni qu'ils interdisent, fermant la salle.

L'erreur serait d'ignorer que, dans les manifestations en commun qui ont été faites, la provocation n'était pas le seul but recherché. Privilégier ainsi un aspect, ce serait dénaturer le travail d'ensemble. Ce qui était recherché, avant tout, c'était, dans le fait de montrer un travail, la mise à l'épreuve de ce travail dans les différentes conséquences qu'il semblait impliquer. Ce que l'on pourrait nommer pratique théorique.

Ainsi, la manifestation de la rue de Montfaucon a pour objet de démontrer que le travail présenté par chacun n'est pas nécessairement le travail de chacun, mais peut bien être celui d'un autre. Le travail en question est exclusif d'une pratique individuelle telle qu'elle est rendue nécessaire par et dans la création artistique habituelle.

Cette pratique individuelle en art existe où il y a individu-artiste révélé par son travail. Mais cette référence à l'individu n'est plus adaptée dès lors que le produit ne porte pas la marque de l'individu. Celui-ci n'est là que pour assumer un produit, et ce peut être fait dans le cadre d'un ensemble d'individus, ou non. La différence ne semble être que quantitative.

A Lugano, Buren et Toroni invitent n'importe qui à « faire » le travail que l'on voit ordinairement présenté par eux. Ce n'est évidemment pas alors de l'anonymat d'un individu qu'il est question mais uniquement de l'anonymat d'une proposition, quand bien même elle serait accouplée commodément au nom de Buren ou Toroni, parce que c'est Buren ou Toroni qui, généralement, la présente. Au-delà de la mise en pratique au sein d'une association de spécialistes, l'expérience est proposée à la limite de la probation possible.

Cohérence

Dans l'action commune, on constate que tout est mis en commun, et notamment tout ce qui est écrit. Cela est assez rare pour être relevé. L'action entreprise ne permet pas la moindre dissension, et cette dissension n'est pas possible aussi longtemps que l'on s'attache à explorer un travail qui semble répondre à des exigences communes. Et ce travail-à-l'épreuve dévoilera, pour certains, ses contradictions impropres à la continuation de l'entreprise.

L'œuvre de démystification accomplie en une seule année ne peut être magistrale que parce qu'elle s'appuie sur un produit qui, lui-même, était démystificateur. Une énorme tâche était à accomplir. Sa nécessité apparaissait dès la première toile (que l'on peut situer en 1966 pour les artistes dont il est question). **Son ampleur était visible dès la première manifestation commune, en janvier 1967** (nous l'avons résumée plus haut). Nous pouvons même dire que c'est alors déjà dans sa totalité qu'elle se montrait. Depuis lors, et encore aujourd'hui, c'est le même travail qui, par certains des associés de l'origine, continue d'être accompli et toujours précisé.

Même produit, bien sûr, mais l'âge de ce produit n'a d'intérêt que pour les amateurs d'anecdotes. Même travail **dans sa totalité** parce qu'il constitue une remise en question sans cesse renouvelée d'une œuvre sans cesse faite et « autour » de laquelle, parce que c'est la question de l'art qui est ainsi questionnée, c'est l'histoire de l'art telle qu'elle est qui s'articule dans son absence (de l'art) ou se désarticule dans sa présence historique.

Considérant ceux qui ont poursuivi l'exploration depuis plus de cinq ans, on chercherait vainement la faille entre le produit pictural et le travail d'ensemble, dans la mesure où la fameuse dichotomie entre théorie et pratique fut dès l'abord mise entre parenthèses, mais où, tout au contraire, une différence fut dès le départ marquée entre un produit pictural qui montrerait le chemin de l'absolu, dans sa fixité (ce qui compose l'histoire de l'art), et un travail sur l'art, sur la peinture, dans lequel était également comprise la proposition-peinture toujours faite et jamais répétée. C'est dans ce sens que l'on est toujours reporté à une chose « à voir », car on ne peut s'en faire une idée, sauf à fuir devant une Réalité d'ensemble.

C'est l'art dans son ensemble qui est mis en jeu, mais l'appréhender comme abstraction (ce qu'il n'est pas), c'est se suffire de métaphysique, permettant la dichotomie bien propre à la théorétisation commune s'appliquant à un champ spécifique.

Appendice

Un travail fut entamé en 1967 par quatre artistes. Au titre de l'information, il se devait d'être retracé, car il ne le fut jamais [2]. Ce travail continue d'être effectué. Comme éclairement d'un domaine particulier, il continue de se poser sur des bases dès le début définies : art comme illusion, comme distraction, comme illusion de communication, comme soutien objectif d'une société de classes.

L'aspect provocant des premières manifestations était nécessaire. C'est une nécessité qui ne se pouvait ignorer, étant donné que le produit pictural impliquait une cohérence qui ne pouvait laisser dans l'ombre la moindre ambiguïté par rapport à l'art. Des expériences plus récentes sont venues réaffirmer que cette nécessité n'était pas factice, puisque c'est finalement contre la proposition-peinture que se sont organisés en corps de défense musées et organisateurs, police et artistes [3].

Mais au-delà de ces preuves, dont on n'a que faire, apportées par la bêtise apeurée des souteneurs du privilège (de l'art), c'est, encore une fois, d'une cohérence qu'il s'agit.

Cette cohérence ne peut rivaliser avec un art qui se voudrait conceptuel, ni avec un art d'abstraction lyrico-verbale, ni avec un art de l'esthétisme paupérisant, ni avec un art minimaliste mécaniste, avec aucune de ces contorsions actualisantes qui composent la riche diversité de l'art contemporain. On ne peut rivaliser avec le pathétique du toujours déjà absent.

Cette cohérence est évidemment intolérable à ceux qui ne veulent pas voir (ils en « mourraient ») que le débat s'est irrévocablement déporté hors la sphère de la pratique de l'art comme manière d'exister. Il leur manque même la conscience de l'actualité.

1. « Quand nous disons que la peinture ne devrait être que « visualité de la peinture elle-même », il s'agit alors, et alors seulement, de son questionnement véritable à partir duquel la visualité de cette peinture n'a plus intérêt ni non-intérêt. La visualité de la peinture elle-même, c'est son effacement perpétuel et constant en tant que chose visible. C'est enfin son absence en tant que peinture, ou plutôt sa propre mise en question au moment même où elle apparaît, qui peut la rendre aveuglante. La visualité d'une peinture elle-même, c'est la disparition définitive de la peinture en tant que chose visuelle. » (Daniel Buren, « Mise en garde n° 3 », **VH 101** n° 1.)

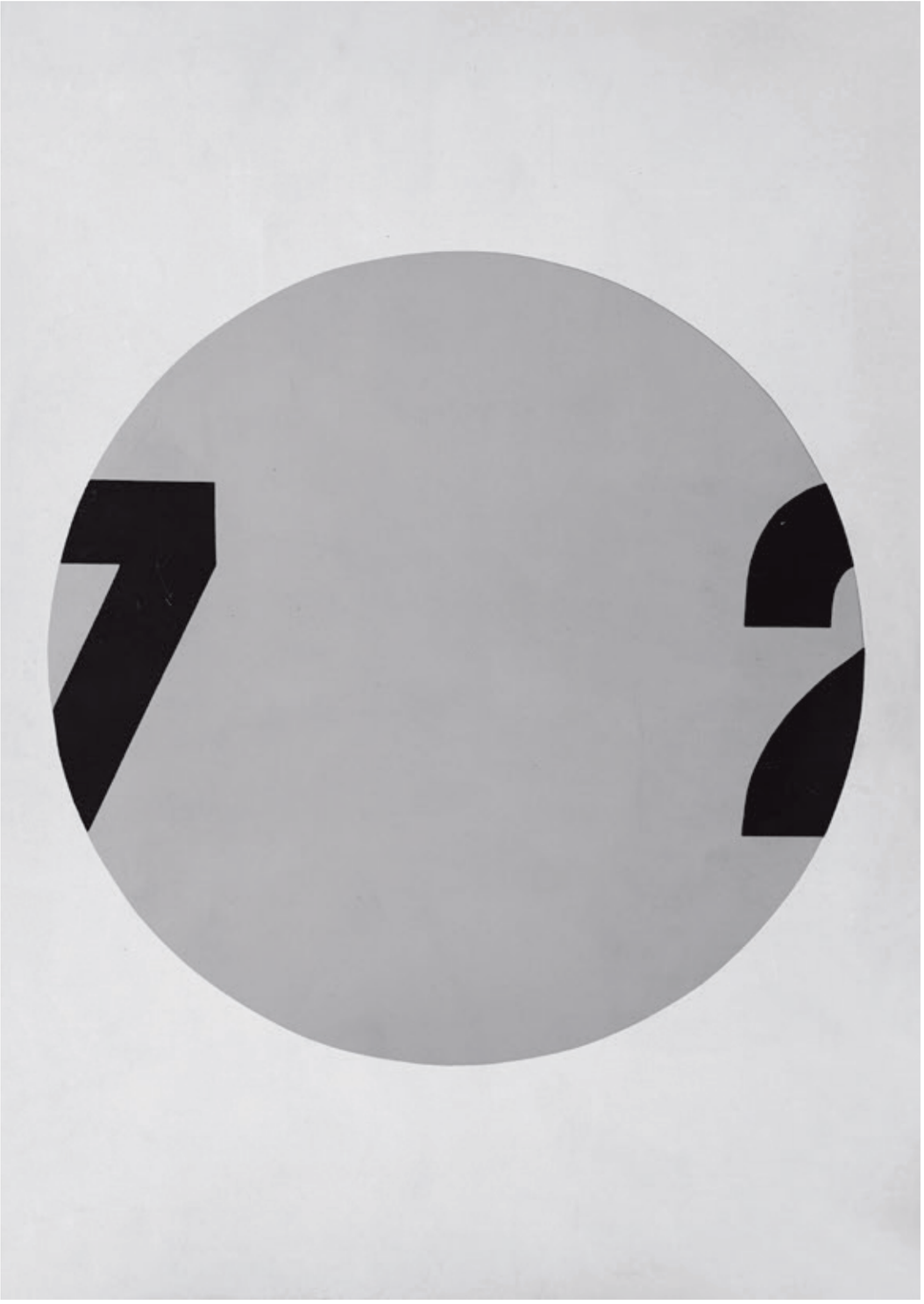
2. A l'exception d'un texte paru dans **Studio International** en janvier 1969.

3. Buren et Toroni à Palerme, Buren à Berne et à New York.

62 **Michel Claura, "Actualité," *VH101* No. 5 (1971), cover and pp. 40-47, 25 × 19 cm.**
VH101 was published quarterly between 1969-1972 in Paris, France, edited by the art critic Otto Hahn and Françoise Esselier. The retrospective article by Michel Claura in 1971 on the history of the group never mentioned Parmentier's dissolution of the group, announced December 6, 1967. Claura will never mention the tract.

Following this article, Parmentier wrote up this response, taken from notes in his "yellow-orange" notebook **(p. 91, fig. 59)**: "... more than three years after the dissolution of the group, Claura wants us to believe *a posteriori* that the principal theoretical characteristic that motivated the rupture — the notion of the 'anonymity of the product' — had been proposed right from the first 'manifestation' (January 1967) — see *VH101* no. 5, pp. 40-47. It was never a question of anonymity before December 1967 (in other words, before the, "Manifestation" on rue de Montfaucon, at which I refused to participate and after which I left the group), and for good reason — it is the least defendable point in Buren's (and Toroni's) position, and I always refused to emphasize it when I was present."

The complete manuscript (unpublished during the artist's lifetime) from which this extract is taken has been transcribed and published by Aristide Bianchi in Michel Parmentier, "Trois brouillons fin 1971 - début 1972," in *La Part de l'Œil* 20 (Dossier: "Ouvrir le support") (2005): 67-70.



63 **Catalogue of the exhibition "Douze ans d'art contemporain en France 1960-1972" (Twelve years of contemporary art in France 1960-1972), Grand Palais, Paris (France), May 7 – September 18, 1972, Paris, Éditions des Musées Nationaux, cover and pp. 292-296, 32 × 23 cm.**
[MICHEL PARMENTIER: Biography, Born in Paris in 1938. Ceased painting definitively in 1968.]

In 1972, invited to show in the exhibition "Douze ans d'art contemporain en France 1960-1972," Parmentier agrees to exhibit a copy of each of his canvases (1966, 1967, 1968) and publishes in the catalogue an "Open Letter to François Mathey" **(see pp. 98-99, translated p. 120)**, chief curator of the exhibition, stating the reasons that have led him to agree to exhibit work "with an objectively subversive quality." He concludes: "Cessation is irrecuperable subversion."

On the organization committee, Mathey, the chief curator, was assisted by François Barré, Jean Clair, Daniel Cordier, Maurice Eschapasse, Serge Lemoine, and Alfred Pacquement.

michel parmentier

biographie

Né à Paris, en 1938.
A cessé définitivement de peindre en 1968.

œuvres exposées

Bleu, 1966,
Huile sur toile,
2,37 × 2,16 cm,
Fonds national d'art contemporain.
Gris, 1967,
Huile sur toile,
233 × 240 cm,
Galerie Jean Fournier.
Rouge, 1968,
Huile sur toile,
233 × 240 cm,
Galerie Jean Fournier.

Paris, le 16 mars 1972

M. Mathey
Commissaire Général
à « la création artistique en France
1960-1972 ».

Cher Monsieur,

Suite à votre lettre du 25 février, je vous confirme mon accord pour que vous exposiez de **mon travail 1965-1968** *les toiles que vous aurez à charge de réunir et pour que soit présenté aussi le prolongement de ce travail :* **mon arrêt définitif de peindre en 1968.** *Votre entreprise retrace en effet une période qui couvre mon activité et sa cessation qui est sa suite logique... position-critique active. Je pense avec vous qu'il est souhaitable de dire aujourd'hui, le plus clairement possible, les raisons qui m'ont amené à cesser de peindre ; cette lettre doit donc être considérée in extenso comme étant cette mise au point nécessaire.*
Si j'accepte d'être (et de ne pas être) présent au Grand Palais, c'est d'abord parce qu'il y aurait un certain ridicule à vouloir « gommer » ce qui a été fait, c'est aussi essentiellement dans un but didactique : montrer le « dire-littéral » que fut mon travail ; situer ce travail (dire et dénoncer par là sa limite, puisque, pour être objectivement subversif, il n'en est déjà pas moins invité officiellement sinon reconnu) ; dire, enfin, mon départ.
J'ai peint, de 1965 à 1968, des bandes horizontales, de couleur unique, de 38 cm de largeur, qui alternaient avec les bandes (de mêmes dimensions, blanches) de la toile protégée de la projection de peinture (bombe ou pistolet) par un pliage préalable, puis rendues apparentes par le dépliage. Ce travail fut strictement répété de 1965 à 1968, la couleur ne changeant arbitrairement d'une année à l'autre que pour ne pas se charger d'une signification : préférentielle ou symbolique.

Cette description dit tout du produit-peinture dont je fus l'auteur.
J'ai cessé définitivement de peindre en 1968.
Cette cessation dit tout, à la suite de ce travail, de ma situation historique de peintre.
Si mon travail **est lui-même théorie,** *toute la théorie, mon départ, lui, doit avoir recours aux mots pour n'être ni fausse sortie, ni suspecte désaffection, ni désertion mal motivée d'artiste qui se recycle ; cette absence, cette cessation est le prolongement intime de mon travail, elle est directement dictée par la qualité objectivement subversive de celui-ci :*
— subversif, non par ce qu'il proposerait de discours, de vertueuses et désuètes déclarations militantes, mais précisément parce qu'il ne propose rien de ces discours, de ces déclarations... ni de quelque discours ou déclaration que ce soit...
— subversif parce que déconnectant tout registre sensible, abolissant toute image, tout savoir, effaçant jusqu'à la trace **lisible** *du geste (image suffisante, depuis quelques décennies, à rassurer sur un talent, une vitalité... une « présence »)...*
— subversif parce que négligeant les simulateurs modernistes, qui pour perpétuer la complicité béate entre artiste — missionnaire et public — démissionnaire, ont troqué les pinceaux contre le néon...
— subversif parce que refusant de se substituer à la conscience du regardeur par un de ces gestes appropriateurs souverains qui de Duchamp au « funk-art » en passant par le nouveau réalisme vivifient l'art au lieu de le dénoncer...
Par rapport à l'art, au dire-pictural, qui fut et est : **discours « délégué »,** *par rapport au « voir » qui fut et est :* **lecture soumise...** *la subversion ne peut être que :* **dire-littéral primaire,** *la subversion ne peut être que* **l'oblitération de la communication.**
En ce sens, mon travail fut « limite ».
Procédant d'un geste couvrant, primaire et oblitérant, il est réflexion-critique sur la peinture ;

294

Rouge, 1968.

63

63 [translation see **p. 120**]

il porte et nie *certaines aventures passées du geste et du « montrer »... il est : peinture/suite et fin... couvrant : il est très exactement suite, primaire et oblitérant : il est aussi, strictement, l'envers de la peinture, sa fin.*

Il est **geste** *(et, en cela, communication), il est* **trace** *qui ne dit que sa littéralité, en l'occurence « neutre », « inintéressante », d'une évidence primaire, conceptualisée, classée, abstraite, creuse... des bandes : il « dit » l'a-communication.*

Le pliage autorisait le geste couvrant le plus total et aveugle qui soit **(qui était tous les dires mêlés)** *et le plus vain du point de vue artistique puisqu'il oblitérait tout message, ne permettant aucun « dialogue »... insistant monologue de muet.*

Il fut objectivement subversif, c'est une chose.

Il fut fait, il fut montré et fut, en 1967, accompagné des actions didactiques du « B.M.P.T. » (puisque toute subversion, pour être, doit être perçue et que la subversion en art, quand elle existe, est trop radicalement l'envers même du registre « dit-perçu » pour jouer efficacement son rôle... puisque la subversion, en art, est **aussi** *l'inefficacité).*

Répondant à un souci immédiat d'efficacité, une de ces actions fut de dénoncer publiquement la fonction réactionnaire de l'art et de ses manifestations, quitter les Salons (s'en servir et les quitter) fut dans la logique de cette dénonciation, ce n'était que l'aspect immédiatement perceptible de la subversion du travail **présenté et retiré...** *c'était le relai rendant audible le dire-critique à travers le dire-littéral : « Tout le reste est art, tout le reste est réactionnaire. »*

Il est devenu évident qu'aujourd'hui cette position tactique **(que supportait et justifiait la peinture-limite),** *s'efface dans les contradictions mêmes d'un « poursuivre » suspect, elle sert de modèle à quelques avant-gardistes qui, pour mieux se faire admettre, doivent ponctuer leur comique* **présence** *de quelques « absences » coquettes. La confusion au niveau des mobiles pourrait sembler complète et bien dans la tradition artistique si ces refus ne répondaient tous au souci de s'intégrer.*

La limite que nous voyons donc de ces actions ne doit pas être négligée.

Une autre limite, prévisible encore et plus sérieuse, était à éviter. Les actions et le dire-critique qui allaient entrer dans la consommation précisément par le biais du « terrorisme », allaient y entraîner le travail-limite lui-même... poursuivi, il allait être reconnu... la « trace-neutre », glisser : « trace-neutre militante »... puis : signe parmi les signes. Il suffit d'ailleurs, Monsieur, de voir le « B.M.P.T. » invité ici et tel de ses « membres », le plus actif depuis 1968, invité à titre personnel, pour comprendre que la subversion ne vit pas longtemps : subversion dans votre domaine.

La poursuite d'un travail qui se fausse dangereusement lui-même et s'enlise complaisamment dans une situation d'avant-garde, la surenchère « théorique », l'omniprésence sont autant d'éléments qui rendent a posteriori consommable l'inconsommable a priori.

La trace-limite devait cesser d'être produite, cessant elle dénonçait et avouait ses limites en situation *(elle dénonce et avoue les limites où elle se situe), elle préserve (autant que possible) sa qualité subversive.*

Cesser c'est « geler » la trace-neutre, c'est la soustraire au piège que nous voyons parfaitement fonctionner de la reconnaissance aveugle, de la consommation béate.

Mon invitation ici, n'est qu'un épiphénomène (révélateur), je suis invité aujourd'hui pour de mauvaises raisons, j'y vois la conséquence du travail poursuivi de façon rien moins que lucide par certains.

Je sais votre entreprise du niveau des Salons que je dénonçais en 1967, ni plus ni moins, mais :

— parce que, de toutes façons, on ne se soustrait pas à une reconnaissance immaturée et de mauvais aloi, à partir du moment où elle se manifeste, par simple refus d'exposer,

— parce que votre entreprise, étant rétrospective, me semble être un moindre mal... et une moindre occasion de montrer un travail qui n'existe que : passé,

— parce que la normalisation que signifie mon invitation vient justifier de façon évidente (sinon agréable) mon arrêt de peindre,

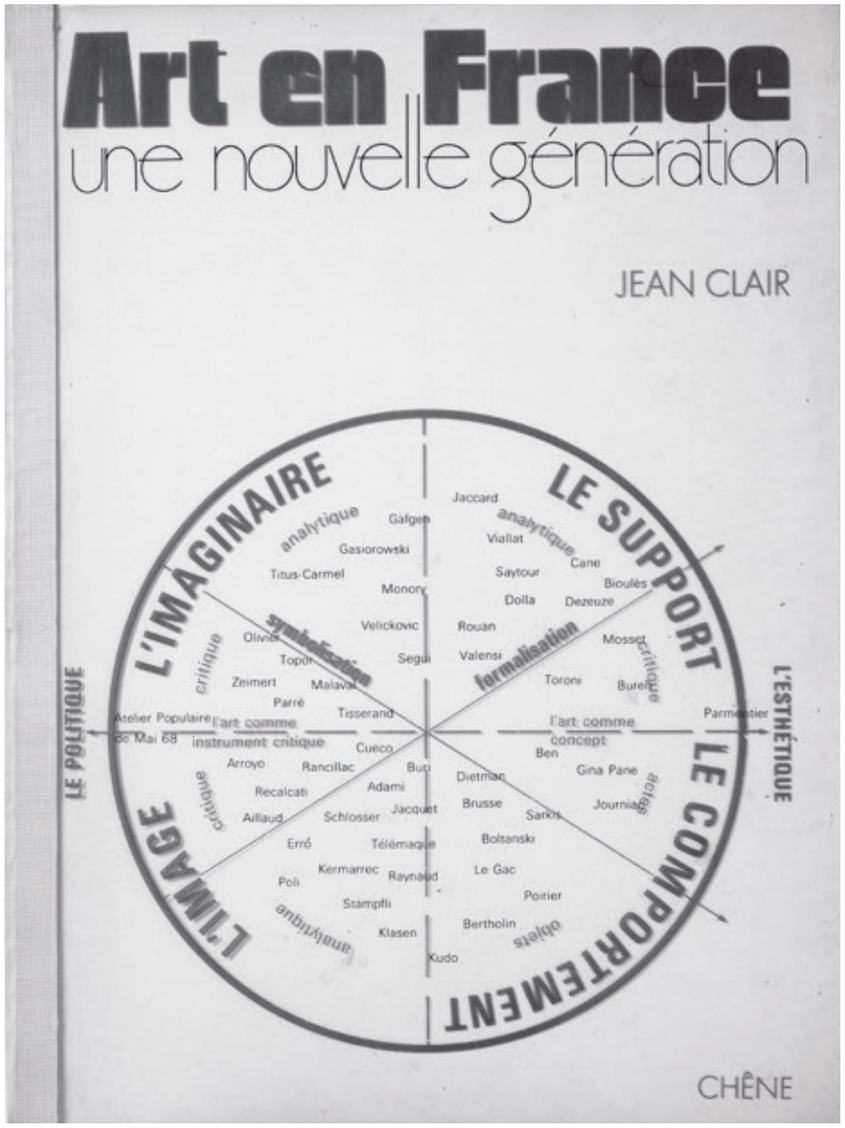
— parce que mon travail montré évitera peut-être, paradoxalement une éventuelle sacralisation qui s'appuierait sur le mythe de l'absence de la même façon qu'elle s'appuie, pour d'autres et ailleurs, sur celui de la présence « impersonnelle »,

— parce que ma « présence/absence » autorise cette mise au point,

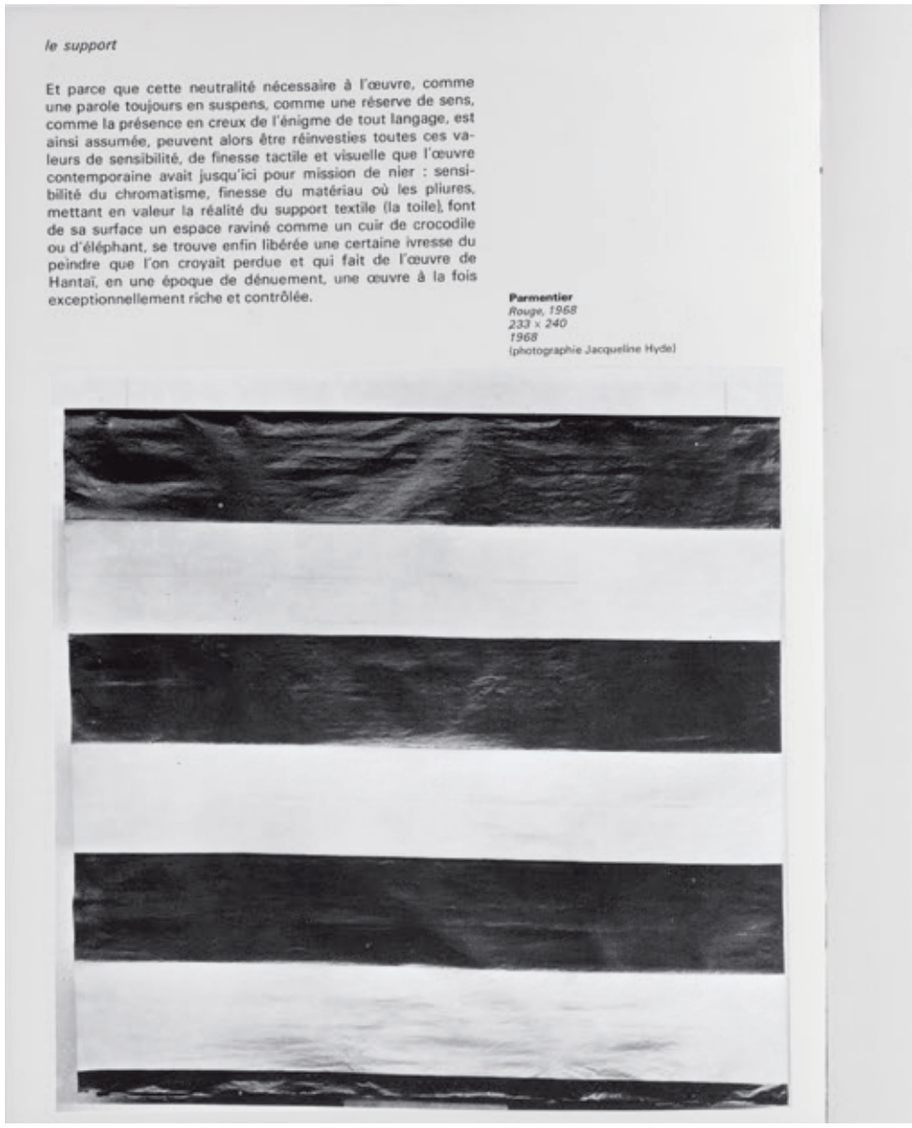
— parce que, enfin, votre exposition et ses adversaires me sont aujourd'hui également indifférents... J'accepte, monsieur, que vous présentiez mes toiles, je ne préjuge pas leur avenir : « subversives » mais l'indifférence qui a accueilli leur présentation passée me semble de ce point de vue une garantie... quant à leur présence au Grand Palais, elle est **pour mémoire... la cessation, elle, est subversion irrécupérable.**

Soyez assuré, Monsieur, de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Michel PARMENTIER.



64



le support

Et parce que cette neutralité nécessaire à l'œuvre, comme une parole toujours en suspens, comme une réserve de sens, comme la présence en creux de l'énigme de tout langage, est ainsi assumée, peuvent alors être réinvesties toutes ces valeurs de sensibilité, de finesse tactile et visuelle que l'œuvre contemporaine avait jusqu'ici pour mission de nier : sensibilité du chromatisme, finesse du matériau où les pliures, mettant en valeur la réalité du support textile (la toile), font de sa surface un espace raviné comme un cuir de crocodile ou d'éléphant, se trouve enfin libérée une certaine ivresse du peindre que l'on croyait perdue et qui fait de l'œuvre de Hantaï, en une époque de dénuement, une œuvre à la fois exceptionnellement riche et contrôlée.

Parmentier
Rouge, 1968
233 × 240
1968
(photographie Jacqueline Hyde)

65

64 **Jean Clair, "Art en France. Une nouvelle génération" (Art in France: A new generation), Paris (France), Éditions du Chêne, 1972, cover and pp. 96-97, 27 × 20.4 cm.**
Jean Clair conceived the B. M. P. T. initialism, reproduced for the first time in this publication, to designate the group of four. It was constantly contested by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni.

65 **Transparency with *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), photograph by Jacqueline Hyde.**
This photograph accompanied the folded/unfolded A4 sheet, a model for folding and conserving the work **(p. 23)**.
It would be reproduced in black and white in several publications **(see pp. 98-99, pp. 116-117, and above)**.

1968 [rouge] (1968 [red]) is not date-stamped. This work, which is almost square, differs from the formats seen in Parmentier's work so far, with the alternation of four painted and three unpainted bands: "Painting on unstretched canvas, 6 painted horizontal bands alternating poppy-red lacquer by Ripolin and white, each 38 cm wide (3+3) and, at the bottom, 1 partial red band of 8 cm, 233.5 × 241.5 cm." Note: on the book, at the top, a Velcro strip 5 cm wide is glued on.

In 1986, the canvas entered the collection of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, inv. AM 1986-158, purchased from Galerie Jean Fournier.

« B.M.P.T. »

C'est cette même exigence de discontinuité du discours, d'une analytique rigoureuse du matériau, qu'on retrouve dans les travaux du groupe Support/Surface et des peintres travaillant dans la même direction que lui.
Avant eux cependant, il convient de revenir un instant sur l'activité du groupe Buren, Mosset, Parmentier et Toroni durant l'année 1967 (16). Des quatre manifestations qui marqueront son existence (17), la plus significative est sans doute la troisième, celle qui devait se dérouler au Musée des Arts Décoratifs le 2 juin. « Dérouler » est impropre d'ailleurs à la désigner puisque, à proprement parler, rien ne devait s'y passer. Le public avait été convié à se réunir dans la salle de conférence du Musée. Sur scène était accrochée une toile de chacun des quatre membres du groupe. Au bout d'une heure d'attente, rien n'arrivant, un tract fut distribué, expliquant qu'il ne s'était agi « évidemment, que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni », soit 4 toiles carrées de 2,50 m de côté :
— Une toile divisée en 29 bandes égales et verticales rouges et blanches dont les deux extrêmes sont recouvertes de blanc (Buren)
— Une couronne de diamètre extérieur 7,8 cm et de diamètre intérieur 4,5 cm au centre d'une toile blanche (Mosset)
— Des bandes horizontales alternées grises et blanches de 38 cm (Parmentier).
— 85 empreintes bleues d'un pinceau plat (n° 50) placées en quinconce à intervalles de 30 cm (Toroni)
Expérience-limite, la manifestation était de ces évidences dont on dit qu'elles crèvent les yeux. Conviés à voir un certain travail, les spectateurs ne pouvaient qu'être attentifs à tout sauf à la littéralité de ce travail même. Car ce que voulait dire la manifestation, c'était que, ne délivrant aucun message, la peinture n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'elle est matériellement; réalité d'un support (la toile), réalité d'une couleur (le pigment), réalité d'une forme (la bande, le cercle, etc.); ce qu'elle représente, c'est elle-même. Loin d'être le lieu d'une communication (comme elle le fut autrefois : médium permettant l'ouverture à autre chose qu'elle-même : l'imagination, le rêve, la re-présentation, etc.), elle est désormais le lieu d'une absence : un *non-lieu*. N'ayant plus lieu d'être, la peinture n'est pas même ce qu'on pourrait nommer une utopie — l'art envisagé, comme il l'a toujours été, comme une fiction consolatrice —, la peinture est une *atopie*.
Mettre en scène une toile (l'exposer sur la scène d'un auditorium, face à un public), c'est donc, explicitement, dévoiler, accuser, détruire cette autre mise en scène, mais implicite, dont le tableau, depuis ses origines, prétend être le lieu. C'est instaurer un lieu sans lieu, c'est circonscrire (encadrer) une absence.
Si l'on prend l'exemple d'une des quatre toiles, celle de Parmentier par exemple, on peut voir combien loin cette absence était poussée (comme on le dit d'un vide, en physique).
Non seulement la neutralité de l'objet/peinture est-elle assurée au niveau du support par la quadrature du format, au niveau

Michel PARMENTIER : Rouge, 1968

"J'ai peint, de 1965 à 1968, des bandes horizontales, de couleur unique, de 38 cm de largeur, qui alternaient avec les bandes (de mêmes dimensions, blanches) de la toile protégée de la projection de peinture (bombe ou pistolet) par un pliage préalable, puis rendues apparentes par le dépliage. Ce travail fut strictement répété de 1965 à 1968, la couleur ne changeant arbitrairement d'une année à l'autre que pour ne pas se charger d'une signification : préférentielle ou symbolique.

Cette description dit tout du produit-peinture dont je fus l'auteur.

J'ai cessé définitivement de peindre en 1968"

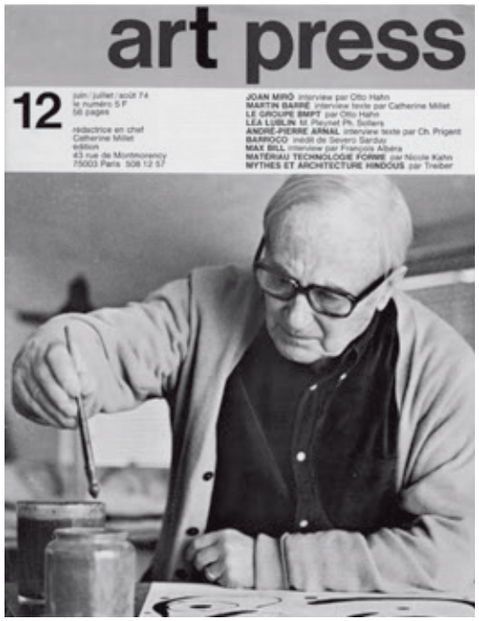
(Lettre de Michel Parmentier à François Mathey, du 16 mars 1972)

Pour la conservation, il faut surtout ne jamais rouler la toile, mais la suspendre. Avant un nouvel accrochage, prévoir de la replier quelques temps dans son pliage originel (en accordéon), de façon à ce que les plis soient visibles au nouveau dépliage ; cf la photocopie jointe.

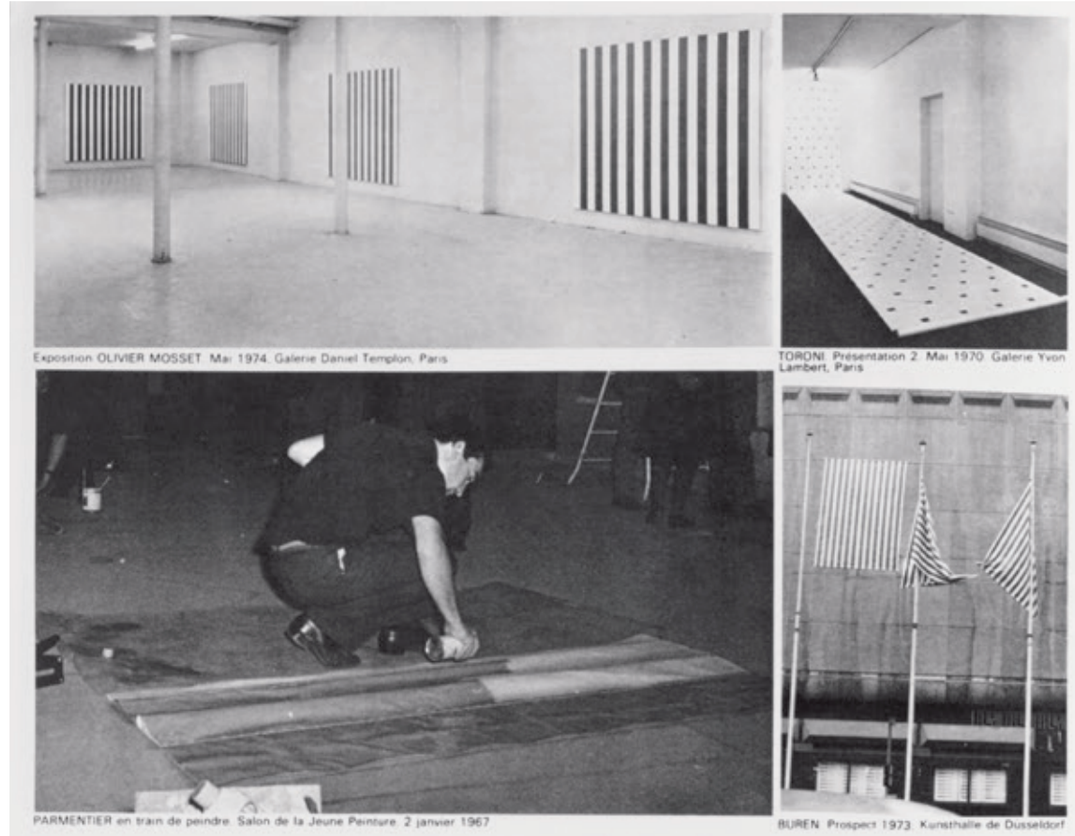
66

66 **Excerpt from the "Open Letter to François Mathey," March 16, 1972, instructions for the hanging and conservation of the work *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]).**
[Michel PARMENTIER: [Rouge], *1968* ([red], 1968)
"Between 1965 and 1968, I painted horizontal 38 cm wide bands in a single color, which alternated with bands (the same dimension, white) of the canvas protected from the sprayed paint (aerosol or spray-paint) by a preliminary folding, which then comes into appearance through unfolding.
This work was repeated exactly the same way between 1965 and 1968, the color only changing arbitrarily from year to year so as not to laden it with preferential or symbolic signification.
This description says everything about the product-painting of which I was the author. I ceased painting definitively in 1968."
(Letter by Michel Parmentier to François Mathey
dated March 16, 1972)
To protect the canvas, it must never be rolled up but suspended. Before a new hanging, plan to refold the original folds (concertinaed) for a short time, in a way that the folds are visible in the new unfolding. Please see the attached photocopy.]

This document was presented with the photocopied and folded diagram of *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]) **(see p. 23)**.



67



Exposition OLIVIER MOSSET. Mai 1974. Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris

TORONI. Présentation 2. Mai 1970. Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris

PARMENTIER en train de peindre. Salon de la Jeune Peinture. 2 janvier 1967

BUREN. Prospect 1973. Kunsthalle de Dusseldorf

resse au sens trouvera plus d'aliments spirituels dans l'œuvre de Cézanne que devant l'éventaire d'un primeur.

L'opposition entre illusion et réalité conduit d'ailleurs à des attitudes dangereuses. En posant d'une part la bonne grosse réalité, on en arrive aussitôt à l'opposer à une minorité maladive qui n'a de cesse de fausser ce réel. Dans cette perspective, «il y aurait d'une part des intellectuels morbides et tourmentés, qui vivent dans l'illusion et la fausseté, et de l'autre l'HOMME qui ne va jamais au cinéma, qui ne lit jamais un livre, ne regarde jamais un tableau, mais qui, préservé «de l'agression aliénante de l'art», manifeste devant la vie une attitude merveilleusement vraie, entretient des contacts authentiques, bref, voit les choses telles qu'elles sont. Nous ne sommes pas loin de la notion «d'art dégénéré».

Il n'est pas dans notre dessein d'attaquer l'œuvre de Buren en soulignant les contradictions de ses textes théoriques. Dieu merci, on peut produire des œuvres valables en développant des théories aberrantes : voyez les pointillistes. Mais dans sa volonté démonstrative, Buren dévoile ses intentions ainsi que celles qui animaient le groupe B.M.P.T. Au début, leur désir secret était de mettre fin à l'art. Et le conseil du début, «B.M.P.T. vous conseillent de devenir intelligent» traduisait en fait la volonté de faire sortir le public de la soi-disant mystification artistique. Mais le groupe ne pouvait qu'échouer à ce premier stade - et sur ce point - car il ne faisait que substituer la praxis du gourmet («une pomme est faite pour être croquée» écrit Buren) à celle de l'interrogation formelle. En fait, la réflexion fait partie de l'homme tout autant que l'alimentation.

D'une façon plus subtile, Buren reviendra sur cette mise à mort de l'art, en construisant une histoire de l'art enfermée dans le carcan d'un but à atteindre. Dans «Repères», texte de 1970, il part du principe que Cézanne, à travers son œuvre, posait deux questions : 1) «Est-il possible d'élimine tout sujet en peinture et de ne montrer que la peinture peinte - ou qui se peint - c'est-à-dire de montrer une peinture sans histoire autre que sa propre histoire, sans illusion, sans représentation...». 2) «Peut-on... faire apparaître la propriété du support sur laquelle on peint, c'est-à-dire une surface plane ?». Partant de ces questions proposées comme fondamentales et seules valables, Buren dénonce ceux qui s'en sont écartés, à savoir les cubistes, Duchamp, les surréalistes, le Pop Art, etc... Ils sont accusés d'avoir censuré la vérité, de s'être prêtés à une basse manœuvre de récupération. Mais certains, selon Buren, ont poursuivi dans la bonne voie, pour un petit moment car tous, hélas, ont été victimes d'un blocage. Il s'agit de Matisse (la couleur pour elle-même), puis Mondrian, Pollock (l'acte de peindre en soi), Newman (la surface plane), Stella (la bande qui n'est qu'une bande)... En traçant une histoire de l'art dont le but est de faire apparaître la peinture et rien d'autre, on en arrive à Buren qui ne fait qu'imprimer une couleur sur un papier ou à Ryman qui ne fait que laisser la trace d'un pinceau sur un support. Ayant décrété que cette voie était la bonne et la seule possible, nous serions donc arrivé à l'aboutissement de la peinture, à son triomphe qui est en même temps sa mort. La peinture, émancipée de toute représentation, de toute signification, atteint la dignité de l'objet réel en abandonnant toute velléité d'être un lieu où s'élabore le sens. Réduite à n'être qu'un pigment sur une chose plate, la peinture est enfin elle-même, aussi présente ou aussi absente qu'une feuille d'arbre, qu'un grain de sable.

Mais est-il exact que le but de Cézanne était de peindre la peinture, peut-on dire que l'art poursuit un but, et n'est-il pas insensé de prétendre que l'art depuis cent ans ne cherche qu'à se signifier lui-même ? Et c'est là où la démarche de Buren devient fascinante. A travers son volontarisme paranoïaque, il poursuit l'aventure la plus délirante de ces dix dernières années. Dans cette perspective, les démonstrations de Buren, qui appuyées de schémas dénoncent le fait que derrière la Joconde il y a une planche en bois cachée par la peinture, ne doivent pas être prises comme tentative de clarification, mais comme la manifestation d'un esprit monomaniaque. Et peut-être a-t-on tort de se demander si Buren raisonne juste ou non. Il est bien plus troublant de voir que depuis 8 ans, il tente d'imposer ses tissus rayés, ses papiers imprimés qui ne sont selon ses propres propos ni artistiques ni anti-artistiques, ni intéressants ni inintéressants, qui ne signifient rien, qui ne dérangent rien, qui ne sont rien d'autres que ce qu'ils sont.

Mais là-dessus, un fait nouveau est intervenu. Début 1974, Mosset s'est à son tour mis à faire des bandes, peintes celles-là. Est-ce un pavé dans le domaine de Buren ? Non, dans la mesure où le groupe B.M.P.T. refusait que l'un ou l'autre soit propriétaire de sa forme. Mais en même temps Mosset posait une question subtile : des bandes faites par Buren sont-elles différentes des bandes faites par Mosset. A cela s'ajoute des strates psychologiques : alors que Buren tente de suicider l'art, Mosset ajoute une autre forme de suicide, celle de sa propre individualité. Et tout cela, au nom de la problématique d'un visible neutre, impersonnel, anonyme.

Pour l'observateur extérieur, pour qui il est indifférent qu'une forme d'expression, vidée de son sens, s'étiole ou meurt, l'aventure du groupe B.M.P.T. est sujet à passionnantes réflexions. Ce n'est pas le lieu de décider ici qui a tort et qui a raison, puisque c'est la praxis des artistes et leur activité au sein d'une société qui fera que l'art demeurera le lieu des prises de conscience ou celui d'une tautologie répétitive du genre de «la réalité est réelle».

14

67 **Otto Hahn, "Le groupe BMPT la mort supposée de l'art" (The BMPT group and the purported death of art), *art press*, no. 12, June-August 1974, cover and p. 14, 32.5 × 25 cm.**
Excerpt from the article by Otto Hahn, "Le groupe BMPT: La mort supposée de l'art," much contested by the "Lettre ouverte à machin" (Open letter to what's-his-face) cosigned by Buren, Parmentier, and Toroni, dated July 10, 1974 **(see p. 103)**.

In the center, Parmentier spraying a canvas on the ground during the opening of "Manifestation 1" (photo: Bernard Boyer).

68 **Open letter from Michel Parmentier cosigned by Buren and Toroni, "Lettre ouverte à Machin..." (Open letter to what's-his-face"), addressed to Otto Hahn, July 10, 1974, typewritten, with "Duplalfa" watermark, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[OPEN LETTER TO WHAT'S-HIS-FACE, (in relation to an article that was published in something we received)

Despite the divergences that continue to oppose us — and which you obviously don't understand — all three of us are still capable of agreeing on certain points: thus, today, we have the pleasure of confirming, dear Otto Hahn, that you are a mediocre chubby-cheeked idiot.
Paris, July 10, 1974, BUREN-PARMENTIER-TORONI]

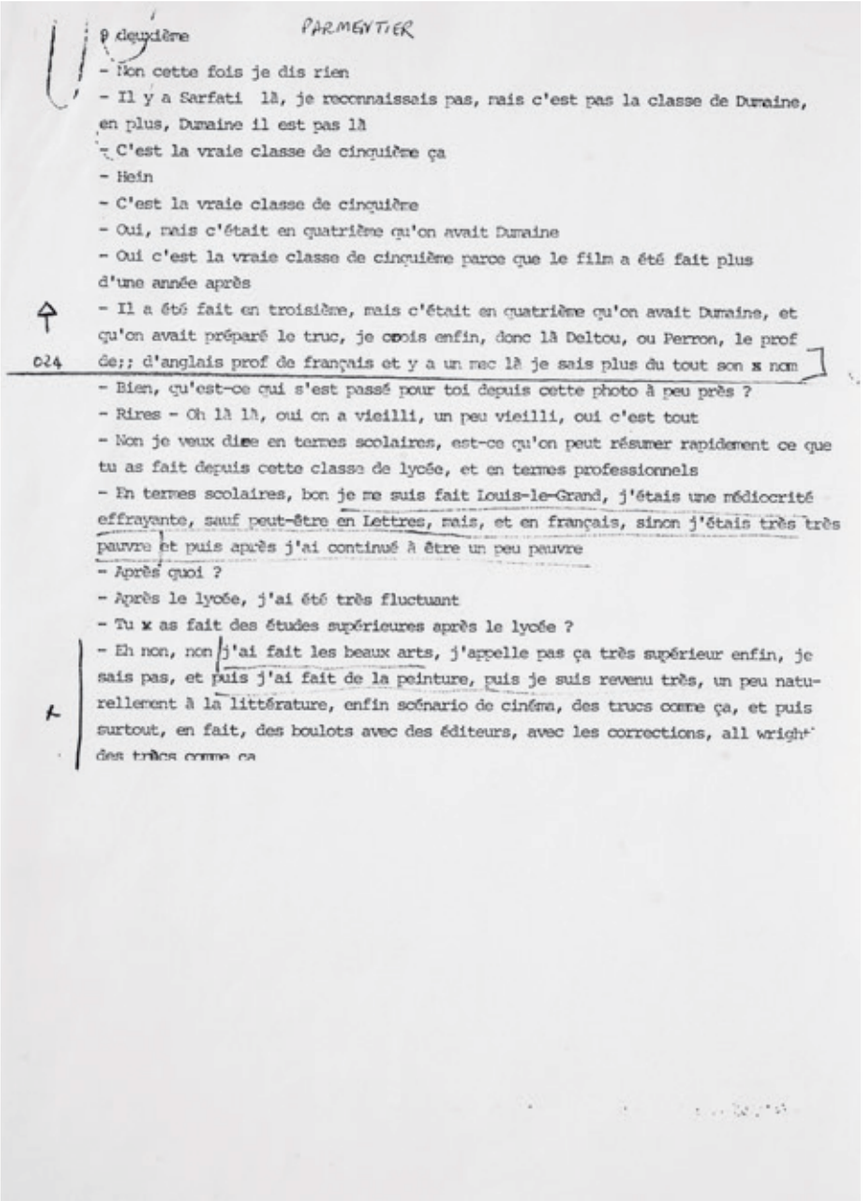
LETTRE OUVERTE A MACHIN

(à propos d'un article paru dans quelque chose qu'on a reçu).

Malgré les divergences qui continuent de nous opposer - et auxquelles vous ne pouvez, de toute évidence, rien comprendre - nous sommes encore capables de tomber d'accord tous les trois sur certains points : ainsi, aujourd'hui, nous avons le plaisir de vous confirmer, cher Otto Hahn, que vous êtes un médiocre con joufflu.

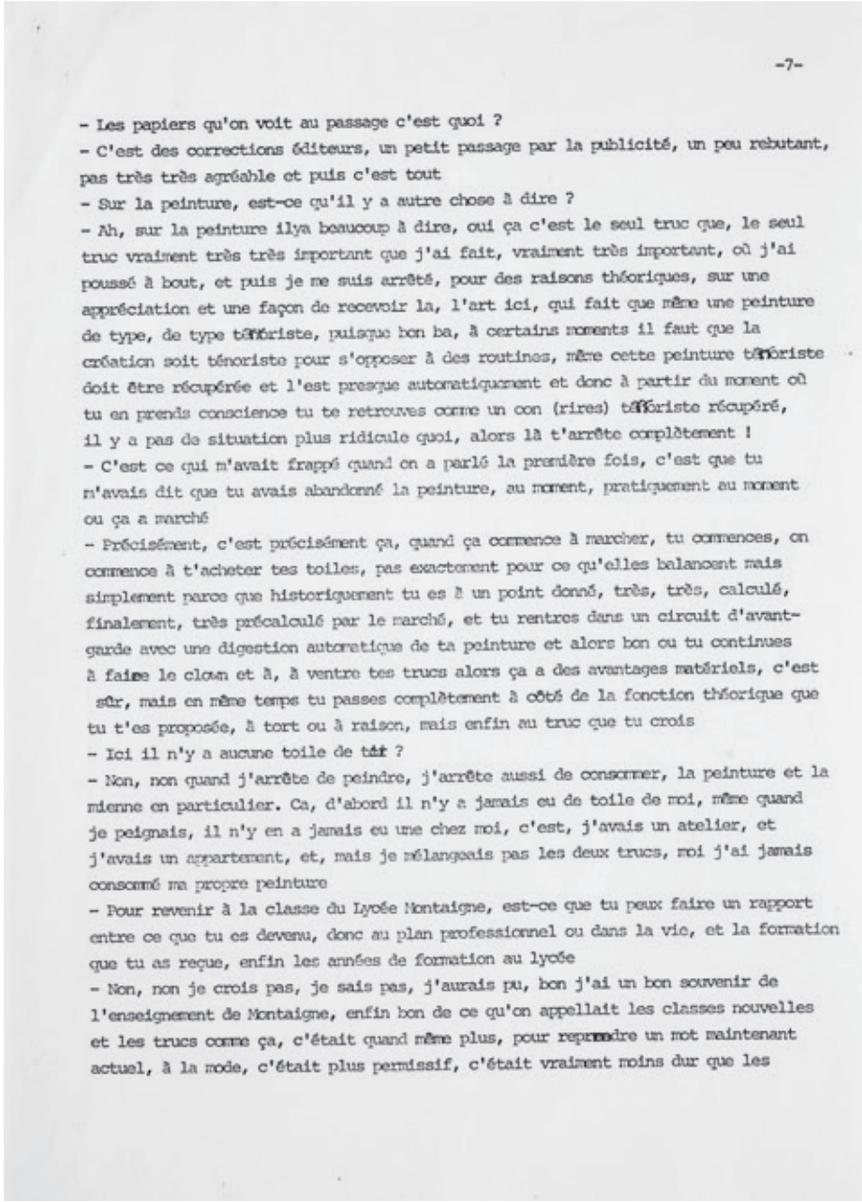
Paris, le 10 juillet 1974,

BUREN - PARMENTIER - TORONI.



PARMENTIER

- Non cette fois je dis rien
- Il y a Sarfati là, je reconnaissais pas, mais c'est pas la classe de Dumaine, en plus, Dumaine il est pas là
- C'est la vraie classe de cinquième ça
- Hein
- C'est la vraie classe de cinquième
- Oui, mais c'était en quatrième qu'on avait Dumaine
- Oui c'est la vraie classe de cinquième parce que le film a été fait plus d'une année après
- Il a été fait en troisième, mais c'était en quatrième qu'on avait Dumaine, et qu'on avait préparé le truc, je crois enfin, donc là Deltou, ou Perron, le prof de;; d'anglais prof de français et y a un mec là je sais plus du tout son x nom
- Bien, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé pour toi depuis cette photo à peu près ?
- Rires - Oh là là, oui on a vieilli, un peu vieilli, oui c'est tout
- Non je veux dire en termes scolaires, est-ce qu'on peut résumer rapidement ce que tu as fait depuis cette classe de lycée, et en termes professionnels
- En termes scolaires, bon je me suis fait Louis-le-Grand, j'étais une médiocrité effrayante, sauf peut-être en Lettres, mais, et en français, sinon j'étais très très pauvre et puis après j'ai continué à être un peu pauvre
- Après quoi ?
- Après le lycée, j'ai été très fluctuant
- Tu x as fait des études supérieures après le lycée ?
- Eh non, non j'ai fait les beaux arts, j'appelle pas ça très supérieur enfin, je sais pas, et puis j'ai fait de la peinture, puis je suis revenu très, un peu naturellement à la littérature, enfin scénario de cinéma, des trucs comme ça, et puis surtout, en fait, des boulots avec des éditeurs, avec les corrections, all wright des trucs comme ça



-7-

- Les papiers qu'on voit au passage c'est quoi ?
- C'est des corrections éditeurs, un petit passage par la publicité, un peu rebutant, pas très très agréable et puis c'est tout
- Sur la peinture, est-ce qu'il y a autre chose à dire ?
- Ah, sur la peinture ilya beaucoup à dire, oui ça c'est le seul truc que, le seul truc vraiment très très important que j'ai fait, vraiment très important, où j'ai poussé à bout, et puis je me suis arrêté, pour des raisons théoriques, sur une appréciation et une façon de recevoir la, l'art ici, qui fait que même une peinture de type, de type terroriste, puisque bon ba, à certains moments il faut que la création soit ténoriste pour s'opposer à des routines, même cette peinture terroriste doit être récupérée et l'est presque automatiquement et donc à partir du moment où tu en prends conscience tu te retrouves comme un con (rires) terroriste récupéré, il y a pas de situation plus ridicule quoi, alors là t'arrête complètement !
- C'est ce qui m'avait frappé quand on a parlé la première fois, c'est que tu m'avais dit que tu avais abandonné la peinture, au moment, pratiquement au moment ou ça a marché
- Précisément, c'est précisément ça, quand ça commence à marcher, tu commences, on commence à t'acheter tes toiles, pas exactement pour ce qu'elles balancent mais simplement parce que historiquement tu es à un point donné, très, très, calculé, finalement, très précalculé par le marché, et tu rentres dans un circuit d'avant-garde avec une digestion automatique de ta peinture et alors bon ou tu continues à faire le clown et à, à ventre tes trucs alors ça a des avantages matériels, c'est sûr, mais en même temps tu passes complètement à côté de la fonction théorique que tu t'es proposée, à tort ou à raison, mais enfin au truc que tu crois
- Ici il n'y a aucune toile de toi ?
- Non, non quand j'arrête de peindre, j'arrête aussi de consommer, la peinture et la mienne en particulier. Ca, d'abord il n'y a jamais eu de toile de moi, même quand je peignais, il n'y en a jamais eu une chez moi, c'est, j'avais un atelier, et j'avais un appartement, et, mais je mélangeais pas les deux trucs, moi j'ai jamais consommé ma propre peinture
- Pour revenir à la classe du Lycée Montaigne, est-ce que tu peux faire un rapport entre ce que tu es devenu, donc au plan professionnel ou dans la vie, et la formation que tu as reçue, enfin les années de formation au lycée
- Non, non je crois pas, je sais pas, j'aurais pu, bon j'ai un bon souvenir de l'enseignement de Montaigne, enfin bon de ce qu'on appellait les classes nouvelles et les trucs comme ça, c'était quand même plus, pour reprendre un mot maintenant actuel, à la mode, c'était plus permissif, c'était vraiment moins dur que les

69 **Copy of an excerpt from the transcription of Michel Parmentier's interview with Sylvain Roumette: two typewritten pages, one of them annotated, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**

[Sylvain Roumette: – no, this time I'm saying nothing.

Michel Parmentier: There's Sarfati there. I don't recognize him, but it's not Dumaine's class. Anyway, Dumaine is not there.

— That's really the fifth grade class there [at the Lycée Montaigne].

— What?

— It's really the fifth grade class.

— Yes, but we had Dumaine in the fourth grade.

— Yes, that's really the fifth grade class because the film was made more than a year later.

— It was made in the third grade, but I think it was in the fourth grade that we had Dumaine and made the film. There's Deltou, or Perron, the… English teacher, the French teacher, and there's that guy whose name I can't remember.

— So, what have you been doing since around the time of this photo?

— [Laughter] Oh boy! Yes, we've gotten older, a little older, that's all.

— No, I mean in terms of education. Can you give us a brief overview of what you have been doing professionally since this class?

— In terms of education, I went on to Louis-le-Grand.[1] I was appallingly mediocre, except perhaps in the arts and French. Otherwise, I was a very poor student, and afterwards I continued being quite poor.

— After what?

— After high school, I drifted around a lot.

— Did you continue your studies [*études supérieures*] after high school?

— No, no… I went to art school. I'm not sure I would call that very "superior," but anyways. Then I started painting. Then I came back quite naturally to literature. There was a film-script and things like that. And then especially work with publishers, proof-reading, you know, things like that.

— The pieces of paper that can be seen in passing, what are they?

— It's proof corrections, a small publicity text, all a little discouraging, really not very enjoyable, and that's all.

— In terms of painting, what else can you say?

— Ah! There's a lot to say about painting. Yes, it's the only thing… the only really, really important thing that I did — really very important — which I pushed to the limit. And then I stopped for theoretical reasons concerning the ways in which art is appreciated and received, which means that even painting that looks terrorist — because at certain moments, what is created must be terrorist in order to challenge certain routines — even this terrorist painting must become recuperated and is so almost automatically. So, from the moment you become conscious of this, you end up looking like an idiotic, recuperated terrorist. The situation couldn't be more ridiculous, so then you stop completely!

— What struck me when we first spoke is that you told me you had abandoned painting practically at the very moment when everything was going well.

— That's precisely it. When one begins to have success, you begin… someone begins by buying your canvases, not exactly so that they speak freely but simply because historically you are at a predetermined point, and it's very, very calculated, and in the end already quite determined by the market. And so, you enter into the avant-garde circuit with its inevitable way of assimilating your painting, and then you carry on being a clown and sell your stuff, which of course has material advantages, but at the same time you completely sidestep the theoretical work you had proposed, rightly or wrongly, or at least the thing that you believed in.

— There's no painting of yours here?

— No, no. When I stop painting, I also stop consuming painting, and my own in particular. First of all, I've never had a painting of mine at home, I had a studio and I had an apartment, but I never mixed them up. I have never consumed my own paintings.

— Coming back to the class at Lycée Montaigne, do you see a relation between what you have become professionally or in life and the education you received, those years of education at school?

— No, no, I don't think so. I don't know. I could have… well, I have fond memories of the teaching at Montaigne, what were called the new classes and things like that. Taking up a current term, it was more in vogue, more permissive, and certainly less hard than the (…)

1 Situated on the rue Saint-Jacques in the Latin Quarter in Paris, Louis-le-Grand is one of the most prestigious lycées in France. Translator's note.]

In 1977, Parmentier took part in a documentary by Sylvain Roumette, *La Photo de classe* (The class photo), also called *Vingt Ans après* (Twenty years later) (55 min, 16 mm, color and black and white, France, 1977).

Former students of the Lycée Montaigne in Paris, who were filmed there in 1951 when in a second form literature class that was part of an experiment in new teaching methods, met up with their teacher twenty years later and were asked about their memories.

Excerpts from a conversation between Sylvain Roumette and Parmentier. Some of Parmentier's statements on art (painting) were cut in the final edit of the film. Here we publish the transcript.

LILIANE & MICHEL
DURAND-DESSERT

43, rue de Montmorency
75003 Paris. 277 63 60

PARMENTIER*
(3 toiles de 1966, 1967, 1968)

11 février - 16 mars

* Michel Parmentier a cessé définitivement de peindre au cours de l'année 1968.

70

DÉMENTI (extrait) :

(...) et jusqu'à notre dernière rencontre (qui remonte maintenant à dix ans), cette peinture n'a jamais fait, devant moi, la moindre allusion à la pêche au lancer telle qu'elle se pratique, admirable et virile, sur les grands rapides écumants du nord des États-Unis ou du Canada.

Michel Parmentier
Cerdon-du-Loiret, janvier 1978.

ALLÉGATION :

L'idée ne préexiste pas au langage, elle se forme en lui et par lui.

Heinrich von Kleist

71

72

70 **Invitation to the exhibition "Parmentier* (3 toiles de 1966, 1967, 1968)," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), February 11 – March 16, 1978, 10.5 × 14.9 cm.**
[LILIANE & MICHEL, DURAND-DESSERT
43, rue de Montmorency 75003 Paris. PARMENTIER* (3 canvases from 1966, 1967, 1968), February 11 - March 16, *Michel Parmentier ceased painting definitively over the course of 1968.]

Ten years after he stopped painting, Parmentier had his first exhibition, featuring three canvases (1966, 1967, and 1968). He had met Michel Durand-Dessert through Niele Toroni. Gallerists in Paris, Liliane and Michel Durand-Dessert would represent Parmentier from 1978 to 1991 and helped make his art present in French museums, notably by donating several works to the Musée de Grenoble in 2005.

71 **Tract "Démenti [...] Allégation" (Refutation [...] allegation) accompanying the invitation to the exhibition "Parmentier* (3 toiles de 1966, 1967, 1968)." With "Extra Strong" watermark, 27 × 21 cm.**
[REFUTATION (extract):
(...) and up to our recent encounter (which goes back now ten years), this painting in front of me has never made the least allusion to cast fishing as it is practiced so admirably and manfully in the great foaming rapids in the northern United States and Canada.
Michel Parmentier, Cerdon-du-Loiret, January 1978
ALLEGATION:
The idea does not preexist language; it is formed in and by it.
Heinrich von Kleist[1]

1 See Heinrich von Kleist, *On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Speaking*. ed. and trans. by David Constantine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), pp. 405-09.

72 **Three canvases from 1966, 1967, and 1968, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), print from original black-and-white photograph, 24 × 18 cm.**
In Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, photography session to present the canvases to be shown in the gallery: *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966), *15 mars 1967* (March 15, 1967), and *18 février 1968* (February 18, 1968); the last was fixed to the wall, the two others were partially folded/unfolded to show the mechanism that produced them.

73

Entre les soussignés: Michel Parmentier
demeurant à: 32 rue Tournefort, 75005 Paris

ci-après nommé " l'artiste" d'une part, et M.et Mme Durand-Dessert
demeurant à: 43 rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris

ci-après nommé " l'acquéreur", il a tout d'abord été exposé:

L'artiste a produit une oeuvre d'art, ci-après dénommé "l'oeuvre ", dont les caractéristiques suivent:

Description: 7 bandes horizontales peintes, alternées bleues et blanches, de 38 cm de largeur (4 + 3) et, en haut et en bas, 2 bandes bleues de 5 cm et 10, 5 cm

Matériau:	Date:	Dimensions:
toile libre	5 avril 1966	281 x 245 cm

Les parties souhaitent que soient protégées l'intégrité et la clarté des idées et conceptions de l'artiste quant à son oeuvre et qu'à cet effet il soit tenu compte des souhaits et avis que pourra le cas échéant émettre l'artiste, créateur de l'oeuvre.
En conséquence, les parties ont convenu que la cession de l'oeuvre se ferait moyennant les conditions et obligations mutuelles ci-après.
Pour les expositions, l'artiste et l'acquéreur conviennent que:
a) L'acquéreur fera connaître par écrit à l'artiste son intention de présenter ou laisser présenter l'oeuvre dans une exposition publique, donnant à l'artiste toutes les informations utiles relatives à l'exposition qui lui auront été communiquées par l'organisateur de l'exposition.
Cette information devra être fournie à l'artiste avant que tout engagement soit pris par le collectionneur vis à vis de l'organisateur de l'exposition.
L'artiste fera connaître à l'acquéreur et à l'organisateur de l'exposition tous avis ou demandes qu'il aurait à émettre à propos de l'exposition projetée de son oeuvre et à propos de la présentation physique de l'oeuvre (accrochage..).L'acquéreur n'exposera ni ne laissera exposer l'oeuvre en public sans que soit au préalable respecté le présent alinéa.

b)Aucune exposition publique de l'oeuvre ne pourra avoir lieu sans qu'au préalable l'acquéreur ait obtenu le consentement exprès par écrit de l'artis

c)L'acquéreur s'engage à ne pas altérer, modifier ou apporter quelque changement que ce soit à l'oeuvre décrite plus haut.

d)De son vivant l'acquéreur est responsable de toute présentation publique de l'oeuvre, même faite à son insu.Ce présent contrat restera en vigueur entre les parties, leurs héritiers, légataires, éxécuteurs testamentaires, curateurs, ayants cause, cessionnaires etc..

e)Les obligations de l'acquéreur viendront à expiration vingt et un ans après le décès de l'artiste.

d)L'acquéreur s'oblige à ne céder l'oeuvre qu'autant qu'il aura obtenu du cessionnaire qu'il adhère tout d'abord au présent contrat et en ratifie tous les termes et conditions.Ladite adhésion au contrat sera suffisamment prouvée par la signature d'une copie de ce contrat et l'expédition de cette copie à l'artiste.

Fait à Paris le 15 février 1978

L'artiste L'acquéreur

74

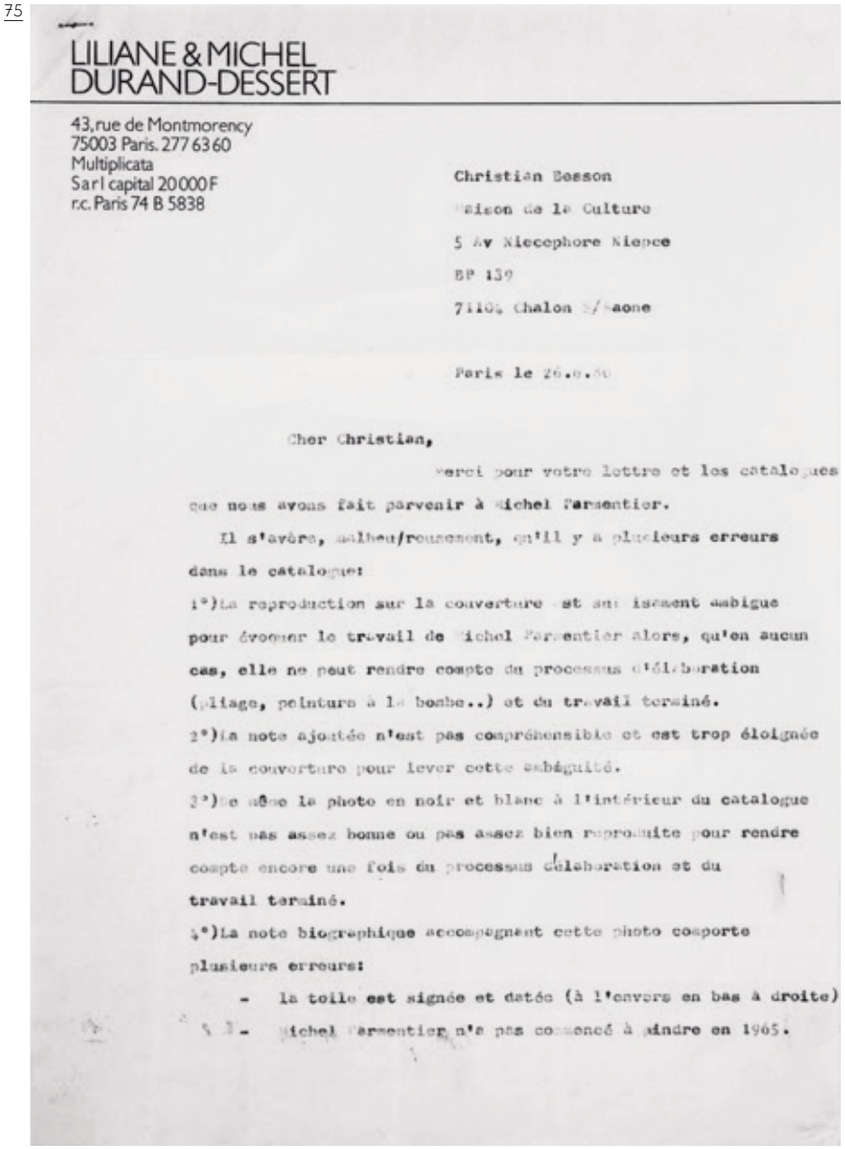
1968-78
QUELQUES...
ACQUISITIONS
MUSEE DE GRENOBLE

Valério ADAMI
Yaacov AGAM
Gilles AILLAUD
Jean-Claude BARRERE
Jean-Marie BERTHOLIN
Max BILL
James BISHOP
Victor BRAUNER
Louis CANE
Carlos CRUZ-DIEZ
Jean DEGOTTEX
Jan DIBBETS
Théo van DOESBURG
Sam FRANCIS
Naum GABO
Jean GORIN
Juan GRIS
Michael HEIZER
Douglas HUEBLER
Gottfried HONNEGER
Ellsworth KELLY
Joël KERMARREC
Peter KLASEN
Sol LEWITT
Richard LONG
Annette MESSAGER
Laszlo MOHOLY-NAGY
Jacques MONORY
Louise NEVELSON
Kenneth NOLAND
Dennis OPPENHEIM
Bernard PAGES
Michel PARMENTIER
Eduardo PAOLOZZI
Martial RAYSSE
Judit REIGL
Vassilakis TAKIS
Cy TWOMBLY
Claude VIALLAT
Tom WESSELMAN

Grenoble
musée de peinture
12-09 / 17-12-79

Chalon-sur-Saône
maison de la culture
2-05 / 30-06-80

75



LILIANE & MICHEL
DURAND-DESSERT

43, rue de Montmorency
75003 Paris. 277 63 60
Multiplicata
Sarl capital 20 000 F
r.c. Paris 74 B 5838

Christian Besson
Maison de la Culture
5 Av Nicephore Niepce
BP 139
71104 Chalon s/Saone

Paris le 26.6.80

Cher Christian,

Merci pour votre lettre et les catalogues que nous avons fait parvenir à Michel Parmentier.

Il s'avère, malheureusement, qu'il y a plusieurs erreurs dans le catalogue:

1°)La reproduction sur la couverture est surtout ambigue pour évoquer le travail de Michel Parmentier alors, qu'en aucun cas, elle ne peut rendre compte du processus d'élaboration (pliage, peinture à la bombe..) et du travail terminé.

2°)La note ajoutée n'est pas compréhensible et est trop éloignée de la couverture pour lever cette ambiguité.

3°)De même la photo en noir et blanc à l'intérieur du catalogue n'est pas assez bonne ou pas assez bien reproduite pour rendre compte encore une fois du processus d'élaboration et du travail terminé.

4°)La note biographique accompagnant cette photo comporte plusieurs erreurs:

- la toile est signée et datée (à l'envers en bas à droite)
- Michel Parmentier n'a pas commencé à peindre en 1965.

73 **Contract between Michel Parmentier and Michel Durand-Dessert for *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966), February 15, 1978, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[Between the undersigned: Michel Parmentier living at: 32, rue Tournefort, 75005 Paris, referred to hereafter as "artist," on the one hand, and Mr. and Mrs. Durand-Dessert, living at: 43, rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris, referred to hereafter as "purchaser," the following has been set forth: The artist has created a work of art, hereafter "the work," whose characteristics are the following: Description: 7 horizontal alternating blue and white painted bands, 38 cm wide (4+3), and 2 bands of 5 cm and 10.5 cm on the top and bottom, Material: unstretched canvas, Date: April 5, 1966, Dimensions: 281 × 245 cm

Both parties wish that the integrity and clarity of the artist's ideas and conceptions regarding his work might be protected and, to this effect, agree to take into account, as need be, any wishes and recommendations issued by the artist, creator of the work.

In consequence, the parties have agreed that cession of the work will be made by means of the mutual conditions and obligations outlined below.

For exhibitions, the artist and purchaser agree that:
a) The purchaser will notify in writing to the artist his intention to exhibit the work or let it be exhibited in a public exhibition, providing the artist all the necessary information regarding the exhibition that has been communicated by the exhibition organizer. This information should be provided to the artist before any engagement is undertaken by the collector with the exhibition organizer. The artist will make known to the purchaser and exhibition organizer every recommendation or request that he issues regarding the proposed exhibition of his work and the physical presentation of the work (hanging...). The purchaser will not exhibit or let be exhibited the work in public without first complying with the conditions outlined in the present paragraph.
b) No public exhibition of the work can take place without the purchaser having beforehand obtained the artist's express written consent.
c) The purchaser agrees not to alter, modify, or bring any changes whatsoever to the work described above.
d) While living, the purchaser is responsible for all public exhibition of the work, even when made unbeknownst to him. This present contract remains in effect between the parties, their heirs, legatees, executors of wills, legal guardians, successors, transferees, etc....
e) The purchaser's obligations will expire twenty-one years after the artist's death.
f) The purchaser is obliged not to cede the work before having first obtained from the transferee adherence to the present contract, ratifying all the terms and conditions herein. Sufficient proof for adhering to the aforesaid contract is provided by signing a copy of this contract and sending this copy to the artist.
Signed in Paris, February 15, 1978, The artist, The purchaser
Liliane Durand-Dessert (signature)
Michel Durand-Dessert (signature)]

This was the first certificate/contract drawn up by Parmentier on February 15, 1978. Two copies were produced for the sale of *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966). Attached to the work, it was to be countersigned by the buyer (here, Michel and Liliane Durand-Dessert). First record and exhaustive visual and material description of a work. Parmentier would use the same terminology to signify and describe his works and the procedure through which they were elaborated. By acknowledging the work described, "the buyer" and "the artist" acknowledged a mutual moral obligation binding "the acquirer" to the work acquired.

Note: In January 1972, Daniel Buren introduced the definitive form of a "certificate of authenticity" for his work, titled "avertissement" (notification). This was to accompany every work in circulation and systematically used in any transaction. Two other versions (1968-1972) preceded this one.

74 **Catalogue *1968-78 : Quelques... Acquistions Musée de Grenoble*, Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble (France), 1979-1980, unpaginated, 21 × 30 cm.**
Cover of the catalogue incriminated by Parmentier because of the reinterpretation and graphic reproduction of a canvas.

75 **Letter from Michel Durand-Dessert to Christian Besson, June 26, 1980, 2 typewritten pages with "Extra Strong" watermark and 1 photocopy, stapled, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**
[Paris, 6/26/80: LILIANE & MICHEL DURAND-DESSERT, 43, rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris [to] Christian Besson, Maison de la Culture, 5, ave. Nicéphore Niépce, BP 139, 71104 Chalon-sur-Saône
Dear Christian,

Thank you for your letter and the catalogue that we forwarded to Michel Parmentier.

Unfortunately, it turns out that there are several errors in the catalogue.
1) The reproduction on the cover is somewhat ambiguous in evoking the work of Michel Parmentier, while in no sense does it take into account the process through which it is elaborated (folding, spray-paint...) and the finished work.
2) The appended note does not make sense and appears too far from the cover to remove this ambiguity.
3) Likewise, the black and white photograph inside the catalogue is not good enough or not reproduced well enough to take into account once again the process in which the work is elaborated and the finished work.
4) The biographical note accompanying this photo contains several errors:
— the canvas is signed and dated (on the back, on the lower right side)
— Michel Parmentier did not start painting in 1965

→ continues on **p. 108**

Il en est d'ailleurs de même pour les autres membres de BMPT.
La pratique et la théorie de BMPT ne sont pas nées ex nihilo.
Cette erreur (reprise dans la fiche technique) pourrait être corrigée par la biographie ci-jointe élaborée par Michel Parmentier lui-même et à reproduire telle quelle.

En conséquence, vous comprendrez que Michel Parmentier ne puisse pas accepter ces erreurs.

Il demande ainsi, que, pour les catalogues qui restent:

a) Les erreurs dans la biographie et la fiche technique soient corrigées.

b) La couverture et la photo intérieure soient changées pour une meilleure photo (même en noir et blanc) ou soient supprimées.

Je pense que vous comprendrez ces demandes qui ne cherchent qu'à permettre une réelle appréhension du travail (dans sa réalisation pratique et dans son contexte historique).

Dans l'attente de vous lire, nous vous prions de croire en nos sentiments les meilleurs.

Michel Durand-Dessert

* " J'ai peint, de 1965 à 1968, des bandes horizontales, de couleur
" unique, de 38 cm de largeur, qui alternaient avec les bandes
" (de même dimension, blanches) de la toile protégée de la pro-
" jection de peinture (bombe ou pistolet) par un pliage préalable
" puis rendue apparente par un dépliage. Ce travail fut strictement
" répété de 1965 à 1968, la couleur ne changeant arbitrairement
" d'une année à l'autre que pour ne pas se charger d'une significa-
" tion: préférentielle ou symbolique.
" Cette description dit tout du produit-peinture dont je fus
" l'auteur."

M.Parmentier
in Catalogue de "72/72"
Grand Palais, Paris, 1972

** Pour plus de détails sur ces manifestations, se reporter, en attendant mieux, aux articles cités dans la biblio ci-dessus.

75

In addition, it is the same for other members of BMPT. BMPT's practice and theory are not created ex nihilo. This mistake (repeated in the index of works) could be corrected by the attached biography, which was supplied by Michel Parmentier himself and should be reprinted as such.

In consequence, you will understand that Michel Parmentier is unable to accept these errors.

For the remaining catalogues, he thus demands:

a) The errors in the biography and technical information be changed.

b) The cover and inside photograph be changed for a better photograph (even in black and white) or else removed.

I think you will understand these requests, which are only expressed to enable a real understanding of the work (in its practical realization and in its historical context).

In anticipation of your response, yours most sincerely,
Michel Durand-Dessert

* "Between 1965 and 1968, I painted horizontal 38 cm wide bands in a single color, which alternated with bands (the same dimension, white) of the canvas protected from the sprayed paint (aerosol or spray-paint) by a preliminary folding, which then comes into appearance through unfolding. This work was repeated exactly the same way between 1965 and 1968, the color only changing arbitrarily from year to year so as not to laden it with preferential or symbolic signification.

This description says everything about the product-painting of which I was the author."

M. Parmentier, From the "72/72" Catalogue, Grand Palais, Paris, 1972

** For more details concerning these "Manifestations," until better articles appear, please refer to the articles cited in the bibliography below.]

Disagreements on the subject of a catalogue cover **(fig. 74, p. 106)**, regarding the poor quality of a reproduction (trimmed and in black and white) of *15 avril 1968* (April 15, 1968) and errors in the Parmentier biography, accompanied by an excerpt from the "Open Letter to François Mathey" written by Parmentier for the catalogue exhibition "Douze ans d'art contemporain en France 1960-1972." This quotation generally repeats the one that features in the document, apart from the phrase, "I ceased painting definitively in 1968" **(see fig. 66, p. 101)**.

"Mettez-m'en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à dîner ce soir."

Les âneries et les contre-vérités à notre sujet ont été, depuis treize ans, monnaie courante. Les filiations abusives et les laborieuses réductions n'ont pas manqué ; elles étaient dans l'ordre des choses.

Aussi simplement que notre travail et notre action avaient, à l'époque, opéré le vide autour de nous et qu'un silence consterné accueillait nos prises de position, nous sommes aujourd'hui, par un crapuleux « réajustement » de perspective, investis du rôle de grands frères, voire de pères d'une floppée de bricoleurs plus ou moins adroits de leurs mains.

Or, pas plus qu'en 67 nous n'avions de pairs nous n'avons de descendance en 80.

Que les laissés pour compte d'alors (ceux qui se sont vautrés quelque trois ans plus tard au sein du désopilant Supports/Surfaces ou les autres), que leurs thuriféraires, leurs grands dadais d'héritiers, que les Nouveaux Ringards de chez Fournier, les ramasse-poussière de la Galerie de France, les gourous de Beaux-Arts de province, que tous les Dolla, Dezeuze, Cane, Pincemin, Ristori, Saytour, Viallat, Meurice, Buraglio [1] perpétuent, en plus raide, les entrechats des Soulages, Warhol, Bernard Buffet et Cie ne nous surprend ni ne nous gêne outre mesure. Qu'ils nous prennent malgré tout comme référence [2] prouve que non contents d'être restés des débiles profonds ils sont, de surcroît, devenus des morpions.

Que Mosset lui-même, depuis 74, prenne son thé chez les comiques Templon-Millet-Pleynet, c'est son problème et n'interfère nullement avec ce qu'on a fait ensemble. Pendant un très court moment, il a été à deux doigts de comprendre quelque chose.

Tout ceci, donc, n'est ni surprenant ni scandaleux.

Toutefois, quand un Viallat fait dire à son préfacier [3] que nous lui aurions, en 66, proposé de se joindre à nous, il ment carrément. **Jamais il n'en a été question. Il applique comme méthode autobiographique le joli flou artistique qui d'ordinaire préside à son travail. Déjà expert en falsification de dates (comme nombre de ses amis de S/S), ce chef historique du n'importe-quoi éprouve l'impérieux besoin de refaire l'histoire... Comme on le comprend !**

Mais c'est une chose, Viallat, que de battre le rappel de tes papas [4], une autre que de nous emmerder, nous, avec tes fantasmes post-œdipiens.

Que notre travail fut et demeure exemplaire, nous n'en avons jamais douté. Mais il ne pouvait être exemplaire que de lui-même, de même que, didactiques, nos actions communes ne visaient, strictement, qu'à sa mise en évidence. Que ce travail et ces actions puissent, même de loin, servir de modèle dit précisément que **nous n'avons pas fait école.**

BUREN PARMENTIER TORONI
septembre 80

1. Cette liste n'est pas, on le comprendra, exhaustive.

2. Notamment, pour les plus récentes, les approximations de Poinsot, Lepage, Briot, Lamarche-Vadel, Ceysson, etc. (On peut d'ailleurs décerner une mention particulière aux niaiseries véhiculées par le catalogue Dezeuze — Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Etienne, 1980 — où l'artiste trouve « symptomatique » qu'une de nos manifestations ait été « patronnée par Marcel Duchamp ». C'est symptomatique, oui... de l'obsession de Dezeuze et du culte de la vedette chez ce petit prof. Duchamp était *spectateur payant,* entre autres, de Manifestation 3, Paul McCartney avait assisté, parmi d'autres, à Manifestation 1 et Dezeuze oublie pourtant de dire que nous avons aussi été patronnés par les Beatles ; il ne peut pas penser à tout...)

3. J.M. POINSOT, catalogue de l'exposition Viallat aux Entrepôts Lainé, Bordeaux 1980.

4. Exposition Viallat, Musée de Chambéry, octobre-décembre 1978.

N.B. : Que nous puissions signer le présent texte n'implique évidemment pas, *sur le fond,* un rapprochement, aussi minime soit-il, du travail et/ou de l'attitude critiques que nous développons chacun depuis 1968. Plus que quiconque sans doute, nous sommes attentifs aux divergences (parfois irréconciliables) qui apparaissent tous les jours à travers nos choix.

76 **Open letter signed by Buren, Parmentier, and Toroni, "Mettez-m'en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à dîner ce soir" (Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette's coming round for dinner tonight), addressed to Claude Viallat, September 1980, typewritten with "Extra Strong" watermark. 29.7 × 21 cm.**

[**"Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette's coming round for dinner tonight."**
The inanities and falsehoods concerning us have become commonplace over the last thirteen years. The abusive affiliations and labored reductions have not been absent: they were expected.

As simply as our work and action had created a void around us at the time and that a dismayed silence greeted our critical position, today we are invested with the role of big brothers through a dishonest "readjustment" of perspective, even fathers of a bunch of more or less skillful handymen [*bricoleurs*].

Now, we didn't have peers in 1967 any more than we have descendants in 1980.

That the social outcasts at the time — those sprawling around three years later among the hilarious Supports/Surfaces or the others — that their sycophants, their great clumsy young heirs, that the New Old Phonies of dear [Jean] Fournier, the dust-collectors at the Galerie de France, the gurus from the art schools in the provinces, that the [Noël] Dollas, [Daniel] Dezeuzes, [Louis] Canes, [Jean-Pierre] Pincemins, [François] Ristoris, [Patrick] Saytours, [Claude] Viallats, [Jean-Michel] Meurices, [Pierre] Buraglios[1] — that all these perpetuate more rigidly the entrechats of [Pierre] Soulages, [Andy] Warhol, Bernard Buffet and Co, doesn't surprise us, nor overly disturb us. That in spite of everything they take us as a reference[2] proves that, not content with remaining real morons, they have become little brats to boot.

That since '74 Mosset himself has tea with the comics [Daniel] Templon-[Catherine] Millet-[Marcelin] Pleynet is his problem and nowhere interferes with what we have done together. For a very brief moment, he was on the verge of understanding something.

Thus, all of this is neither surprising nor shocking.

However, when a Viallat points out to his preface writer[3] that we had proposed that he join us in 1966, he is clearly lying. That was never a possibility. He applies pretty artistic vagueness as an autobiographical method, which usually informs his work. Already an expert in falsifying dates (like a number of his Supports/Surfaces friends) this historical leader of "anything goes" feels the imperious need to remake history... as is well known!

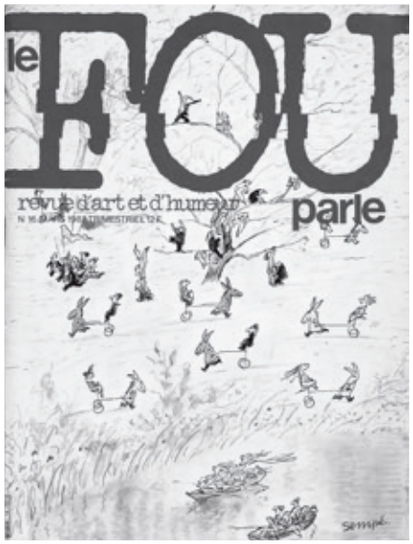
But it is one thing, Viallat, to call your daddies to arms[4], quite another to bore the shit out of us with your post-oedipal fantasies.

That our work was and remains exemplary, we have never doubted. But it can only be exemplary of itself, just as our didactic communal actions aimed strictly at a questioning of the work's evidence [*mise en évidence*]. That this work and these actions might, even from afar, serve as a model expresses precisely that **we had no successors.**

BUREN PARMENTIER TORONI
September 1980

1. One understands that this list is not exhaustive.
2. In terms of the most recent, see notably the critical estimations of [Jean-Marc] Poinsot, [Jacques] Lepage, [Marie-Odile] Briot, [Bernard] Lamarche-Vadel, [Bernard] Ceysson, etc. (Incidentally, one might give specific mention to the nonsense conveyed in the Dezeuze catalogue from the Musée d'Art et Industrie at Saint-Etienne in 1980 in which the artist finds "symptomatic" that one of our "manifestations" had been "patronized by Marcel Duchamp." This is symptomatic, yes... of Dezeuze's obsession and the cult of superstars by this little professor. Duchamp was a *paying spectator,* along with others, at "Manifestation 3." Paul McCartney among others was present at "Manifestation 1," and yet Dezeuze forgets to mention that we were also patronized by the Beatles... he can't think of everything...).
3. Jean-Marc Poinsot, in the exhibition catalogue *Viallat,* at the Entrepôts Lainé, Bordeaux, 1980.
4. See *Viallat,* Musée de Chambery, October-December 1978.

N.B.: That we are able to sign the present text obviously does not imply any *essential* rapprochement, however minimal, of the work and/or critical attitude that we have each been developing since 1968. No doubt more than anyone else, we play close attention to the divergences (sometimes irreconcilable) which appear every day through our choices.]



77

77 **Jacques Vallet, "Michel Parmentier profession non-peintre" (Michel Parmentier, Profession Non-Painter), *Le Fou parle: revue d'art et d'humeur*, no. 16, March 1981, pp. 25-28, 27.7 × 21 cm.**
[translation **see p. 120**]

Copy annotated by Parmentier. The article by Jacques Vallet was followed by the publication of "Mettez-m'en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à dîner ce soir" (Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette's coming round for dinner tonight), open letter to Claude Viallat, signed by Buren, Parmentier, and Toroni, September 1980 **(see p. 109)**.

Le Fou parle: revue d'art et d'humeur was a quarterly review published by Le Chemin et Balland in Paris, France, between April-May 1977 and November 1984 (30 issues). Up to issue no. 5, the senior editor was Philippe Ferrand, after which Jacques Vallet took over.

Michel Parmentier profeSSion non-peintre

Nous avons présenté, depuis notre premier numéro, des hommes et des femmes, peintres ou sculpteurs, dont nous importaient la quête, la qualité, l'exigence, la réalité arrachée, bribes par bribes, à la solitude et au silence. N'entrait pas dans notre propos d'écrire sur la peinture, encore moins de désigner des phares. Ceux-ci ont suffisamment de spécialistes de l'éclairage autour d'eux. Dans nos prochains numéros, nous nous intéresserons à d'autres domaines. Aussi pour clore cette série consacrée aux peintres, nous avons choisi de parler d'un homme fou de peinture et qui a cessé de peindre.

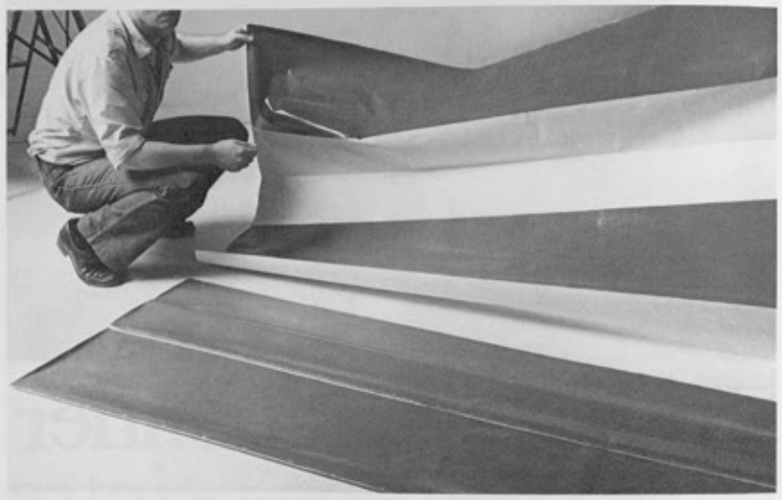
J.V.

Michel Parmentier est né à Paris en décembre 1938. Reconnu dans les années 60 par le milieu « culturel », il a volontairement cassé cette notoriété, à ses yeux suspecte (c'est l'homme des ruptures), pour adopter une position dure, subversive qui, depuis, n'a cessé d'influencer l'avant-garde. Le tract que nous publions ici (qu'il signe en commun avec Buren et Toroni) indique qu'il n'est pas particulièrement fier d'une descendance fort nombreuse et qu'il n'a pas souhaitée. En 1968, il arrête définitivement de peindre. Se réservant, toutefois, de dire pourquoi il a fermé la porte.

« J'apprends tous les jours un peu plus pourquoi j'ai fait de la peinture et, en même temps, j'apprends un peu plus pourquoi je me suis arrêté ». Le dire, ici, ne peut être que très partiel, très très fragmentaire. Parmentier se méfie des mots qui en disent trop ou trop peu. Ils ne peuvent qu'être faux, tant tout ce qui touche à la peinture est indicible. Son ironie, son humeur, ses nombreuses digressions, sa susceptibilité scrupuleuse dans ce domaine révèlent assez combien il est ballotté entre la tentation de parler et celle de se taire. Il semble pourtant évident, treize ans après cet arrêt définitif, que la peinture soit encore la grande affaire de sa vie.

en même temps que Blanchot et Montaigne après Leiris, c'est plutôt une bonne méthode. »

En peinture, la méthode ne sera pas différente. Il se veut seulement le meilleur. Plus même : « J'ai toujours su que je serais le meilleur ». Il interroge longuement la peinture. « Si je cite des noms, ça ne dira qu'une toute petite partie de l'émotion. » Il rappelle pourtant une rencontre, en 1961 à New York,



Dire et ne pas dire

L'affaire commence très jeune, par le désir de devenir « artiste ». Etre artiste est une promesse de plaisir mais également une possibilité de rupture (la première) avec son milieu familial (« ma mère aurait tant aimé que je sois médecin »). En réalité, quand il sera peintre, il s'appliquera toujours à ne pas prendre le genre artiste, le côté licence lui paraissant vulgaire et artificiel par rapport au vrai problème qui le tourmente : la peinture. Il deviendra même très austère sur la peinture.

Auparavant, il passe son temps au lycée à lire des livres qui ne sont pas au programme, puis à visiter le Louvre, l'Orangerie, à dessiner, dessiner de moins en moins mal puis, dit-il, de mieux en mieux. « C'est plus tard que j'ai vraiment lu les classiques, avec sans doute plus de profit puisque c'est moi qui choisissais de le faire. Et puis, lire Madame Bovary avec un Pollock (« il me faudra quatre longues années pour comprendre que c'est le seul peintre depuis trois siècles »), avec un Titien (« superbe, une bonne femme qui a un chapeau étonnant ou alors c'est des porte-jarretelles, je ne sais plus »), avec un de Staël qui ne ressemblait pas tout à fait à ceux qu'il connaissait à Paris. Il dévore également Bonnard. « De Staël et Bonnard – j'ai vingt-deux ans, circonstances atténuantes, s'il vous plaît – font pour moi exactement la même chose : poser une couleur et la nier, le plus souvent par une autre couleur posée par-dessus. »

Le dire et le nier, dire et ne pas dire, cette attitude lui convient. D'autant plus qu'il trouve les autres peintres, y compris les non-figuratifs, beaucoup, beaucoup trop bavards dans leur peinture. Ça lui donne des haut-le-cœur. Il découvre aussi Bram Van Velde qui n'est pas loin de la répétition vaine et incantatoire à laquelle lui-même va aboutir. Seulement, à ses yeux, la sensibilité de Bram Van Velde passe « trop vite la rampe ».

A cette époque, Parmentier peint une peinture informelle, de grandes plages blanches. Il pose beaucoup de peinture sur sa toile puis revient dessus avec de grandes coulées blanches. Comme pour tout cacher. « Ça circulait, c'était bien foutu, comme on dit. »

Des bandes horizontales

Cette peinture rencontre un certain succès. Prix Lefranc (très recherché, un million d'anciens francs), invitation au Salon de mai (à cette époque, une consécration), Michel Parmentier s'inquiète. Le succès lui semble de mauvais aloi. Si tant de gens s'accordent sur sa peinture, c'est qu'il fait fausse route. D'autant qu'il veut faire quelque chose de pudique et de très fort, qui arrive très fort au regardeur et qui en dise le moins possible. « A un moment, j'ai été surpris que ma peinture réussisse tellement bien à dire ce que je n'avais pas envie de dire. »

Il en arrive donc, deuxième rupture, à casser sa peinture. Et pas seulement la sienne. Il a envie « de taper de plus en plus fort, de plus en plus pur ».

Une exigence qui l'amène à rejeter tout le « consommer culturel » (il le dit réactionnaire). Et il commence à peindre des bandes horizontales, uniquement des bandes horizontales, geste primaire qui n'est que cela, ne discourt pas, ne porte aucun message, ne raconte rien de l'auteur (apparemment), casse toute connivence... en fait, s'oppose radicalement à l'art. Il se veut neutre, le plus neutre possible. Et il refait toujours la même toile.

Ce travail, qui est pour lui sa « vraie peinture », commence en 1965. Les bandes horizontales sont de couleur unique, de 38 cm de largeur. Elles alternent avec les bandes de la toile qu'il protège de la projection de peinture (bombe ou pistolet) par un pliage préalable et qui sont rendues apparentes par le dépliage. Des bandes blanches, de mêmes dimensions que les bandes de couleur. Ce travail est strictement répété de 1965 à 1968, seule la couleur

« Mettez-m'en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à dîner ce soir. »

Les âneries et les contre-vérités à notre sujet ont été, depuis treize ans, monnaie courante. Les filiations abusives et les laborieuses réductions n'ont pas manqué ; elles étaient dans l'ordre des choses.

Aussi simplement que notre travail et notre action avaient, à l'époque, opéré le vide autour de nous et qu'un silence consterné accueillait nos prises de position, nous sommes aujourd'hui, par un crapuleux « réajustement » de perspective, investis du rôle de grands frères, voire de pères d'une floppée de bricoleurs plus ou moins adroits de leurs mains.

Or, pas plus qu'en 67 nous n'avions de pairs nous n'avons de descendance en 80.

Que les laissés pour compte d'alors (ceux qui se sont vautrés quelque trois ans plus tard au sein du désopilant Supports/Surfaces ou les autres), que leurs thuriféraires, leurs grands dadais d'héritiers, que les Nouveaux Ringards de chez Fournier, les ramasse-poussière de la Galerie de France, les gourous de Beaux-Arts de province, que tous les Dolla, Dezeuze, Cane, Pincemin, Ristori, Saytour, Viallat, Meurice, Buraglio [1] perpétuent, en plus raide, les entrechats des Soulages, Warhol, Bernard Buffet et Cie ne nous surprend ni ne nous gêne outre mesure. Qu'ils nous prennent malgré tout comme référence [2] prouve que non contents d'être restés des débiles profonds ils sont, de surcroît, devenus des morpions.

Que Mosset lui-même, depuis 74, prenne son thé chez les comiques Templon-Millet-Pleynet, c'est son problème et n'interfère nullement avec ce qu'on a fait ensemble. Pendant un très court moment, il a été à deux doigts de comprendre quelque chose.

Tout ceci, donc, n'est ni surprenant ni scandaleux.

Toutefois, quand un Viallat fait dire à son préfacier [3] que nous lui aurions, en 66, proposé de se joindre à nous, il ment carrément. **Jamais il n'en a été question. Il applique comme méthode autobiographique le joli flou artistique qui d'ordinaire préside à son travail. Déjà expert en falsification de dates (comme nombre de ses amis de S/S), ce chef historique du n'importe-quoi éprouve l'impérieux besoin de refaire l'histoire... Comme on le comprend !**

Mais c'est une chose, Viallat, que de battre le rappel de tes papas [4], une autre que de nous emmerder, nous, avec tes fantasmes post-œdipiens.

Que notre travail fut et demeure exemplaire, nous n'en avons jamais douté. Mais il ne pouvait être exemplaire que de lui-même, de même que, didactiques, nos actions communes ne visaient, strictement, qu'à sa mise en évidence. Que ce travail et ces actions puissent, même de loin, servir de modèle dit précisément que **nous n'avons pas fait école.**

Buren Parmentier Toroni
septembre 80

1. Cette liste n'est pas, on le comprendra, exhaustive.
2. Notamment, pour les plus récentes, les approximations de Poinsot, Lepage, Briot, Lamarche-Vadel, Ceysson, etc. (On peut d'ailleurs décerner une mention particulière aux niaiseries véhiculées par le catalogue Dezeuze – Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Etienne, 1980 – où l'artiste trouve « symptomatique » qu'une de nos manifestations ait été « patronnée par Marcel Duchamp ». C'est symptomatique, oui... de l'obsession de Dezeuze et du culte de la vedette chez ce petit prof. Duchamp était spectateur payant, entre autres, de Manifestation 3, Paul McCartney avait assisté, parmi d'autres, à Manifestation 1 et Dezeuze oublie pourtant de dire que nous avons aussi été patronnés par les Beatles ; il ne peut pas penser à tout...)
3. J.M. POINSOT, catalogue de l'exposition Viallat aux Entrepôts Lainé, Bordeaux 1980.
4. Exposition Viallat, Musée de Chambéry, octobre-décembre 1978.

N.B. : Que nous puissions signer le présent texte n'implique évidemment pas, sur le fond, un rapprochement, aussi minime soit-il, du travail et/ou de l'attitude critiques que nous développons chacun depuis 1968. Plus que quiconque sans doute, nous sommes attentifs aux divergences (parfois irréconciliables) qui apparaissent tous les jours à travers nos choix.

projetée change arbitrairement d'une année à l'autre pour ne pas laisser croire à une préférence.

Cette démarche correspond à un rejet violent du déballage émotif surajouté à la peinture, pour Parmentier, depuis trois siècles, depuis Poussin, et de la complaisance des artistes envers eux-mêmes : « Prenez mon émotion, croyez-moi sur parole, j'suis comme ça, faut aimer ma folie ». Il trouve ça extrêmement impudique.

A l'opposé, il prend en compte, sans la part laissée encore par ces démarches à l'imagination, l'attitude d'un Pollock qui promène aveuglément sur sa toile une boîte percée contenant de la peinture *(dripping)* et d'un Yves Klein avec ses monochromes. Le monochrome de Klein, dit-il, (l'ironie aidant à mieux préciser sa pensée) « c'est le miroir flatteur – tels ceux que nos dévoués majordomes voilaient de crèpe quand nous avions un mort à ne pas réveiller. Et n'oubliez pas la paille sur le pavé, merci – miroir où Narcisse Laglu vient vérifier son *brushing* avant de retourner pâle et hébété faire délicieusement tapisserie au Bal de la Métaphysique pas chère et des Petits lits blancs réunis. »

Parmentier veut que le regardeur s'interroge uniquement sur la peinture, la peinture pure. Et qu'il puisse se dire : tout reste à faire et vraisemblablement ailleurs que dans la peinture. « Je ne sais pas où. Dans la rue. Dans un lit. Et si c'est dans la peinture, il faudra la réinventer. »

Essentiellement subversif

Ce travail peut être considéré comme essentiellement subversif. Pas de discours militants, pas de ces déclarations vertueuses qui ne modifient jamais le comportement de qui que ce soit, pas de discours du tout. Plus de registre sensible, il abolit toute image, tout savoir, il efface jusqu'à la trace lisible du geste, « image suffisante depuis quelques décennies à rassurer sur un talent, une vitalité... une *présence* ». Il ne perpétue pas « la complicité béate entre artiste/missionnaire et public/ démissionnaire » (comme chez les modernistes qui ont troqué les pinceaux pour autre chose). Enfin, il refuse « de se substituer à la conscience du regardeur par un de ces gestes appropriateurs et souverains qui, de Duchamp au *funk art*, en passant par les nouveaux réalismes, vivifient l'art au lieu de le dénoncer ».

Il lui semble, dans ce travail peint aveuglément, réunir les gestes les plus excessifs et les plus pudiques possibles. S'il peut toujours être considéré comme subversif, Parmentier pense aujourd'hui que ce travail comporte beaucoup d'autres choses. « Il a cette beauté difficile à admettre, cette évidence choquante qui cache – mais imparfaitement, je le sais maintenant – ma sensibilité, presque parfaitement quand même. »

Michel Parmentier n'est pas seul à travailler dans cette direction. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset et Niele Toroni ont, à cette époque-là, des préoccupations semblables. Le groupe « BMPT » se forme alors pour dénoncer publiquement, avec plus d'efficacité, la fonction réactionnaire de l'art et de ses manifestations. L'accord durera peu, de janvier à septembre 1967. Parmentier rompt avec ses partenaires qui dévient selon lui vers l'avant-gardisme.

Donc nouvelle rupture. Dans le tract qu'il rédige, le 6 décembre 1967, pour la sanctionner, il dit qu'il ne cherche plus, qu'il répète : « Je fais des bandes qui représentent des bandes et puis encore des bandes qui signifient : des bandes et puis encore des bandes qui ne sont que des bandes, etc. Je ne choisis plus. » Un peintre qui répète sans arrêt la même chose (une chose dérisoire), c'est de l'anti-peinture, c'est une trahison de l'art.

En décembre 1968, nous l'avons dit, ce sera sa dernière rupture, il met un point final à son travail. Cet acte d'orgueil « absolument insupportable » le brûle encore. Il ne veut pas que cela soit une fausse sortie ni une désertion mal motivée d'artiste qui se recycle. Mais le prolongement intime de sa peinture. L'assurance de ne jamais s'intégrer, d'être irrécupérable, non consommable.

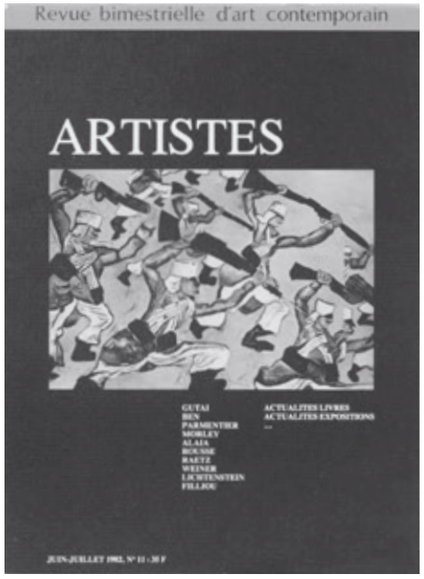
Pour Michel Parmentier, son travail dénonce la peinture aliénante. Il n'annonce pas la fin de la peinture. Il sait qu'il peut toujours « tomber raide-fou » devant un Poussin (« Moi qui ai déclenché toute l'avant garde depuis quinze ans, j'ai envie de voir Poussin... mais rien depuis Poussin – mort en 1665. Et mes premières vraies toiles datent de 1965 ») ou un Philippe de Champaigne (« Tout Delacroix pour Philippe de Champaigne »).

Sa passion reste la peinture pure. « La peinture, c'est ce qui reste quand, dans Ucello, tu as retiré les chevaux, les cavaliers, les fantassins, les arrière-plans, etc. Quand, après être resté deux heures, pétrifié, devant une de ses Batailles, tu es incapable de dire si ça représente un compotier, un missile solaire ou une dame pas trop habillée entourée de messieurs en cols durs. Quand tout vous porte à croire que c'est ça, alors que ce n'est pas ça du tout, et que ce n'est même pas autre chose. »

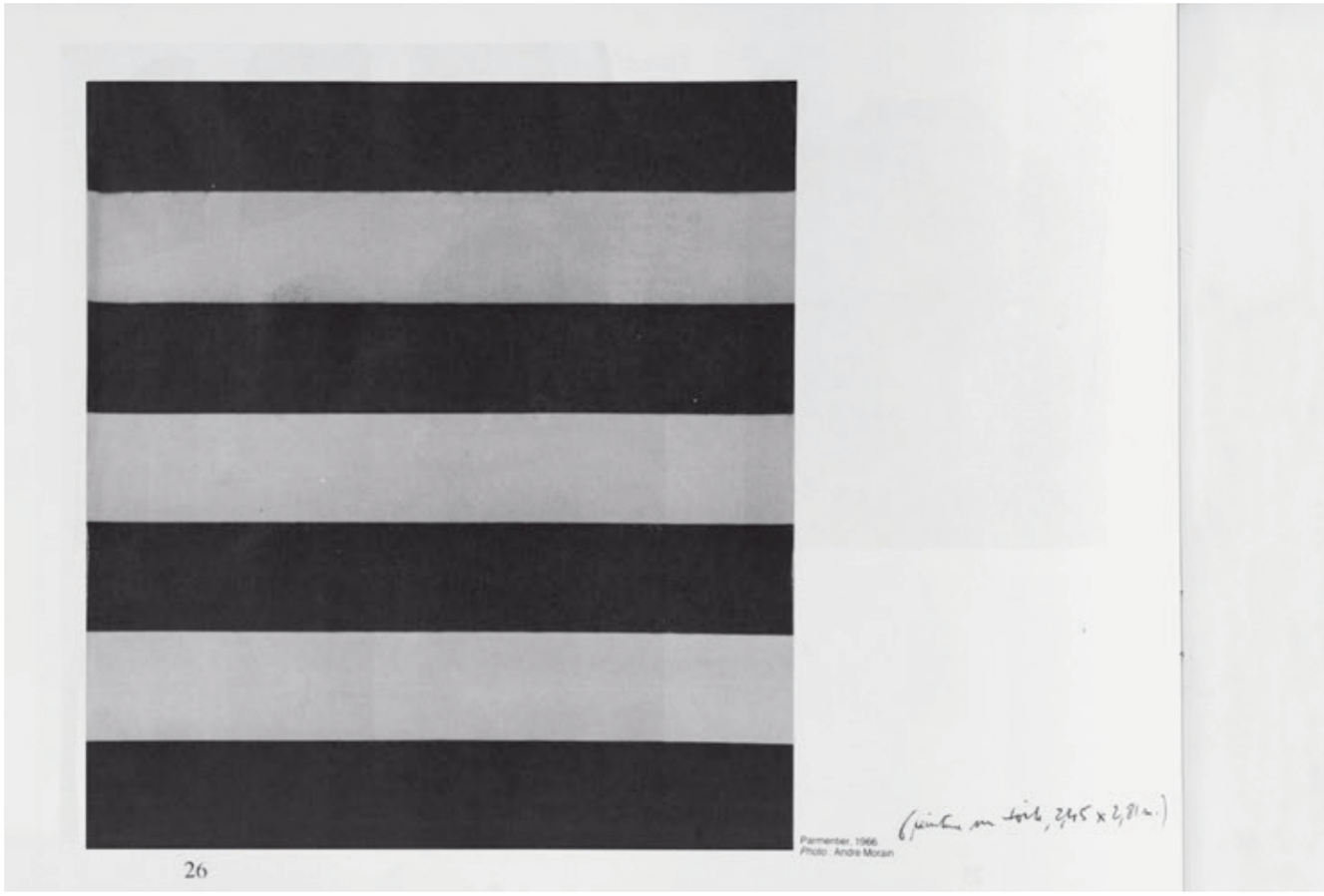
Alors que son arrêt de la peinture lui coûte cher, très très cher, et qu'il le veut définitif, il ajoute : « Si je regarde longtemps Ucello, je repeins exactement la dernière toile que j'ai peinte il y a treize ans. Je reprends exactement au même point. Je ne fais pas autre chose. »

Michel Parmentier est resté amoureux de la peinture. On peut lui reconnaître la profession de non-peintre.

Jacques Vallet



78


Parmentier, 1966.
Photo : André Morain

26

miraculé(e) qui aurait survécu à trois longs siècles de désastres (après Poussin, c'est la honte, rougissons, la merde, et ne me contredisez pas, l'heure tourne (4)), trois longs siècles de cradingues Boucher, de smalas d'Abd el-Kader plus ou moins enlevées, de tours de force comme à la foire, de fétichisme de la lumière, de jeux de Meccano, de gags consternants, de tempêtes pour cuvettes de shampouineuses et, pire encore, de messianisme...

Peindre des bandes, de superbes bandes, les peindre lyriquement (vous ai-je expliqué, jeunes générations, que je ne peignais pas mes bandes mais qu'elles se peignaient elles-mêmes, pliageyl, etc. Non ? Quel dommage ! C'était figurez-vous, la seule façon par laquelle mon lyrisme souffreteux daignait mettre le nez à la fenêtre. Ce sera pour une autre fois). Bref, voilà notre miraculé(e), notre Belle au Bois dormant qui voit fondre, sous le choc de la somptuosité pure de chez Ripolin, son linceul de glace. Il était temps. Pensez donc : trois siècles ! (5) Et si l'ingrate, au réveil, allait tomber amoureuse du premier cosmonaute venu ? Eh bien nous serions témoins à son mariage parce que, question élégance, nous ne craignons personne.

Ou en étais-je avec tout ça ? Oui : ce projet était austère et Buren a préféré œuvrer que continuer à peindre.

Peindre... Peindre, c'est vite dit et quand on a tout dit on n'a rien dit. Ou alors n'importe quoi. Ecoutez plutôt ce qu'avait sorti Rimbaud à l'inauguration de la rétrospective de mes Œuvres Complètes Avouables (1965-1968) au musée municipal de Charleville-Mézières :

« (...) possession immédiate,
« Elan insensé et infini aux splendeurs invisibles, aux délices insensibles, — et ses secrets affolants pour chaque vice — et sa gaîté effrayante pour la foule. » (6)

Au lieu de peindre, donc, Buren nous joue de la flûte, il fait le bateleur.

Reconnaissons-le, il réussit quelques jolis tours : il parvient, par exemple, à faire disparaître ses prestations les plus ostentatoires en trois quatre aller-retour de cette dialectique qui, après avoir cassé les briques que l'on sait, gomme à présent les papiers rayés. (Ainsi, de la trace plate peinte en 1966-1967, littérale et antispectaculaire, supportée par une misérable toile de deux mètres sur deux, et même pas parée des vertus de la provocation ou du dépaysement ; plus ennuyeuse que choquante, sur une cimaise, mais bien réelle, Buren, succombant au charme des sirènes de l'avant-garderie — l'après-68 a été meurtrier, de ce point de vue —, a trouvé le vrai créneau : le spectaculaire-barbe à papa.) Dans la rue, cadre privilégié de ses manifestations, les spectateurs visés fidèlement sont travail sans se douter de rien (naturellement puisqu'il remet dans la rue les drapeaux qu'il en avait sorti) ; et notre nouvel artiste en tire, sérieux comme un pape, un enseignement qui semble le combler : il est plus près du spectaculaire non signifiant d'un panneau Decaux que de celui, signifiant d'un Christo. On aurait pu le rassurer sur ce point sans qu'il se donne tout ce mal.

Il convient toutefois de poser des limites à l'audace : il faut bien vivre ; l'avant-gardisme invisible, pour payer, doit être passé au révélateur, d'où la deuxième opération : la légitimation. Les amateurs d'art distraits qui n'ont pas remarqué le travail de Buren dans la rue pourront rattraper le coup : ils en trouveront la reproduction photographique dans leur revue habituelle. Avec textes. Nous œuvrons avec filet. On a eu peur mais tout rentre dans l'ordre, la boucle est bouclée, l'artiste, ce soir encore, couchera dans sa roulotte... Prochain spectacle : demain même heure.

Elle est tout de même navrante, cette glissade, cette volonté consciente (et même un peu appliquée) de jouer ce jeu, de tenir sa place dans le concert (7) ; elle relève sans doute d'une forme particulière de fatalité, il doit s'agir, chez l'histrion (tenu d'en faire toujours plus), d'une malédiction subie/choisie assez comparable à celle d'un Aragon, dans son domaine, crânement stalinien jusqu'au bout... comme un Still ou un Wurmser (8).

Que Buren vibrionne donc, il ne sera ni le premier ni le dernier, mais, amateurs, vous auriez tort de ne pas en profiter : il est le fourvoyé le plus doué de sa génération.

∴

Mosset, lui, nous aurions aussi bien fait de le laisser à ses tentations para-niçoises. On me dit qu'il est parti vendre de la guimauve à New York. Bonne chance, Kid ! On commence comme ça, un jour on débarque avec sa petite valise, et puis, quarante ans plus tard, on se retrouve à la Maison-Blanche. Merveilleuse Amérique !

∴

La critique, en France du moins, reste bien discrète au sujet de Toroni. Elle prend apparemment conscience de ses limites. Que dire de ça ? De ce truc ? L'encre gèle dans les stylos. Ce n'est même pas drôle, ça ne peut intéresser personne, pensons à nos lecteurs. Les professionnels au regard noyé remisent leurs mots tout particulièrement caduques (ne nous affolons pas : ils ont encore, ailleurs, de beaux jours devant eux).

Même s'il me semble que, parfois, certaines facilités (principalement d'ordre topique) et un goût un peu prononcé de la mise en scène diluent la charge de ses pièces, Toroni m'apparaît être le seul, aujourd'hui, à pratiquer correctement la peinture (9). Suffisamment loin et suffisamment de l'intérieur. Il n'a pas sombré dans l'œuvrisme pour Prix national des Arts, comme Mosset, ni ne s'est envolé, chevauchant de grosses bulles, vers les sphères de l'aventure sociologique, comme Münchhausen-Buren.

∴

Les autres ? Quels autres ? Il n'y en a pas. Pas encore. Pas ici en tout cas. J'ai dit (vous vous en souvenez ?) que la peinture semblait pervertir les meilleurs. Je ne parle que d'eux. Hantaï peut-être ? Son pliage comptera autant que le dripping de Pollock, mais, de ce qui précède, on comprendra j'espère que je sois désolé de le voir accepter avec tant de sérénité les fastes qui en procèdent, chez lui. Un jour, si on me réinvite, j'essaierai de vous en dire plus à ce sujet.

∴

Il y a mon travail, oui. Je persiste à trouver que c'est, depuis très longtemps, ce qui a existé de mieux (ou, tout aussi bien, de pire, naturellement : ce « mieux » -là n'est pas encore mesurable, Dieu soit loué, à l'étalon de votre peinture). Je l'ai arrêté il y a une douzaine d'années et m'en suis déjà expliqué (10). J'en ai donné une raison ; il y en a sûrement d'autres : peut-être étais-je simplement, comme l'artiste dont parle Leiris, « écœuré d'être arrivé à faire strictement ce que je voulais faire ». A vrai dire, je trouvais la confraternité chiante, j'avais peur de ne pas supporter les odeurs de chambrée... je suis d'une extrême délicatesse. (Flanard, disent certains. Et mégalo, tant que vous voudrez. Et aussi élitiste, absolument.)

J'ai eu surtout une peur panique du vide et de la haine de moi où un éventuel « succès » m'eût plongé (cet aveu me coûte, mais moins que vous le croyez).

Bref, j'ai définitivement arrêté de peindre. Ce qui signifie très exactement que je peux récidiver quand je veux et sans rendre de comptes. Mais il faudrait vraiment me payer très cher. Commencez la quête toute de suite.

Michel Parmentier
janvier 1981

28

(1) Je ne confonds pas l'avant-gardisme (qui, à travers de fébriles et fragiles audaces pour projecteurs, constitue simplement la frange mondaine et l'alibi de l'« art-à-consommer-sans-tarder » — et peut d'ailleurs, à la demande, abdiquer tout semblant de démarche novatrice) avec l'avant-garde qui est instituée telle malgré elle.
Un Cane ou un Bioulès, entre autres, ont figuré, vers 1972, dans le wagon avant-gardiste parisien et nous voyons résumé caricaturalement, de leur avant-gardisme d'hier à leur chorale Maréchal, nous voilà d'aujourd'hui, l'art comme reflet fidèle de l'establishment : hier, pompidolisme éclairé, aujourd'hui néo-poujadisme. (Buren n'en est évidemment pas là.)

(2) J'ai naturellement conscience que mon propre arrêt de peindre peut, ici, laisser perplexe. Je n'ai pas très envie de revenir là-dessus pour le moment, je voudrais simplement souligner au passage que si cet arrêt se justifie c'est précisément par la production qui l'a immédiatement précédé (j'entends ma production 1965-68. Il est le contraire d'un reniement. Il va de soi que cesser de peindre après avoir travaillé comme Monory ou Dezeuze, par exemple, ne signifierait rien... ou rien d'autre qu'un tardif constat d'échec). Cette production n'a pas provoqué l'arrêt comme inéluctable, c'est celui-ci qui (peut-être) éclaire celle-là d'une lumière supplémentaire et en accuse (peut-être, encore) le sens. Si cet arrêt marque un échec, ce n'est pas un échec pictural.

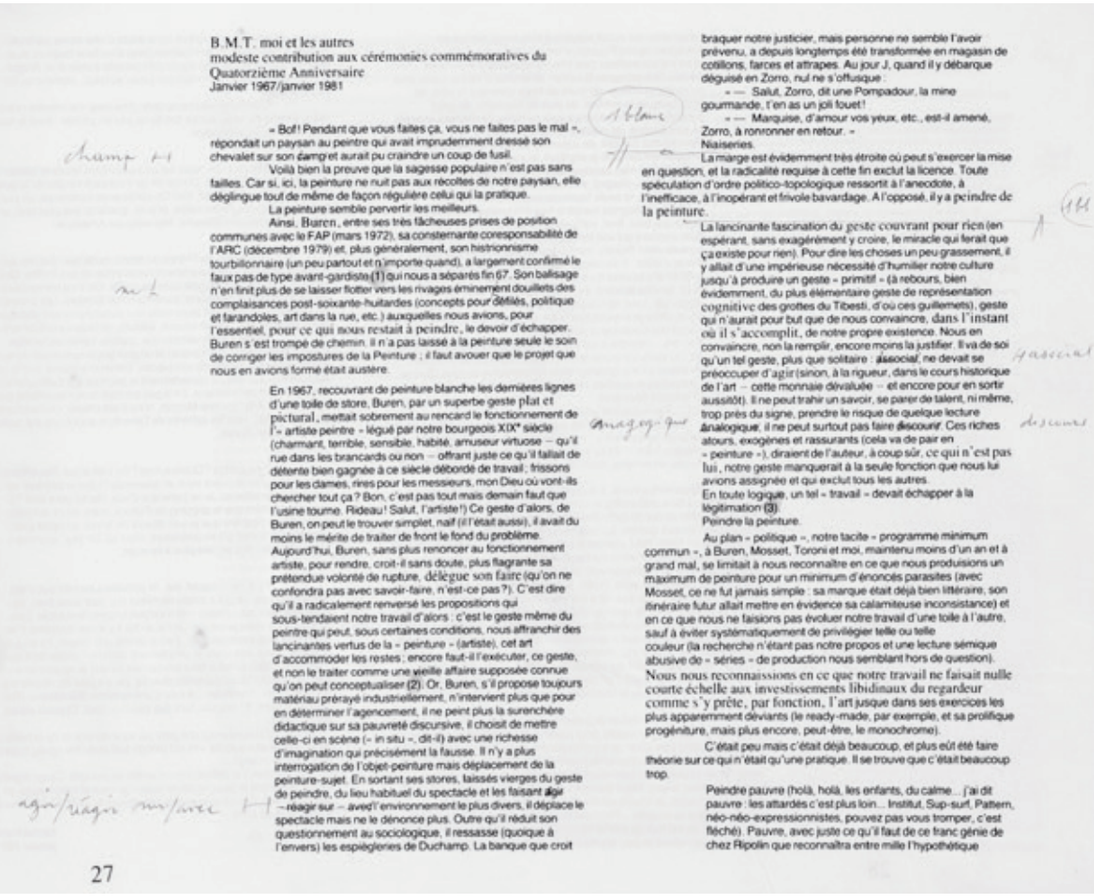
(3) Ne nous prenez pas pour plus naïfs que nous ne l'étions (« les grands artistes », ne manquerez-vous pas de noter finement, « ont tous plus ou moins rompu d'avec l'art avant d'en devenir les plus fiers fleurons »), notre rupture, elle, par la pauvre littéralité des propositions qui la constituaient, avait quelques chances d'être réelle. Quelques boursiers pouvaient bien se faire plaisir devant l'attitude qu'ils nous prêtaient où ils croyaient reconnaître les durs accents qui avaient fait trembler la Closerie des Lilas, certains soirs, entre les deux guerres, ils ne pouvaient pas aller plus loin : le travail se décrochait, les laissait seuls avec leurs nostalgies. Ils ne le « voyaient » (et, éventuellement, l'acquéraient) que comme l'illustration (un peu ingrate) de je ne sais quelle théorie qui n'existait pas, alors que, sans arrière-pensées, il les narguait de son évidence, pratique qui ne critiquait qu'implicitement l'« autre peinture » — l'art, plus ou moins (pratique dont ce n'était d'ailleurs pas le propos).
N'allez pas croire non plus que la trace de ce geste « qui se refuse à dire de l'auteur ce qui n'est pas lui » dise de lui ce qu'il est : elle ne dit littéralement qu'elle-même et qu'elle a été faite. Seul le geste lui-même me dit (et me dit à moi seul puisque vous n'en verrez que le résultat : une trace sans secrets, sans beauté, sans laideur, plate, une trace qui n'a, ni moins ni plus d'intérêt que le tampon qui la date ou la signature qui dérisoirement l'authentifie).
Les amateurs de coups de torchon et de nihilisme étaient, avec nous, aussi floués que les amateurs d'art : ils achetaient un plomb qui jamais ne deviendrait or. D'ailleurs ces malheureux n'étaient pas légion.
Il y a des gens qui adorent précipiter la venue de l'horrible fin quand ils racontent des histoires aux enfants. Quand bien même le grand loup Art, avec son appétit de diabétique, aurait fini par nous dévorer au petit matin, nous trouvant, en cherchant bien, un arrière-goût sucré, il n'était pas nécessaire de dresser le couvert nous-mêmes comme Buren et Mosset l'ont fait par la suite, ensemble ou séparément. Avec un minimum de vigilance, à la fin 1967, nous pouvions résister très longtemps à la légitimation.

(4) Les digressions, ces parenthèses, ces parenthèses dans les parenthèses, c'est éprouvant au possible. Et les renvois aux notes ? Carrément mortel. N'allez pas jusqu'au bout, je ne vous en voudrai pas. Moi-même j'en ai ma claque.

(5) Si on n'y regarde pas de trop près, on peut penser que Pollock avait déjà senti que ça devenait intenable, cette soupe persistante, et qu'il fallait faire quelque chose. Je ne parle que de son dripping, bien entendu. Dommage qu'en fin de compte cette magnifique approche déboucha tir sur du Delacroix, je ne sais pas si je m'en remettrai un jour...
Peut-être aussi faudrait-il parler de Matisse-le-Flamboyant, sans doute, sans doute... Et Klein, malgré tout ? Un autre jour si vous le voulez bien. L'heure tourne, vous dis-je.

(6) Effectivement n'importe quoi, mais tout de même... Que ce petit loubard qui ne payait pas de mine ait pu, comme ça, du premier coup d'œil, désinvolte, en passant sur des santiagues, si simplement réduire le fin fond de mes bandes ripolinées, voilà qui en a laissé perplexes plus d'un.

29



B.M.T. moi et les autres
modeste contribution aux cérémonies commémoratives du
Quatorzième Anniversaire
Janvier 1967/janvier 1981

« Bof ! Pendant que vous faites ça, vous ne faites pas le mal », répondait un paysan au peintre qui avait imprudemment dressé son chevalet sur son champ et aurait pu craindre un coup de fusil.

Voilà bien la preuve que la sagesse populaire n'est pas sans tailles. Car si, ici, la peinture ne nuit pas aux récoltes de notre paysan, elle déglingue tout de même de façon régulière celui qui la pratique.

La peinture semble pervertir les meilleurs.

Ainsi, Buren, entre ses très tâcheuses prises de position communes avec le FAP (mars 1972), sa consternante coresponsabilité de l'ARC (décembre 1979) et, plus généralement, son histrionnisme tourbillonnaire (un peu partout et n'importe quand), a largement confirmé le faux pas de type avant-gardiste (1) qui nous a séparés fin 67. Son balisage n'en finit plus de se laisser flotter vers les rivages éminemment douillets des complaisances post-soixante-huitardes (concepts pour défiles, politique et farandoles, art dans la rue, etc.) auxquelles nous avions, pour l'essentiel, pour ce qui nous restait à peindre, le devoir d'échapper. Buren s'est trompé de chemin. Il n'a pas laissé à la peinture seule le soin de corriger les impostures de la Peinture ; il faut avouer que le projet que nous en avions formé était austère.

En 1967, recouvrant de peinture blanche les dernières lignes d'une toile de store, Buren, par un superbe geste plat et pictural, mettait sobrement au rencard le fonctionnement de l'« artiste peintre » légué par notre bourgeois XIXe siècle (charmant, terrible, sensible, habité, amuseur virtuose – qu'il rue dans les brancards ou non – offrant juste ce qu'il fallait de détente bien gagnée à ce siècle débordé de travail ; frissons pour les dames, rires pour les messieurs, mon Dieu où vont-ils chercher tout ça ? Bon, c'est pas tout mais demain faut que l'usine tourne. Rideau ! Salut, l'artiste !) Ce geste d'alors, de Buren, on peut le trouver simplet, naïf (il l'était aussi), il avait du moins le mérite de traiter de front le fond du problème. Aujourd'hui, Buren, sans plus renoncer au fonctionnement artiste, pour rendre, croit-il sans doute, plus flagrante sa prétendue volonté de rupture, délègue son faire (qu'on ne confondra pas avec savoir-faire, n'est-ce pas ?). C'est dire qu'il a radicalement renversé les propositions qui sous-tendaient notre travail d'alors : c'est le geste même du peintre qui peut, sous certaines conditions, nous affranchir des lancinantes vertus de la « peinture » (artiste), cet art d'accommoder les restes ; encore faut-il l'exécuter, ce geste, et non le traiter comme une vieille affaire supposée connue qu'on peut conceptualiser (2). Or, Buren, s'il propose toujours matériau préravé industriellement, n'intervient plus que pour en déterminer l'agencement, il ne peint plus la surenchère didactique sur sa pauvreté discursive, il choisit de mettre celle-ci en scène (« in situ », dit-il) avec une richesse d'imagination qui précisément la fausse. Il n'y a plus interrogation de l'objet-peinture mais déplacement de la peinture-sujet. En sortant ses stores, laissés vierges du geste de peindre, du lieu habituel du spectacle et les faisant agir – réagir sur – avec l'environnement le plus divers, il déplace le spectacle mais ne le dénonce plus. Outre qu'il réduit son questionnement au sociologique, il ressasse (quoique à l'envers) les espièleries de Duchamp. La banque que croit braquer notre justicier, mais personne ne semble l'avoir prévenu, a depuis longtemps été transformée en magasin de cotillons, farces et attrapes. Au jour J, quand il y débarque déguisé en Zorro, nul ne s'offusque :

« — Salut, Zorro, dit une Pompadour, la mine gourmande, t'en as un joli fouet !

« — Marquise, d'amour vos yeux, etc., est-il amené, Zorro, à ronronner en retour. »

Niaiseries.

La marge est évidemment très étroite où peut s'exercer la mise en question, et la radicalité requise à cette fin exclut la licence. Toute spéculation d'ordre politico-topologique ressortit à l'anecdote, à l'inefficace, à l'inopérant et frivole bavardage. A l'opposé, il y a peindre de la peinture.

La lancinante fascination du geste couvrant pour rien (en espérant, sans exagérément y croire, le miracle qui ferait que ça existe pour rien). Pour dire les choses un peu grassement, il y allait d'une impérieuse nécessité d'humilier notre culture jusqu'à produire un geste « primitif » (à rebours, bien évidemment, du plus élémentaire geste de représentation cognitive des grottes du Tibesti, d'où ces guillemets), geste qui n'aurait pour but que de nous convaincre, dans l'instant où il s'accomplit, de notre propre existence. Nous en convaincre, non la remplir, encore moins la justifier. Il va de soi qu'un tel geste, plus que solitaire : associal, ne devait se préoccuper d'agir (sinon, à la rigueur, dans le cours historique de l'art – cette monnaie dévaluée – et encore pour en sortir aussitôt). Il ne peut trahir un savoir, se parer de talent, ni même, trop près du signe, prendre le risque de quelque lecture analogique ; il ne peut surtout pas faire discourir. Ces riches alours, exogènes et rassurants (cela va de pair en « peinture »), diraient de l'auteur, à coup sûr, ce qui n'est pas lui, notre geste manquerait à la seule fonction que nous lui avions assignée et qui exclut tous les autres.

En toute logique, un tel « travail » devait échapper à la légitimation (3).

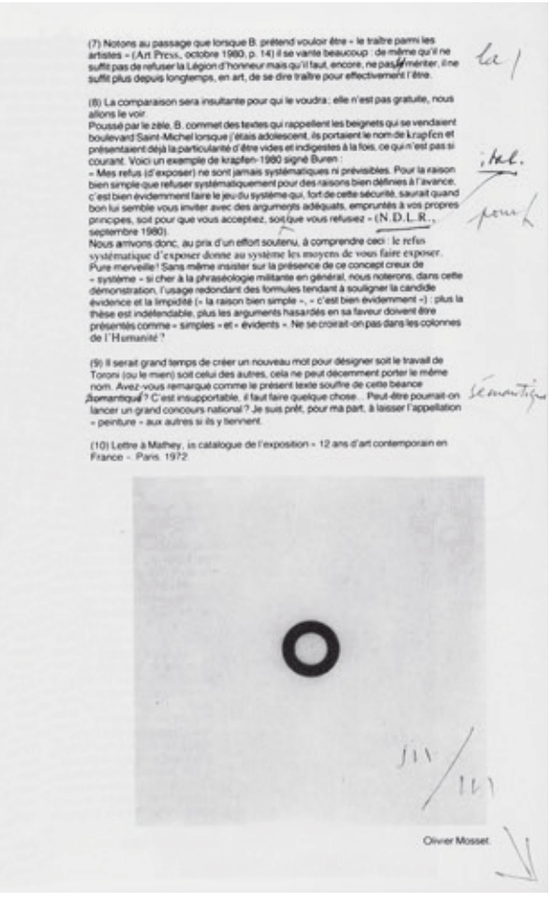
Peindre la peinture.

Au plan « politique », notre tacite « programme minimum commun », à Buren, Mosset, Toroni et moi, maintenu moins d'un an et à grand mal, se limitait à nous reconnaître en ce que nous produisions un maximum de peinture pour un minimum d'énoncés parasites (avec Mosset, ce ne fut jamais simple : sa marque était déjà bien littéraire, son itinéraire futur allait mettre en évidence sa calamiteuse inconsistance) et en ce que nous ne faisions pas évoluer notre travail d'une toile à l'autre, sauf à éviter systématiquement de privilégier telle ou telle couleur (la recherche n'étant pas notre propos et une lecture sémique abusive de « séries » de production nous semblant hors de question). Nous nous reconnaissions en ce que notre travail ne faisait nulle courte échelle aux investissements libidinaux du regardeur comme s'y prête, par fonction, l'art jusque dans ses exercices les plus apparemment déviants (le ready-made, par exemple, et sa prolifique progéniture, mais plus encore, peut-être, le monochrome).

C'était peu mais c'était déjà beaucoup, et plus eût été faire théorie sur ce qui n'était qu'une pratique. Il se trouve que c'était beaucoup trop.

Peindre pauvre (holà, holà, les enfants, du calme... j'ai dit pauvre : les attardés c'est plus loin... Institut, Sup-surf, Pattern, néo-néo-expressionnistes, pouvez pas vous tromper, c'est fléché). Pauvre, avec juste ce qu'il faut de ce franc génie de chez Ripolin que reconnaîtra entre mille l'hypothétique

27



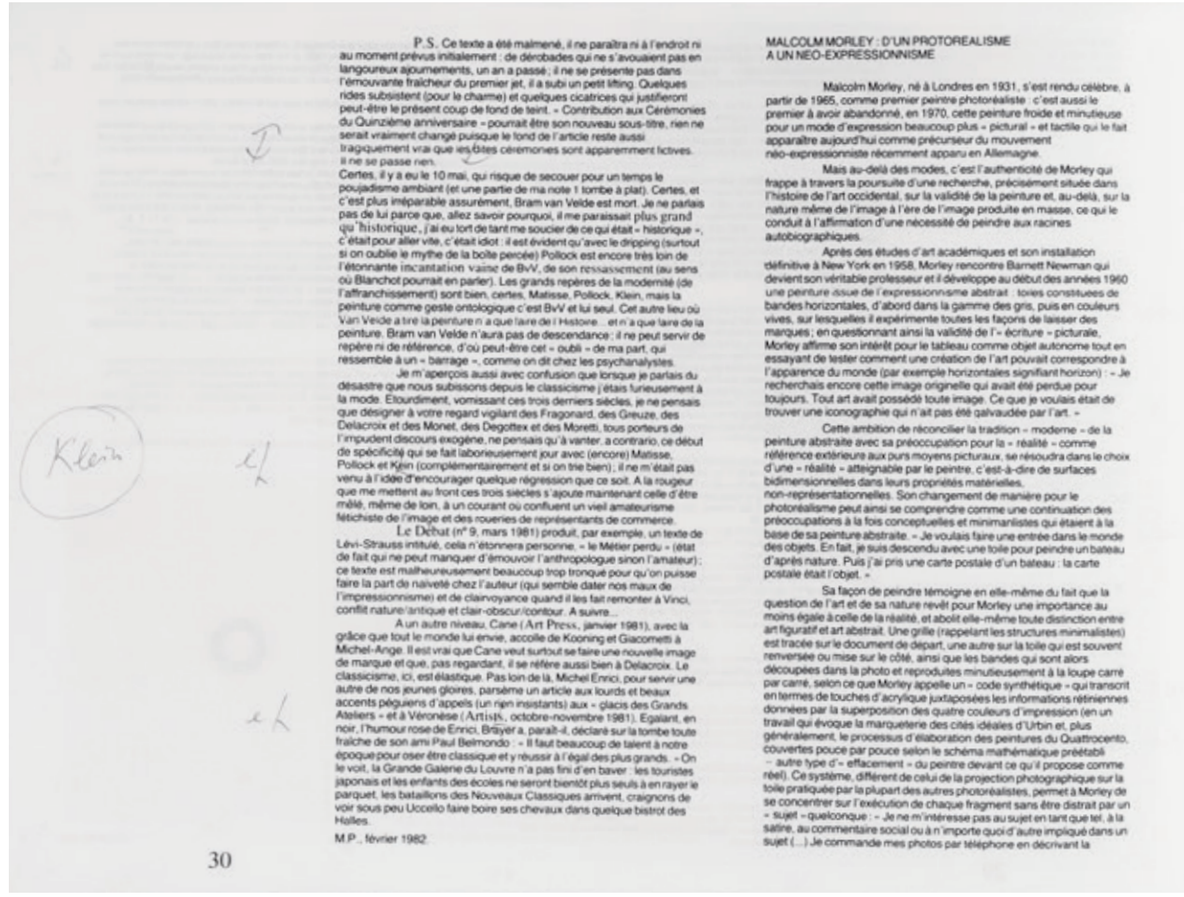
(7) Notons au passage que lorsque B. prétend vouloir être « le traître parmi les artistes » (Art Press, octobre 1980, p. 14) il se vante beaucoup : de même qu'il ne suffit pas de refuser la Légion d'honneur mais qu'il faut, encore, ne pas la mériter, il ne suffit plus depuis longtemps, en art, de se dire traître pour effectivement l'être.

(8) La comparaison sera insultante pour qui le voudra ; elle n'est pas gratuite, nous allons le voir.
Poussé par le zèle, B. commet des textes qui rappellent les beignets qui se vendaient boulevard Saint-Michel lorsque j'étais adolescent, ils portaient le nom de krapfen et présentaient déjà la particularité d'être vides et indigestes à la fois, ce qui n'est pas si courant. Voici un exemple de krapfen-1980 signé Buren :
« Mes refus (d'exposer) ne sont jamais systématiques ni prévisibles. Pour la raison bien simple que refuser systématiquement pour des raisons bien définies à l'avance, c'est bien évidemment faire le jeu du système qui, fort de cette sécurité, saurait quand bon lui semble vous inviter avec des arguments adéquats, empruntés à vos propres principes, soit pour que vous acceptiez, soit que vous refusiez » (N.D.L.R., septembre 1980).
Nous arrivons donc, au prix d'un effort soutenu, à comprendre ceci : le refus systématique d'exposer donne au système les moyens de vous faire exposer. Pure merveille ! Sans même insister sur la présence de ce concept creux de « système » si cher à la phraséologie militante en général, nous noterons, dans cette démonstration, l'usage redondant des formules tendant à souligner la candide évidence et la limpidité (« la raison bien simple », « c'est bien évidemment ») : plus la thèse est indéfendable, plus les arguments hasardés en sa faveur doivent être présentés comme « simples » et « évidents ». Ne se croirait-on pas dans les colonnes de l'Humanité ?

(9) Il serait grand temps de créer un nouveau mot pour désigner soit le travail de Toroni (ou le mien) soit celui des autres, cela ne peut décemment porter le même nom. Avez-vous remarqué comme le présent texte souffre de cette béance sémantique ? C'est insupportable, il faut faire quelque chose... Peut-être pourrait-on lancer un grand concours national ? Je suis prêt, pour ma part, à laisser l'appellation « peinture » aux autres si ils y tiennent.

(10) Lettre à Mathey, in catalogue de l'exposition « 12 ans d'art contemporain en France » Paris 1972

Olivier Mosset



P.S. Ce texte a été malmené, il ne paraîtra ni à l'endroit ni au moment prévus initialement : de dérobades qui ne s'avouaient pas en langoureux ajournements, un an a passé ; il ne se présente pas dans l'émouvante fraîcheur du premier jet, il a subi un petit lifting. Quelques rides subsistent (pour le charme) et quelques cicatrices qui justifieront peut-être le présent coup de fond de teint. « Contribution aux Cérémonies du Quinzième anniversaire » pourrait être son nouveau sous-titre, rien ne serait vraiment changé puisque le fond de l'article reste aussi tragiquement vrai que ses côtés cérémonies sont apparemment fictives. Il ne se passe rien.

Certes, il y a eu le 10 mai, qui risque de secouer pour un temps le poujadisme ambiant (et une partie de ma note 1 tombe à plat). Certes, et c'est plus inéparable assurément, Bram van Velde est mort. Je ne parlais pas de lui parce que, allez savoir pourquoi, il me paraissait plus grand qu'historique, j'ai eu tort de tant me soucier de ce qui était « historique », c'était pour aller vite, c'était idiot : il est évident qu'avec le dripping (surtout si on oublie le mythe de la boîte percée) Pollock est encore très loin de l'étonnante incantation vaine de BvV, de son ressassement (au sens où Blanchot pourrait en parler). Les grands repères de la modernité (de l'affranchissement) sont bien, certes, Matisse, Pollock, Klein, mais la peinture comme geste ontologique c'est BvV et lui seul. Cet autre lieu où Van Velde a tiré la peinture n'a que faire de l'Histoire : et n'a que faire de la peinture. Bram van Velde n'aura pas de descendance ; il ne peut servir de repère ni de référence, d'où peut-être cet « oubli » de ma part, qui ressemble à un « barrage », comme on dit chez les psychanalystes.

Je m'aperçois aussi avec confusion que lorsque je parlais du désastre que nous subissons depuis le classicisme j'étais furieusement à la mode. Etourdiment, vomissant ces trois derniers siècles, je ne pensais que désigner à votre regard vigilant des Fragonard, des Greuze, des Delacroix et des Monet, des Degottex et des Moretti, tous porteurs de l'impudent discours exogène, ne pensais qu'à vanter, a contrario, ce début de spécificité qui se fait laborieusement jour avec (encore) Matisse, Pollock et Klein (complémentairement et si on trie bien) ; il ne m'était pas venu à l'idée d'encourager quelque régression que ce soit. A la rougeur que me mettent au front ces trois siècles s'ajoute maintenant celle d'être mêlé, même de loin, à un courant ou confluent un vieil amateurisme fétichiste de l'image et des rouenies de représentants de commerce.

Le Début (n° 9, mars 1981) produit, par exemple, un texte de Lévi-Strauss intitulé, cela n'étonnera personne, « le Métier perdu » (était de fait qui ne peut manquer d'émouvoir l'anthropologue sinon l'amateur) ; ce texte est malheureusement beaucoup trop tronqué pour qu'on puisse faire la part de naïveté chez l'auteur (qui semble dater nos maux de l'impressionnisme) et de clairvoyance quand il les fait remonter à Vinci, conflit nature/antique et clair-obscur/contour. A suivre...

A un autre niveau, Cane (Art Press, janvier 1981), avec la grâce que tout le monde lui envie, accolle de Kooning et Giacometti à Michel-Ange. Il est vrai que Cane veut surtout se faire une nouvelle image de marque et que, pas regardant, il se réfère aussi bien à Delacroix. Le classicisme, ici, est élastique. Pas loin de là, Michel Enrici, pour servir une autre de nos jeunes gloires, parsème un article aux lourds et beaux accents péguiens d'appels (un rien insistants) aux « glacis des Grands Ateliers » et à Véronèse (Artists, octobre-novembre 1981). Egaiant, en noir, l'humour rose de Enrici, Bräyer a, paraît-il, déclaré sur la tombe toute fraîche de son ami Paul Belmondo : « Il faut beaucoup de talent à notre époque pour oser être classique et y réussir à l'égal des plus grands. » On le voit, la Grande Galerie du Louvre n'a pas fini d'en baver : les touristes japonais et les enfants des écoles ne seront bientôt plus seuls à en rayer le parquet, les bataillons des Nouveaux Classiques arrivent, craignons de voir sous peu Uccello faire boire ses chevaux dans quelque bistrot des Halles.

M.P., février 1982

30

MALCOLM MORLEY : D'UN PROTOREALISME
A UN NÉO-EXPRESSIONNISME

Malcolm Morley, né à Londres en 1931, s'est rendu célèbre, à partir de 1965, comme premier peintre photoréaliste : c'est aussi le premier à avoir abandonné, en 1970, cette peinture froide et minutieuse pour un mode d'expression beaucoup plus « pictural » et tactile qui le fait apparaître aujourd'hui comme précurseur du mouvement néo-expressionniste récemment apparu en Allemagne.

Mais au-delà des modes, c'est l'authenticité de Morley qui frappe à travers la poursuite d'une recherche, précisément située dans l'histoire de l'art occidental, sur la validité de la peinture et, au-delà, sur la nature même de l'image à l'ère de l'image produite en masse, ce qui le conduit à l'affirmation d'une nécessité de peindre aux racines autobiographiques.

Après des études d'art académiques et son installation définitive à New York en 1958, Morley rencontre Barnett Newman qui devient son véritable professeur et il développe au début des années 1960 une peinture issue de l'expressionnisme abstrait : toiles constituées de bandes horizontales, d'abord dans la gamme des gris, puis en couleurs vives, sur lesquelles il expérimente toutes les façons de laisser des marques ; en questionnant ainsi la validité de l'« écriture » picturale, Morley affirme son intérêt pour le tableau comme objet autonome tout en essayant de tester comment une création de l'art pouvait correspondre à l'apparence du monde (par exemple horizontales signifiant horizon) : « Je recherchais encore cette image originelle qui avait été perdue pour toujours. Tout art avait possédé toute image. Ce que je voulais était de trouver une iconographie qui n'ait pas été galvaudée par l'art. »

Cette ambition de réconcilier la tradition « moderne » de la peinture abstraite avec sa préoccupation pour la « réalité » comme référence extérieure aux purs moyens picturaux, se résoudra dans le choix d'une « réalité » atteignable par le peintre, c'est-à-dire de surfaces bidimensionnelles dans leurs propriétés matérielles, non-représentationnelles. Son changement de manière pour le photoréalisme peut ainsi se comprendre comme une continuation des préoccupations à la fois conceptuelles et minimalistes qui étaient à la base de sa peinture abstraite. « Je voulais faire une entrée dans le monde des objets. En fait, je suis descendu avec une toile pour peindre un bateau d'après nature. Puis j'ai pris une carte postale d'un bateau : la carte postale était l'objet. »

Sa façon de peindre témoigne en elle-même du fait que la question de l'art et de sa nature revêt pour Morley une importance au moins égale à celle de la réalité, et abolit elle-même toute distinction entre art figuratif et art abstrait. Une grille (rappelant les structures minimalistes) est tracée sur le document de départ, une autre sur la toile qui est souvent renversée ou mise sur le côté, ainsi que les bandes qui sont alors découpées dans la photo et reproduites minutieusement à la loupe carré par carré, selon ce que Morley appelle un « code synthétique » qui transcrit en termes de touches d'acrylique juxtaposées les informations rétiniennes données par la superposition des quatre couleurs d'impression (en un travail qui évoque la marqueterie des cités idéales d'Urbin et, plus généralement, le processus d'élaboration des peintures du Quattrocento, couvertes pouce par pouce selon le schéma mathématique préétabli – autre type d'« effacement » du peintre devant ce qu'il propose comme réel). Ce système, différent de celui de la projection photographique sur la toile pratiquée par la plupart des autres photoréalistes, permet à Morley de se concentrer sur l'exécution de chaque fragment sans être distrait par un « sujet » quelconque : « Je ne m'intéresse pas au sujet en tant que tel, à la satire, au commentaire social ou à n'importe quoi d'autre impliqué dans un sujet (...) Je commande mes photos par téléphone en décrivant la

78 **Text-article by Michel Parmentier, "B.M.T. Moi et les autres" (B.M.T., Me and the Others), January 1967/January 1981, *Artistes : revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain*, no. 11, June-July 1982, 30 × 22 cm, cover and pp. 26-30.** [translation **see p. 121**]

Copy annotated by Parmentier. Text written in January 1981, published in June-July 1982. Parmentier added a post scriptum dated February 1982.

On page 26, *15 novembre 1966* (November 15, 1966), acquired in 1988 by the FRAC Bourgogne (inv. 9880018); the work reproduced is slightly cut off at the top and bottom.

The work reproduced on page 29 is by Olivier Mosset, *Sans titre*, 1969, acrylic on canvas, 100 × 100 cm.

Artistes: revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain was published between December 1979 and January 1985 (25 issues, two double issues (nos. 9/10, 22/23) and a special issue in June 1984) in Paris, France, by Éditions Belimi. The director of publication and senior editor was Bernard Lamarche-Vadel.

texte pour rectifier les erreurs-typo de "BMT moi et les autres" (censuré par Lechaux d'Artistes)

Pour un erratum, avec deux r et [redacted] désenchantement.

Messieurs, comme on pouvait raisonnablement le craindre, la négligence que vous avez témoignée en ne me soumettant pas les épreuves de "B,M,T,etc." (Artistes, n°11,pp.27-30) fait que ce texte se présente avec, à première vue, une vingtaine de fautes. Certaines sont cocasses : "camp", à la place de champ, dès la troisième ligne, est peut-être un lapsus calami à replacer dans la perspective du coup de fusil qui le suit, et "panaro" pour parano me ravit à un point que je ne m'explique pas complètement.

Je me consolerai, bien obligé, de l'orthographe défaillante, des menues approximations et des blancs oubliés mais, à trois reprises, votre putain de légèreté m'est insupportable :

- page 27, ligne 30 de la seconde colonne, on trouve une très fâcheuse "lecture analogique" quand il faut comprendre lecture anagogique et, dans la même ligne, un "faire discourir" pour faire discours;
- page 29, ligne 4 de la note 9, la délicieuse "béance romantique" que vous avez préférée à ma simple béance sémantique ne manque pas de charme, j'en conviens, et me ferait volontiers sourire si j'étais tout à fait persuadé que vos lecteurs, spontanément, aient pensé à en sourire aussi.

Ces trois encombrantes inepties, au moins, qui ne se rétablissent nullement d'elles-mêmes, méritent je crois un erratum à insérer d'urgence dans le numéro 11 ou, à défaut, dans le numéro suivant. Je tiens à en signer le bon à tirer.

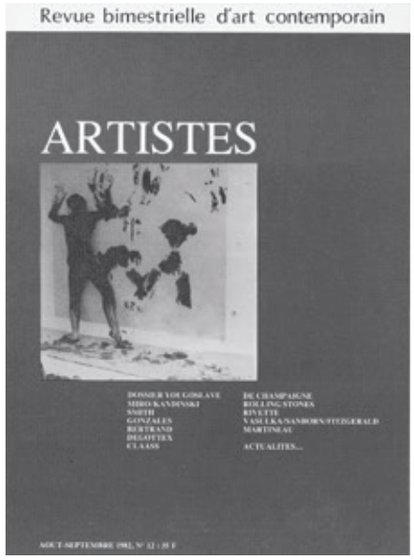
Je ne discuterai pas votre typographie-savonnette ni le choix que vous avez fait des illustrations : il faut bien que vous vous amusiez un peu, mais si je devais, par ce que j'écris, me faire des ennemis, je préférerais naturellement que ce soit par ce que j'ai effectivement écrit.

On peut trouver votre revue "très intelligente", puisque vous le dites, mais, si tous les textes en sont pareillement livrés à la hasardeuse réécriture de votre typographe, elle risque surtout de n'être intelligible qu'aux moins regardants... ce qui, après tout, et enrichi de fiches-cuisine, n'est pas un plus mauvais créneau journalistique.

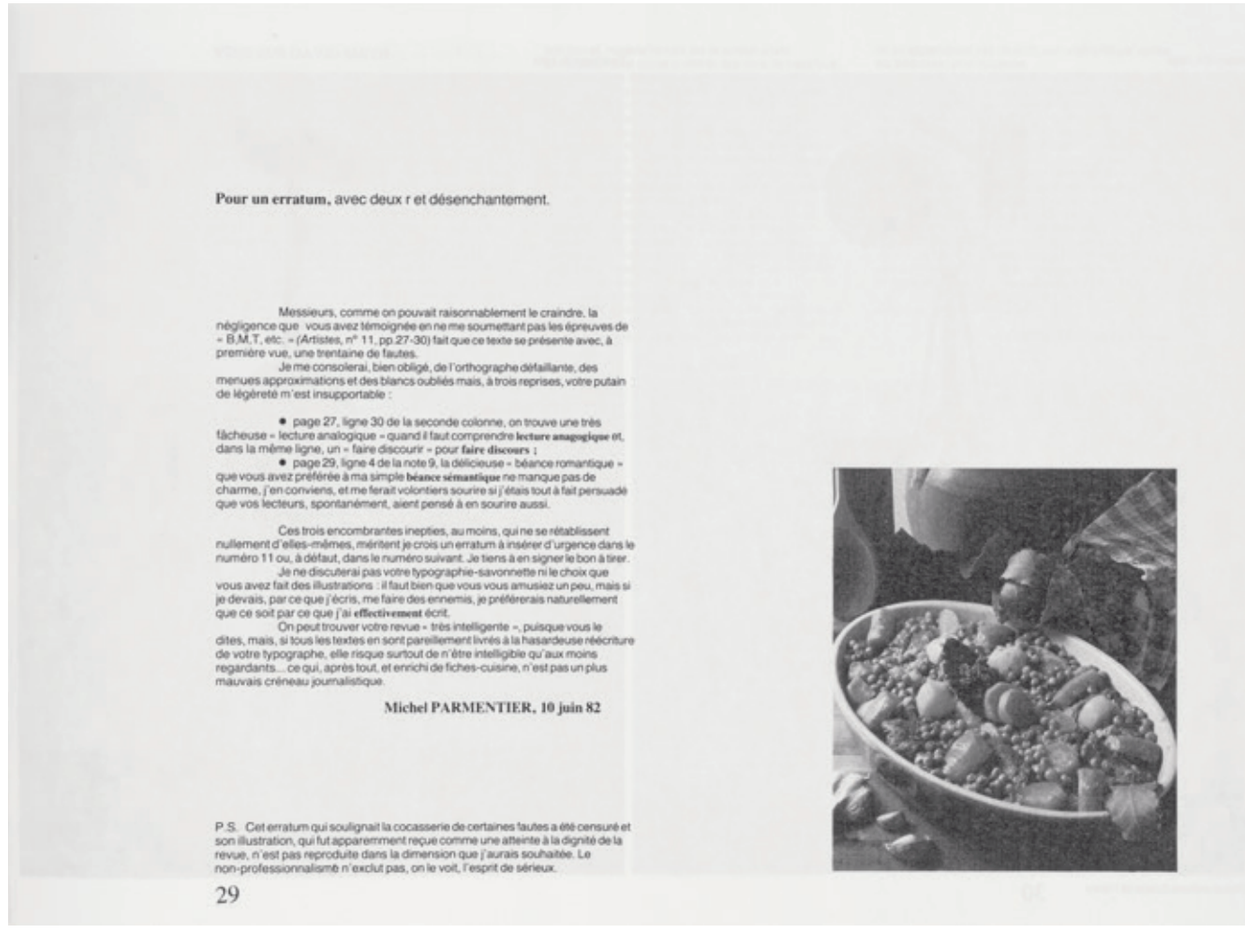
Michel Parmentier, 10 juin 82

79

79 **Text-article by Michel Parmentier, "Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement" (For an erratum, with two r's and disenchantment) June 10, 1982 (see fig.80), in reaction to *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain*, no. 11, June-July 1982, 2 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**
Note by Parmentier: text to correct the typos in "B.M.T., Me and the Others" (censored by Joël Lechaux from *Artistes*)." Joël Lechaux was an art critic.



80



Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement.

Messieurs, comme on pouvait raisonnablement le craindre, la négligence que vous avez témoignée en ne me soumettant pas les épreuves de « B.M.T. etc. » (*Artistes*, n° 11, pp.27-30) fait que ce texte se présente avec, à première vue, une trentaine de fautes.

Je me consolerai, bien obligé, de l'orthographe défaillante, des menues approximations et des blancs oubliés mais, à trois reprises, votre putain de légèreté m'est insupportable :

- page 27, ligne 30 de la seconde colonne, on trouve une très fâcheuse « lecture analogique » quand il faut comprendre **lecture anagogique** et, dans la même ligne, un « faire discourir » pour **faire discours** ;
- page 29, ligne 4 de la note 9, la délicieuse « béance romantique » que vous avez préférée à ma simple **béance sémantique** ne manque pas de charme, j'en conviens, et me ferait volontiers sourire si j'étais tout à fait persuadé que vos lecteurs, spontanément, aient pensé à en sourire aussi.

Ces trois encombrantes inepties, au moins, qui ne se rétablissent nullement d'elles-mêmes, méritent je crois un erratum à insérer d'urgence dans le numéro 11 ou, à défaut, dans le numéro suivant. Je tiens à en signer le bon à tirer.

Je ne discuterai pas votre typographie-savonnette ni le choix que vous avez fait des illustrations : il faut bien que vous vous amusiez un peu, mais si je devais, par ce que j'écris, me faire des ennemis, je préférerais naturellement que ce soit par ce que j'ai **effectivement** écrit.

On peut trouver votre revue « très intelligente », puisque vous le dites, mais, si tous les textes en sont pareillement livrés à la hasardeuse réécriture de votre typographe, elle risque surtout de n'être intelligible qu'aux moins regardants... ce qui, après tout, et enrichi de fiches-cuisine, n'est pas un plus mauvais créneau journalistique.

Michel PARMENTIER, 10 juin 82

P.S. Cet erratum qui soulignait la cocasserie de certaines fautes a été censuré et son illustration, qui fut apparemment reçue comme une atteinte à la dignité de la revue, n'est pas reproduite dans la dimension que j'aurais souhaitée. Le non-professionnalisme n'exclut pas, on le voit, l'esprit de sérieux.

29

80 **Text-article by Michel Parmentier, "Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement" (For an erratum, with two r's and disenchantment), June 10, 1982, in reaction to *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain,* no. 12, August-September 1982, 30 × 22 cm.**
[**For an erratum, with two r's and disenchantment**
Sirs, as might be reasonably feared, the negligence you have shown by not sending me the proofs of "B.M.T, etc." (*Artistes* 11, pp. 27-30) means that, at first sight, this text contains around thirty errors.

Of course, I can deal with wrong spelling, small corrections, and forgotten spaces. But at three points in the article, your damned casualness is intolerable.

- page 27, line 30 in the second column, there is an unfortunate "lecture analogique" [analogical reading] when it should be *lecture anagogique* [anagogical reading]. In the same line, there is a "faire discourir" [to talk about something] for faire discours [to hold a discourse on something];
- page 29, line 4 in note 9, the delectable "béance romantique" [romantic void] that you have preferred for my simple béance sémantique [semantic void] I admit has a certain charm, and it would gladly make me smile if I was quite persuaded that your readers spontaneously thought to smile too.

I believe that these three troublesome ineptitudes, which will never simply correct themselves, at the very least demand an erratum, to be inserted with some urgency into issue 11 or, failing that, into the following issue. I will sign the final proofs.

I won't address your slippery typography, nor the choice you made for the illustrations — you have to have some fun. But if I have to make enemies through my writing, I obviously prefer that it's through what I have actually written.

One could find your magazine "very intelligent" since you say so yourselves, but if all the texts are left to the same erratic rewriting by your typographer, it especially risks only being intelligible to the least attentive... which, after all, accompanied by recipe cards, is not the worst type of journalistic writing.

Michel PARMENTIER, June 10, 1982

P.S. This erratum underlining the comical nature of certain faults has been censored[1] and the accompanying illustration — which was apparently received as an affront to the magazine's dignity — is not reproduced in the dimension that I sought. One can see that the lack of professionalism doesn't exclude the spirit of seriousness.

1 In an earlier draft of this text from the Michel Parmentier archives, this line continues with the following sentence: "Some of these are comical: from the third line on, "camp" in the place of *champ* is perhaps a *lapsus calami,* to situate in the perspective of the fatal blow that follows, and I can't even begin to explain why "panaro" for *paraño* delights me so much." Translator's note.]

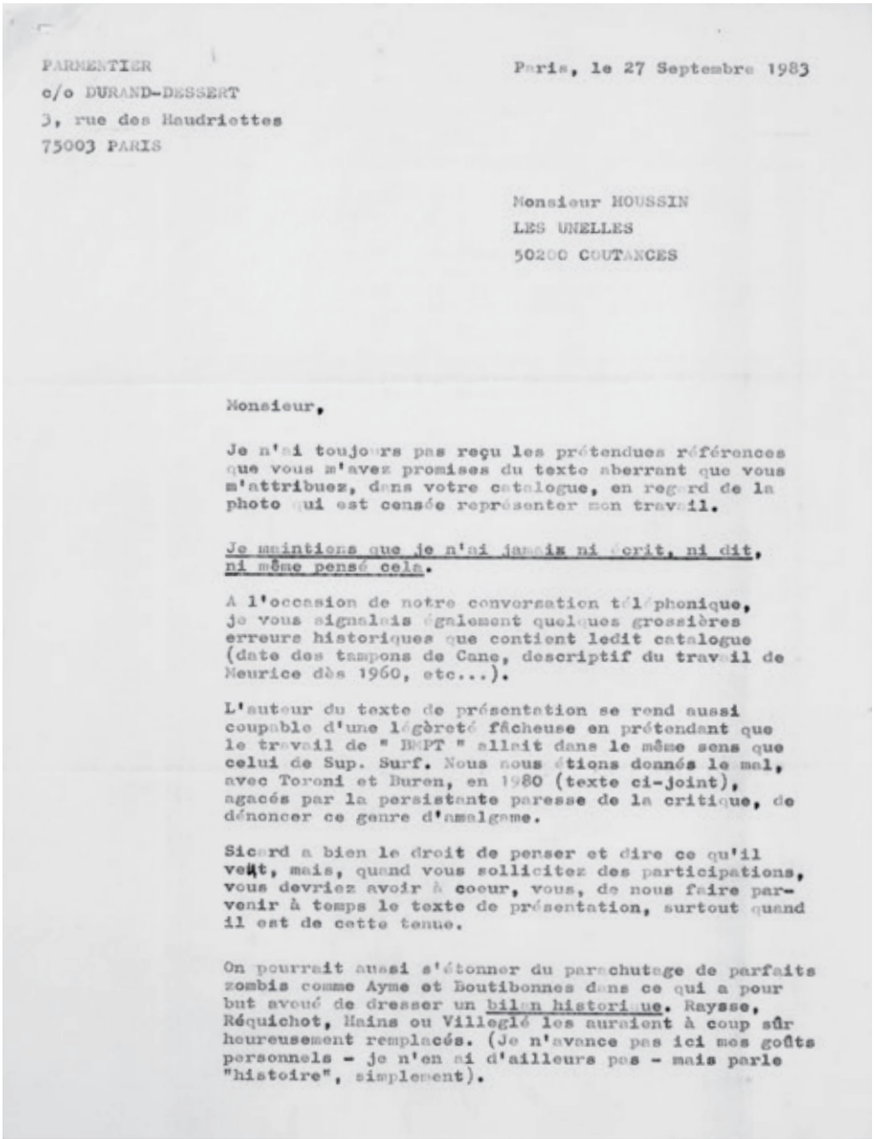
81

82

81 **Catalogue of the exhibition "Art en France: 1960-1980," Les Unelles, Coutances, July 13 – September 16, 1983, Les Unelles, Coutances (France), unpaginated, 1983, 20 × 23 cm.**

82 **View of the exhibition "Art en France: 1960-1980," Les Unelles, Coutances (France), black-and-white silver gelatin print, 12.6 × 16 cm, not attributed.**
In the background: *15 novembre 1967* (November 15, 1967), and in the foreground, the *chair 1969* and the painting are by Ben Vautier.


si faire du nouveau
n'est plus nouveau
qu'est ce qui est nouveau?



PARMENTIER
c/o DURAND-DESSERT
3, rue des Haudriettes
75003 PARIS

Paris, le 27 Septembre 1983

Monsieur HOUSSIN
LES UNELLES
50200 COUTANCES

Monsieur,

Je n'ai toujours pas reçu les prétendues références que vous m'avez promises du texte aberrant que vous m'attribuez, dans votre catalogue, en regard de la photo qui est censée représenter mon travail.

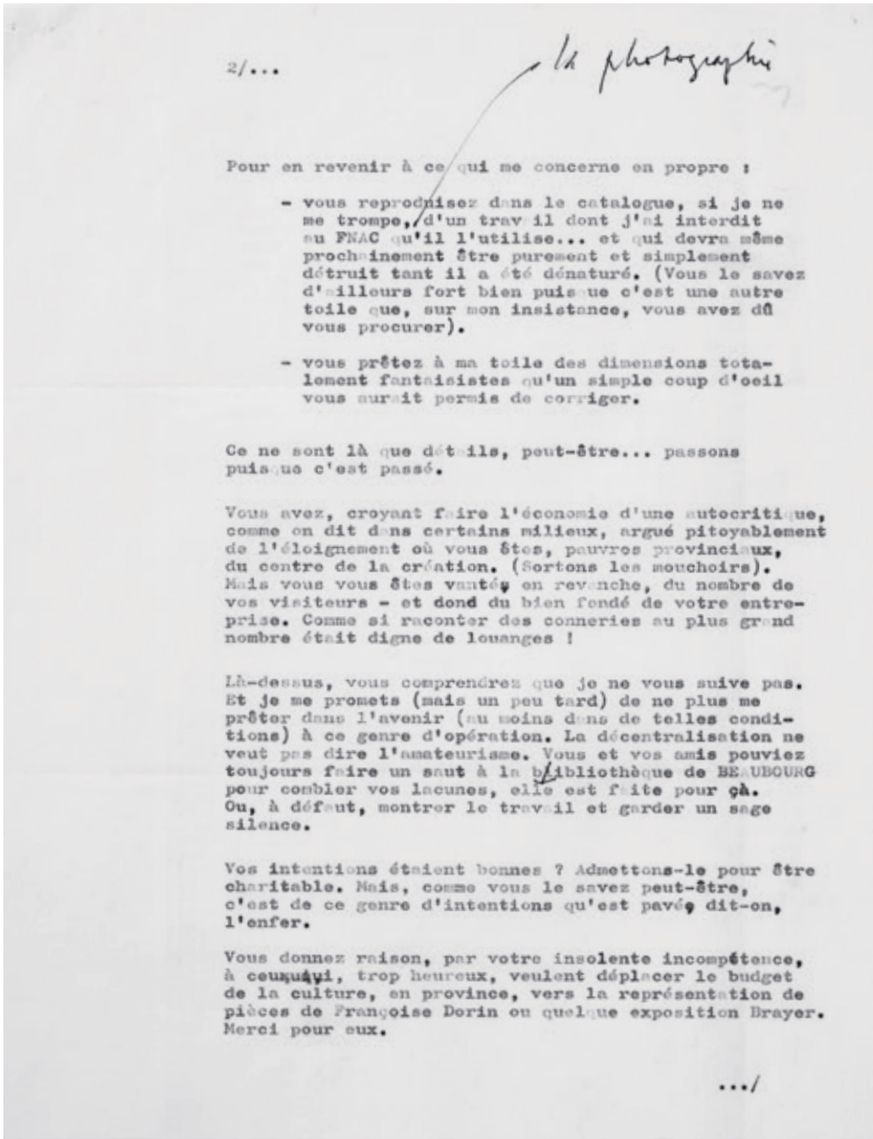
Je maintiens que je n'ai jamais ni écrit, ni dit, ni même pensé cela.

A l'occasion de notre conversation téléphonique, je vous signalais également quelques grossières erreurs historiques que contient ledit catalogue (date des tampons de Cane, descriptif du travail de Meurice dès 1960, etc...).

L'auteur du texte de présentation se rend aussi coupable d'une légèreté fâcheuse en prétendant que le travail de " BMPT " allait dans le même sens que celui de Sup. Surf. Nous nous étions donnés le mal, avec Toroni et Buren, en 1980 (texte ci-joint), agacés par la persistante paresse de la critique, de dénoncer ce genre d'amalgame.

Sicard a bien le droit de penser et dire ce qu'il veut, mais, quand vous sollicitez des participations, vous devriez avoir à coeur, vous, de nous faire parvenir à temps le texte de présentation, surtout quand il est de cette tenue.

On pourrait aussi s'étonner du parachutage de parfaits zombis comme Ayme et Boutibonnes dans ce qui a pour but avoué de dresser un bilan historique. Raysse, Réquichot, Hains ou Villeglé les auraient à coup sûr heureusement remplacés. (Je n'avance pas ici mes goûts personnels - je n'en ai d'ailleurs pas - mais parle "histoire", simplement).



2/...

la photographie

Pour en revenir à ce qui me concerne en propre :

- vous reproduisez dans le catalogue, si je ne me trompe, d'un travail dont j'ai interdit au FNAC qu'il l'utilise... et qui devra même prochainement être purement et simplement détruit tant il a été dénaturé. (Vous le savez d'ailleurs fort bien puisque c'est une autre toile que, sur mon insistance, vous avez dû vous procurer).

- vous prêtez à ma toile des dimensions totalement fantaisistes qu'un simple coup d'oeil vous aurait permis de corriger.

Ce ne sont là que détails, peut-être... passons puisque c'est passé.

Vous avez, croyant faire l'économie d'une autocritique, comme on dit dans certains milieux, argué pitoyablement de l'éloignement où vous êtes, pauvres provinciaux, du centre de la création. (Sortons les mouchoirs). Mais vous vous êtes vanté, en revanche, du nombre de vos visiteurs - et dond du bien fondé de votre entreprise. Comme si raconter des conneries au plus grand nombre était digne de louanges !

Là-dessus, vous comprendrez que je ne vous suive pas. Et je me promets (mais un peu tard) de ne plus me prêter dans l'avenir (au moins dans de telles conditions) à ce genre d'opération. La décentralisation ne veut pas dire l'amateurisme. Vous et vos amis pouviez toujours faire un saut à la bibliothèque de BEAUBOURG pour combler vos lacunes, elle est faite pour çà. Ou, à défaut, montrer le travail et garder un sage silence.

Vos intentions étaient bonnes ? Admettons-le pour être charitable. Mais, comme vous le savez peut-être, c'est de ce genre d'intentions qu'est pavé, dit-on, l'enfer.

Vous donnez raison, par votre insolente incompétence, à ceux qui, trop heureux, veulent déplacer le budget de la culture, en province, vers la représentation de pièces de Françoise Dorin ou quelque exposition Brayer. Merci pour eux.

.../

83 **Mimeographed letter from Michel Parmentier to Gérard Houssin, September 27, 1983, 3 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**

[September 27, 1983: PARMENTIER, C/O DURAND-DESSERT, 3, rue des Haudriettes, 75003 PARIS [to] Mr. HOUSSIN, LES UNELLES, 50200 COUTANCES Paris

Sir,

I still haven't received the supposed references that you promised, from the absurd text that you attribute to me in relation to the photograph that is meant to represent my work in your catalogue.

I maintain that I have never written, said, nor even thought this.

During our conversation by telephone, I also mentioned several serious historical errors contained in the aforesaid catalogue (the dates of [Louis] Cane's rubber stamps, the description of [Jean-Michel] Meurice's work from the 1960s on, etc....)

The author of the introductory text is also guilty of annoying nonchalance by pretending that the work of "BMPT" followed in the same direction as that of Sup[port] Surf[ace]. Irritated by the persistent laziness of the critiques, in 1980 (see attached text[1]), with Toroni and Buren, we were at pains to denounce this kind of conflation.

[Michel] Ricard[2] has every right to think and say what he wants, but when you invite participants in your exhibition, you yourself ought to see to it that the introductory text is sent to us in advance, especially when it is a text of this nature.

It's equally astonishing to see perfect zombies like [Albert] Ayme and [Philippe] Boutibonnes being parachuted into an exhibition whose explicit aim was to lay out an historical overview. For sure, [Martial] Raysse, [Bernard] Réquichot, [Raymond] Hains, or [Jacques] Villeglé could have easily replaced them. (I'm not promoting my personal preferences here — besides, I don't have any — but just speaking "historically").

Returning to what concerns me personally:

— if I'm not mistaken, you reproduce in the catalogue a work which I had forbidden the FNAC [Fonds national d'art contemporain] to use... a work that is soon meant to be completely destroyed given how much it has degraded. (Besides, you already know this very well since, on my insistence, you had to find another canvas).

— you give dimensions for my canvas that are completely nonsensical — a quick glance would have allowed you to correct this.

Perhaps these are only details... it's done, so let's move on.

Believing you are avoiding self-critique — as one says in certain milieus — you made the pathetic argument about how remote you are (poor provincials) from the center where things are being created. (Get the hankies ready.) On the other hand, you boast about the number of visitors, and thus about the legitimacy of your project. As if talking crap about the number of visitors was worthy of praise!

With all that, you will understand that I don't agree with you. And I promise myself (but a little too late) to never lend anything in the future (at least under the same conditions) to this type of operation. Decentralization doesn't mean amateurism. You and your friends can always drop by the bookstore at the Pompidou Center to address the gaps in your knowledge — it's there for that. Or, failing this, showing the work and keeping a guarded silence.

Were your intentions good? In order to be charitable, let's say they were. But as you know, perhaps, and as one says — the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Through your incredible incompetence, you vindicate those who readily want to shift cultural funding in the provinces to the production of Françoise Dorin's plays or some exhibition of [Yves] Brayer.[3] Thanks on their behalf.

Let's be clear. I admit there might be something oppressive about the metropoles with their bluff about "creation" — the fashions they fabricate, their often ignorant self-importance, and this completely ridiculous cultural Jacobinism, inasmuch as it is true that the best are neither necessarily born (nor work) in New York, Tokyo, or Paris, But it is precisely through rigor and seriousness (if that's your aim) that you can match up to them... or perhaps do better than them.

In short, I'm waiting to receive a photocopy of the infamous interview from which you claim to have taken the citation that you attribute to me. If, as is more probable, you don't manage to find it again, I request that you make amends in writing, and without delay. If I insist strongly on the urgency of a written response, it's because I need to cover myself in what I hope is the unlikely event that some people would take your "citation" seriously and have the good taste to use it.

Michel PARMENTIER

P.S. The second text attached here, "B.M.T., etc." was published in Artistes 11. (It was so badly handled by the editor and printer that it needed corrections in the text, which I made. Sometimes corrections are essential, and you would do well to remember that. As you see, and if that reassures you, even amateurism is rampant in Paris. Please excuse me but this text is a little long. But if you read these few pages, you will get a somewhat more just idea of my past work and my current situation.

1 See "Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette is coming round for dinner tonight," **(translated p. 109)**.

2 Parmentier writes "Ricard." As if parodying the mistakes made in the typesetting of his article, the author of the catalogue essay in question was in fact Michel Sicard. Translator's note.

3 Françoise Dorin (b. 1928) is a well-known French actress, playwright, and singer. Yves Brayer (1907-1990) was a French figurative artist and curator, known for scenes from everyday life. Translator's note.]

In the catalogue of the exhibition "Art en France 1960-1980," Gérard Houssin (director of the Centre d'Animation in Coutances) and organizer of the exhibition, reproduced a work by Parmentier without his agreement. Moreover, the work reproduced was not the work in the exhibition. Parmentier believed it was *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) but in fact it was *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]).

At Parmentier's insistence, Houssin managed to obtain a canvas on loan from the Musée de Toulon, attributing the wrong dimensions to the piece: *15 novembre 1967* (November 15, 1967) 245 × 229 cm (and not 213 × 120 cm). Houssin placed beside the reproduction a quotation that was not by Parmentier, a passage from the text by Jean Clair (without acknowledging the source) about the group of four **(fig. 64, p. 100)**.

Comprenons-nous bien, j'admets ce qu'il peut y avoir d'assommant dans un certain bluff des métropoles quant à la"création" - les modes qu'elles fabriquent, leur suffisance souvent ignarde et ce jacobinisme culturel tout-à-fait ridicule, tant il est vrai que les meilleurs ne naissent (ni ne travaillent) forcément à New-York, Tokyo ou Paris. Mais, précisément, c'est par la rigueur et le sérieux (si c'est bien votre propos) que vous pourriez leur tenir tête... ou faire mieux peut-être.

Bref, j'attends de recevoir une photocopie de ce fameux entretien dont vous prétendez avoir extrait la citation que vous me prêtez. Si, comme c'est plus que probable, vous n'arriviez pas à le retrouver, je vous demande de faire amende honorable par écrit et le plus vite possible. Si j'insiste beaucoup sur l'urgence d'une réponse écrite, c'est que j'ai besoin de me couvrir au cas, improbable j'espère, où certains prendraient votre"citation" au sérieux et auraient goût de l'utiliser.

Michel PARMENTIER

P.S. Le second texte joint, " BMT, etc... ", a paru dans Artistes n° 11 (si mal traité par l'éditeur et l'imprimeur qu'il nécessitait les corrections manuscrites que j'ai faites ; elles sont parfois essentielles et vous voudrez bien en tenir compte. Vous le voyez, à Paris aussi sévit l'amateurisme, si cela peut vous rassurer). Ce texte est un peu long et je vous prie de m'en excuser, mais si vous lisez ces quelques pages peut-être arriverez-vous à vous faire une idée approximativement plus juste de mon travail passé et de ma situation présente.

p.98 63 [Paris, March 16, 1972, Mr. Mathey, Senior Curator for "Artistic Creation in France 1960-72"
Dear Sir,
Further to your letter of February 25, I confirm my agreement for you to exhibit canvases from **my work between 1965-1968.** I likewise agree that you will be responsible both for assembling these canvases and also for presenting the extension of this work – namely, **my definitive cessation of painting in 1968.** Indeed, your project retraces a period which covers both my activity and the cessation which is its logical development... an active position-critique. As you suggest, I think that it would be desirable to state today in the clearest possible way the reasons that led me to stop painting. This letter should thus be considered as offering *in extenso* this necessary clarification.

If I agree to be (and to not be) present at the Grand Palais, it is first of all because it would be a little ridiculous to want to "erase" what has been done. But it is also essentially with a didactic aim: to show the "literal-saying [*dire-littéral*]" that was my work; to situate this work (to say and thereby denounce its limit, since, in order to be objectively subversive, it is nonetheless officially invited if not officially recognized); finally, to state my leave-taking.

Between 1965 and 1968, I painted horizontal 38 cm wide bands in a single color, which alternated with bands (of the same dimension, white) of the canvas protected from the sprayed paint (aerosol or spray-paint) by a preliminary folding, which then comes into appearance through unfolding. This work was repeated exactly the same way between 1965 and 1968, the color only changing arbitrarily from year to year so as not to laden it with preferential or symbolic signification.

This description says everything about the product-painting of which I was the author. I ceased painting definitively in 1968.

This cessation, following this work, says everything about my historical situation as a painter. If my work **is itself theory,** all theory (my leave-taking) must have recourse to words in order to be neither a dramatic stage exit, nor dubious disaffection, nor a badly motivated desertion by an artist who reinvents himself. This absence, this cessation is the intimate subsequence of my work; it is dictated directly by its objectively subversive quality:
— subversive, not because it would propose a discourse, virtuous and obsolete militant declarations, but precisely because it proposes nothing of these discourses and declarations... nor any other discourse or declaration, whatever they may be...
— subversive for disconnecting every register of the sensible, abolishing all image, all knowledge, effacing right up to the point of the gesture's **legible** trace (an image sufficient in recent decades needed to reassure one of a talent, a vitality... a "presence")...
— subversive for ignoring modernist imposters, who have swapped out the paintbrush for fluorescent strips in order to perpetuate the blissfully happy complicity between the missionary artist and a decommissioned public...
— subversive for refusing to substitute the viewer's conscience for one of those sovereign appropriating gestures which, from Duchamp to "funk-art," and passing through *Nouveau réalisme*, invigorates art rather than denounces it...

In relation to art, to the pictorial-saying (which was and is a **delegated discourse**, in relation to "seeing" (which was and is a **submitted reading**), subversion can only be a **simple literal saying,** subversion can only be the **obliteration of communication.** In this sense, my work constituted a "limit."

Proceeding from a simple and obliterating gesture of covering, my work is a reflection-critique on painting; **it extends and refutes** certain past ventures of gesture and "showing." It is: painting / continuation and end... covering. It is quite precisely continuation, simple, and obliterating. It is also strictly the other side of painting, its end.

It is **gesture** (and in this way, communication). It is **trace** which only says its literalness, in this case "neutral," "uninteresting," of a simple, conceptualized, arranged, abstract, hollow evidence... of bands: it "says" a-communication.

Folding authorized the most complete and blind covering gesture possible **(which was all of these sayings mixed together)** and the most useless from an artistic point of view since it obliterated every message, allowing for no "dialogue"... insistent monologue of muteness.

It was objectively subversive, which is one thing.

In 1967, it was made, it was shown, and it was accompanied by "B.M.P.T."'s didactic actions (since, in order to exist, all subversion must be perceived and that when subversion in art exists, it is too radically the very underside of the register of the "seen-perceived" to play its role effectively... since subversion in art is **also** its ineffectiveness).

Responding to an immediate concern about efficacy, one of these actions was to denounce publically art's reactionary function and its manifestations; withdrawing from the Salons (using them and then withdrawing) was part of this logic of denunciation. This was only the immediately perceptible aspect of the subversion of the work that was **presented and withdrawn.** It was the relay that rendered the saying-critique audible through the literal-saying: "everything else is art, everything else is reactionary."

It has become obvious that today this tactical position **(which supported or justified a limit-painting)** is effaced within the very contradictions of a suspect "pursuit [*poursuivre*]"; it serves as the model of several avant-garde artists who, in order to be better included, have to punctuate their comical **presence** with a few fashionable "absences." In terms of motives, the confusion might appear to be fully part of an artistic tradition if these refusals didn't all respond to a desire for inclusion.

The limit that we see in these actions should not be ignored.

There is another limit, predictable and even more serious, to be avoided. The work itself was being carried along by the actions and saying-critique that were lending themselves to consumption precisely through the bias of "terrorism." Pursued [*poursuivi*], the work was going to be recognized, the "trace-neuter" slipping into "trace-neuter-militant," and then into a sign among signs. Moreover, it suffices, Sir, to see "B.M.P.T." invited here and one of its "members," the one most active since 1968, invited in a personal capacity, in order to understand that the subversion does not last long — that is, subversion in your domain as curator of exhibitions.

The pursuit of a work that dangerously misrepresents itself and becomes mired complacently into an avant-garde setting, "theoretical" one-upmanship, hyper-visibility — these are some of the elements which, a posteriori, renders consumable the a priori unconsummable.

The trace-limit should cease being produced; ceasing, it denounces and avows its limit-situation (it denounces and avows its limits where it is situated), preserving (as much as possible) its subversive quality.

To cease is to "freeze" the trace-neuter, to remove it from the trap of blind misrecognition that we see functioning so perfectly, of blissful consumption.

My invitation to this exhibition is only a (telling) epiphenomenon. I am invited today for poor reasons. I see in it the consequence of work pursued by some others in a less than lucid way.

I know your initiative at the level of the Salons that I denounced in 1967, no more no less, but:
— because, in any case, a simple refusal to exhibit will not allow one to avoid a recognition that is immature and of doubtful quality from the moment it manifests itself,
— because your project, being a retrospective, strikes me as a lesser evil... and a lesser occasion to exhibit work that only exists as past,
— because the normalization that my invitation signifies obviously (if pleasantly) comes to justify my ceasing to paint,
— because my exhibited work will perhaps — paradoxically — avoid a potential sacralization which would be based on the myth of absence in the same way that it is based for others and elsewhere on the myth of "impersonal" presence,
— because my "presence/absence" authorizes this clarification,
— because, finally, your exhibition and its adversaries are today as equally irrelevant to me...

I agree, Sir, to allow you to present my canvases; I do not anticipate their "subversive" future, but the indifference with which they have been received in past exhibitions seems to me guaranteed from this point of view as for their presence at the Grand Palais, it is **for the record... ceasing painting is an irrecuperable subversion.**
Be assured, Sir, of my sincere best wishes
Michel PARMENTIER]

p.110 77 [**Michel Parmentier: Profession Non-Painter**
Michel Parmentier was born in Paris in December 1938. Well-known in the "cultural" milieu of the 1960s, he willingly renounced this notoriety, which he found dubious (he is a man of ruptures) in order to adopt a hardened, subversive position which has since continued to influence the avant-garde. The tract that is published here[1] (which is co-signed with Buren and Toroni) shows that he is not especially proud of a large number of heirs, which he never desired. In 1968, he ceased painting definitively. At the same time, he reserved the right to say why he shut the door on painting.

"Every day, I learn a little more why I made paintings and at the same time I learn a little more why I stopped." The claim here can only be seen as very incomplete, very fragmentary. Parmentier distrusts words that say too much or too little. They can only be false inasmuch as everything that touches painting is inexpressible. His irony, his mood, his numerous digressions, his scrupulous sensitivity in this context reveals quite well how he oscillates between the temptation to speak and keeping quiet. However, thirteen years after this definitive stoppage, it seems quite evident that painting is the great event of his life.

This started when he was young, with the desire to become an "artist." To be an artist offers the promise of pleasure but equally the possibility of rupture (the first) with his family ("my mother would have loved for me to become a doctor"). In reality, when he is a painter, he will always refuse to claim a place for himself in the genus of artist, artistic membership appearing to him as vulgar and artificial in relation to the real problem that torments him: painting. He will even become very austere about painting.

Prior to this, he spent time at school reading books that were not included on the syllabus, then visiting the Louvre or the Orangerie to draw, drawing less and less badly and then, he says, better and better. "It was later that I really read the classics, and undoubtedly with more benefit because I was the one choosing to read them. Then, reading *Madame Bovary* at the same time as Blanchot and Montaigne after Leiris, that's a pretty good method."

The method won't be much different for painting. Only that he wanted to be the best. Even more, "I always knew that I would be the best." He interrogated painting at length. "If I cite names, that would tell you only a very small part of the sentiment." However, he recalls an encounter in 1961 in New York with a Pollock ("It took me four long years to understand that he's the only painter for the last three centuries"), with a Titian ("Superb, a woman with an astonishing hat, or else garter belts, I can't remember"), with a de Staël, which didn't exactly resemble the works he had seen in Paris. He also devoured Bonnard. "De Staël and Bonnard — excuse me, but I was only twenty-one years old, in extenuating circumstances — for me, both of them did exactly the same thing: apply color and deny it, and most often by applying another color on top of it."

Saying it and denying it, saying and not saying — this is the attitude which suits him, and all the more so that he finds other painters, including non-figurative painters, far too verbose in their painting. This makes his stomach turn. He also discovered Bram van Velde, whose work is not too distant from the useless and incantatory repetition to which his own work aspires. Except that Bram van Velde's sensibility "comes across a little too well" for Parmentier.

At this time, Parmentier made loosely painted abstract paintings of large white fields. He applied a lot of paint to the canvas, then covered over the top layer with large white pours of paint, as if trying to hide everything. "It got around. They said it was pretty clever." This painting had some success — the Lefranc Prize (much sought-after, a million old Francs), invitation to the May Salon (an accolade at this time). Michel Parmentier grew anxious. Success seemed to him dubious. If so many people agree about his painting, it is because it has taken the wrong path, particularly since he was trying to do something modest and very powerful, something which comes across very forcefully to the viewer and which says as little as possible. "At a point, I was surprised that my painting succeeded so well in saying something that I didn't want to say." The second rupture then took place — breaking with painting. And not only his own. He wanted "to strike more and more loudly, more and more purely."

An exigency that led him to reject all "cultural consumption" (he calls it reactionary). He began to paint horizontal bands, a simple gesture that is nothing more than that, without discourse, bearing no message, saying nothing about the author (apparently), putting an end to all complicity... in fact, radically opposing itself to all art. He sought to be neutral, the most neutral possible. And he always remakes the same painting.

This work, which for Parmentier is his "real painting," begins in 1965. The horizontal bands are a single color, 38 cm wide. They alternate with bands of the canvas that he protects from the sprayed paint (aerosol or spray-gun) by a preliminary fold, which are then made visible by the unfolding. The white bands are the same dimensions as the bands of color. This work is repeated in exactly the same way between 1965 and 1968, with only the sprayed color changing arbitrarily from one year to the next so as not to suggest any preference.

For Parmentier, this approach corresponds to a violent rejection of the emotional outpouring appended to painting over the last three centuries, at least since Poussin, and of the artists' own self-complacency: "Take my emotion, believe what I say, I'm like that, you have to love my madness." He finds this all quite shameless.

Against this, he takes into account Pollock's attitude — without the part still left to the imagination in this approach — who pulls a pierced box containing paint (*dripping*) blindly across his canvas, or Yves Klein with his monochromes. He says (with an irony helping to focus his thinking) that a Klein monochrome "is a flattering mirror — like those that our devoted stewards veil in crepe when there is a dead person one mustn't wake. Not to forget the straw on the pavement, thankyou — a mirror where Narcissus Laglu checks her *blow-dried hair* before returning pale and stupefied, a wallflower at both the cheap Metaphysics Ball and the Small White Beds Ball together."

Parmentier wants the viewer to question painting exclusively, pure painting. And that he might tell himself: in all probability, everything remains to be done elsewhere than in painting. "I don't know where. In the road. In bed. And if it's in painting, it has to be reinvented."

This work can be considered essentially subversive. No militant discourse, no virtuous declarations which never modify anyone's behavior, no discourse at all. No longer a register of the sensible, the work now abolishes every image and all knowledge. The work effaces right up to the *legible* trace of the gesture (for several decades, this image has been enough to assure us of a talent, a vitality... a *presence*). It does not perpetuate "the blissfully happy complicity between the missionary artist and a decommissioned public" (like those modernists who traded their paintbrushes for something else). Finally, he refuses "to substitute the viewer's consciousness for one of those sovereign appropriating gestures which, from Duchamp to *funk-art*, and passing by through *Nouveau réalisme*, invigorates art rather than denounces it."

In this work that is painted blindly, he seems to bring together both the most excessive gestures possible and the most reserved. If he was always considered subversive, Parmentier thinks today that this work comprises something else. "It has a beauty that is difficult to accept, this shocking evidence that masks my sensibility — albeit imperfectly, as I now know — but almost perfectly, all the same."

Michel Parmentier is not alone working in this vein. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Niele Toroni shared similar preoccupations back then. The "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni" group came together at the time to denounce publically and more effectively art's reactionary function and its expressions. The agreement between them lasted a short time, from January to September 1967. Parmentier broke with his partners, whom he thought had veered toward avant-gardism.

And so, a new rupture. In the tract from December 6, 1967, that he wrote recognizing this rupture, he says that he's no longer seeking something, but repeating: "I make bands which represent bands, and then again bands that signify... bands, and then bands again which are only bands, etc. I'm no longer choosing." A painter who endlessly repeats the same thing (a ridiculous thing) is an anti-painter; it's a betrayal of art.

As we have mentioned, the final rupture will be in December 1968, when he brings his work to an end. This "absolutely unbearable" act of pride still consumes him. He doesn't want this to be a dramatic stage-exit, or a badly motivated desertion by an artist seeking to reinvent himself, but the intimate prolongation of his painting — the guarantee of never fitting in, of being irrecuperable, inconsumable.

For Michel Parmentier, his work denounces an alienating painting. He doesn't announce the end of painting. He knows that he can always "fall dumbstruck" in front of a Poussin ("Having myself provoked the entire avant-garde for the last fifteen years, I feel like seeing a Poussin... but nothing since Poussin, who died in 1665, and my first real paintings date from 1965") or in front of a Philippe de Champaigne ("all Delacroix for Philippe de Champaigne").

His passion remains for pure painting. "Painting is what remains when one takes away the horses, the horsemen, the foot soldiers, the backdrops, etc. in Uccello — when, having remained transfixed in front of one of his *Battles* for two hours, you are incapable of saying if that represents a compote dish, a surface-to-surface missile, or a half-undressed woman surrounded by men with stiff collars, when everything leads you to believe that that's it when that's not it at all, and that it's not even something else." While ceasing painting costs him dearly, very dearly, and that he wants it to be definitive, he adds: "If I look at Uccello for a long time, I repaint exactly the last canvas that I painted thirteen years ago. I take it up at exactly the same point. I don't do anything else."

Michel Parmentier has stayed in love with painting. One can recognize his profession as non-painter.

Jacques Vallet

1 See "Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette is coming round for dinner tonight," translated **p. 109**.]

p.113 78 [**B.M.T., Me and the Others, A Modest Contribution to the Fourteenth Anniversary Commemorative Ceremonies January 1967-January 1981**

"Whatever! While you're doing that, you're not hurting anyone," a peasant replied to a painter who had dared to set up his easel in his field and who might have feared getting shot.

So, here's the proof that popular wisdom is not flawless. Because if painting here doesn't damage the peasant's crops, it nevertheless destroys the person who paints on a regular basis.

Painting seems to pervert even the best.

This can be seen in Buren, between his extremely unfortunate stance held in common with FAP (Front des Artistes Plasticiens) in March 1972,[1] his deplorable cooperation with ARC (Animation, Recherche, Confrontation) in December 1979,[2] and, more generally, his frenzied histrionics[3] (almost everywhere and at any time), which separated us at the end of 1967. His beacons drift endlessly towards the eminently snug shorelines of post-'68 self-indulgence (notions of marches, politics and farandoles, art in the street, etc.) to which, *for what remains for us to paint,* we essentially have the obligation to escape. Buren has thus taken the wrong path. He didn't leave painting alone the task of correcting the impostures of Painting. One must admit that the project that we had formed together was austere.

In 1967, covering the outer edges of a store-bought canvas with white paint — a superbly flat and pictorial gesture — Buren soberly discarded the actions of the "artist painter" bequeathed by our bourgeois nineteenth century (charming, impressive, sensitive, obsessed, virtuoso entertainer — whether he rebels or not — offering just enough well-earned relaxation for a century overwhelmed by work; thrills for the ladies, laughter for the men — my God, where are they going to find all that! Well, that's not all, but tomorrow the factory must be running. Curtain! Goodbye, artist!). One might find Buren's gesture from that time simplistic, naive (which it also was), but at least it had the merit of addressing the crux of the problem head-on.

Today, without further renouncing the actions of the artist, Buren delegates his way of working [*son faire*] (which of course shouldn't be confused with a savoir-faire, right?) to make his supposed desire for rupture more flagrant, or so he presumably believes. In other words, he has radically inverted the propositions that informed our work back then. It is the painter's very gesture that, under certain conditions, can liberate for us the nagging virtues of "painting" (artist), this art of accommodating what is left over. One still has to execute this gesture, and not treat it like an old, supposedly known problem that one can conceptualize.[4] Now, if Buren always proposes an industrially prepared material, he no longer intervenes only in order to determine the layout; he no longer paints an excessive didacticism over its discursive impoverishment. He chooses to stage this ("in-situ" he says) with a richness of imagination which precisely distorts it. There is no longer an interrogation of the object-painting but a displacement of the painter-subject. In bringing out his awnings from their usual space of spectacle, left blank from the gesture of painting, making them act/react on/with the most varied environments, he displaces the spectacle but no longer denounces it. In addition to reducing his questioning to the sociological, he keeps trotting out Duchamp's shenanigans (even if in reverse). The bank that our vigilante thinks to rob at gunpoint has long ago been transformed into a store for party favors, practical jokes, and novelty items, and no one seems to have warned him of this. On D-day, when he emerges disguised as Zorro, nobody is offended:

"Hello, Zorro," says a Madame de Pompadour with a gourmand appearance, "you have a pretty whip!"

"Marquise — there's love in your eyes, etc.," Zorro is moved to purr in return.[5] Inanities.

The margin is obviously very narrow where this questioning can be undertaken, and the radicalness required to achieve this excludes licentiousness. All politico-topological speculation comes down to anecdote, inefficacy, unproductiveness, and frivolous gossip. On the other hand, there is *painting of painting.*

The abiding fascination of gesture, covering for nothing (hoping, without any exaggerated belief, in the miracle that makes all this exist for nothing). To state things a little bluntly, there was an imperious necessity to humiliate our culture, to the point of producing a "primitive" gesture (as opposed, of course, to the most elementary gesture of the more cerebral representations in the caves in Tibesti, which explains the scare-quotes), a gesture whose only goal is to convince us, *in the instant in which it is accomplished,* of our own existence — to convince us of it, not to fulfill it, and even less to justify this existence. It goes without saying that such a gesture, more than solitary, asocial, ought not to be preoccupied with taking action (unless, at a limit, within the history of art — this devalued currency — and again in order to immediately withdraw from it). It cannot betray a knowledge, demonstrate a talent, nor even — coming too close to being a sign — take the risk of a certain anagogical reading. It certainly can't become a discourse. These rich attires, exogenous and reassuring (these go together in "painting") would say something about the author, without fail, something that is definitely not him; our gesture would be lacking the only function that we had assigned it and that excludes all the others.

Logically, such "work" ought to escape all legitimization.[6]

To paint painting.

On the "political" level, our tacit "common minimum program" as Buren, Mosset, Toroni, and myself — which lasted less than a year with great difficulty — limited itself to recognizing in what we were producing a maximum of painting for a minimum of parasitic utterances (with Mosset, this was never simple — his sign [*marque*] was already quite literary, his future itinerary confirming this disastrous inconsistency) and inasmuch as our work did not evolve from one canvas to another, except for systematically avoiding to privilege such and such a color (research wasn't our aim and an abusive semantic reading of the "series" of what was produced seemed to us out of the question).

We recognized that our work never lent itself to the viewer's libidinal investments in the way that art lends itself in its function to the most apparently deviant exercises (the ready-made, for example, and its prolific progeny, but even more, perhaps, the monochrome). It wasn't much, but it was already a lot, and it would have been even more if one were to theorize what was only a practice. It happened that it was far too much.

Impoverished painting (hold on, hold on children, let's calm down... I said "impoverished." The latecomers come afterwards... the Institute [des Beaux-Arts in Paris], Sup[port]-Sur[faces], Pattern painting, neo-neo-expressionists, you can't mistake them, its signposted in advance). Impoverished, with just the "franc" essence of Ripolin paint to distinguish among thousands the hypothetical miracle that would have survived three long centuries of disasters (after Poussin, it's an embarrassment, we're blushing, it's shit, and don't contradict me, time goes by,[7] three long centuries of cruddy Bouchers, of paintings of Emir Abdelkader's followers being more or less carried off, of exploits just like at the fair, the fetishism of light, Meccano construction sets, deplorable jokes, pictures of storms hanging over shampooers' basins, and worse still, messianism.)

Painting bands, superb bands, painting them lyrically (you, younger generations, have I explained to you that I don't paint my bands but that they paint themselves, folding, etc. No? What a shame! You can imagine, this was the only way through which my sickly lyricism deigned to see what was happening. This will be for another time.) In short, here's our miracle, : our Sleeping Beauty who sees her icy shroud melt under the shock of the pure sumptuousness of Ripolin paint. It was time. Think about it — three centuries![8] And if, upon waking, the ingrate was going to fall in love with the first cosmonaut to come along? And so, we will be witnesses at the wedding because, in terms of elegance, we fear no-one.

So where was I going with all that? Yes, this project was austere, and Buren preferred to work towards making something and making a career [*œuvrer*] than continue to paint.

To paint... to paint, that's easy to say. And when one says that, one has said nothing, or rather, any old thing. Listen instead to what Rimbaud said at the inauguration of my retrospective of Avowable Complete Works (1965-1968) at the municipal museum at Charlesville-Mézières:"... immediate occupancy.

Mad and infinite momentum toward invisible splendors, imperceptible delights — and its secrets that madden every vice — and its gaiety that frightens the masses..."[9]

And so, in the place of painting, Buren plays the flute to us while playing the buffoon.

Let's admit it, he completed a few nice tricks. For example, he made his most ostentatious performances disappear in three or four round-trips of this dialectic which, after having done something extraordinary that we all know about, presently erases striped papers. (Thus, from the painted flat trace in 1966-1967 — literal and anti-spectacular, supported by a miserable two by two meter canvas, and not even adorned with the virtues of provocation or culture shock, more boring than shocking, hung on a wall but quite real — Buren succumbed to the charms of the avant-garde sirens (post '68 has been deadly from this point of view), finding his true niche — spectacular candy floss.) In the street, the privileged context for his manifestations, the intended spectators brush up against his work without suspecting anything (naturally, since he puts back into the street the flags that he had brought out). And as solemn as a judge, our new artist draws lessons from this which seem to satisfy him — he is closer to the non-signifying spectacle of an outdoor advertising poster than to the signifying spectacle of a Christo. One might have been able to reassure him on this point without him causing himself all this trouble.

Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to situate the limits of this audacity. One has to live; in order to pay, the invisible avant-gardism must reveal itself. Whence, the second operation — legitimization. Distracted amateurs of art who haven't noticed Buren's work in the street can fix the problem — they can find photographic reproductions in their usual art magazine. With texts. We work on a tightrope with supporting wires. It was frightening, but everything comes into place, everything comes full circle, the artist will sleep in his circus trailer again tonight... Next spectacle, tomorrow at the same time.

All the same, this slippage, this conscious willingness (even a little calculated) to play the game, to take one's place in the concert[10] — this is depressing. No doubt it stems from a particular kind of fatality. For the minstrel (always trying to do more), it must come from a suffered/chosen malediction fairly comparable to Aragon's malediction in his domain, gallantly stalinian right to the end... like an André Stil or a Count von Wurmser.[11]

That Buren is seen everywhere — he won't be either the first or the last, but you amateurs of art, you would be wrong not to take advantage of this — he is the most gifted compromised person of his generation.

As for Mosset, it would have been better if we had left him to his para-Niçoise temptations. They tell me that he left to sell marshmallows in New York. Good luck, kid. It begins like this — one day you disembark with your small suitcase and then, forty years later, you find yourself at the White House. Isn't America wonderful?

In France at least, the critics remain quite discreet when discussing Toroni. They are seemingly aware of his limits. What can one say about this? About this effect? Not much ink is being spilled. It's not even funny; it isn't interesting to anyone. Let's think of our readers. Professionals with dazed looks reuse their particularly obsolete phrases (let's not get carried away — besides, they still have better days ahead of them).

Even if it seems to me that, occasionally, certain facilities (principally of a topical order) and a fairly pronounced taste for staging his work dilutes the work's force. Toroni appears to me to be the only one today to practice painting correctly[12] — sufficiently far from what is conceived as painting and sufficiently from within. Unlike Mosset, he hasn't succumbed to making work for the National Prize for the Arts, nor flown off, straddling large bubbles, towards the spheres of sociological adventures, like Münchhausen-Buren.

The others? What others? There aren't any. Not yet. Not here, in any case. I told you (you remember?) that painting seems to pervert the best. I'm only speaking of them. Hantaï, perhaps? His folding will count as much as Pollock's *drips,* but from what precedes it, one will understand, I hope, that I am sorry to see him accept with so much serenity the ostentatiousness that proceeds from it in his work. If I get invited back one day, I will try to say more to you about this.

Yes, there is my own work. I persist in finding that, for some time, it is the best of what exists (or, of course, just as bad, or worse — this "best" is not measurable as the standard of your painting, thank God). I stopped a dozen years ago and have already explained myself about that.[13] I gave a reason. Surely there are others. Perhaps I was simply like the artist that [Michel] Leiris speaks of: "disgusted in getting to do strictly what I wanted to do." To be honest, I found this brotherhood a pain in the ass. I was frightened that I couldn't bear the odors in the barrack room — I'm extremely delicate (paranoid, some say, and a megalomaniac — say what you will. Elitist as well. Absolutely).

I especially had a panic fear about emptiness and a hatred of the self into which an eventual "success" would have thrust me. (This admission costs me, but less than you think.)

In short, I definitively ceased painting. Which means very exactly that I can commit another offense [*récidiver*] when I want, and without having to account for it. But you'll really have to pay me a lot. Begin a collection right away.

Michel Parmentier, January 1981

P.S. Appearing neither in the place nor at the moment that was initially planned, this text has been badly treated — from evasions that will not acknowledge languorous postponements, a year has passed. It is not presented in the moving freshness of a first draft, having been subject to a little facelift. A few wrinkles remain (which gives it its charm) and a few scars which perhaps will justify the present application of some foundational make-up. "Contribution to the Fourteenth Anniversary Ceremonies" could be its new subtitle — nothing would have really changed since the basis of the article remains just as tragically true as the aforesaid ceremonies are apparently fictive.

To be sure, there was the May 10th [the election of François Mitterand], which for a while risks shaking up the prevailing reactionary conservatism [*poujadisme*] (a part of my first footnote above falls flat). No doubt Bram van Velde is dead, and this is certainly more irreparable. I'm not speaking about him because — I've no idea why — he appears to me more important than historical. I was wrong to worry myself so much about what was "historical" — I was rushing things, and it was stupid. It's obvious that with the *drips* (especially if one forgets the myth of the pierced box), Pollock is still quite far from Bram van Velde's astonishingly useless incantation, his endless repetition [*ressassement*] (in the sense that Blanchot speaks of this term). The great points of reference in modernity — the breakthroughs — are obviously Matisse, Pollock, Klein, but painting as an ontological gesture is Bram van Velde and him alone. This other space toward which van Velde took painting has nothing to do with History... has nothing to do with painting. Bram van Velde has no descendants. He serves as neither a benchmark nor a reference, which explains on my part this "memory lapse" (as the psychoanalysts say).

I also realize with some confusion that when I was speaking of the disaster that we have suffered since classicism, I was being wildly fashionable. Impetuously, vomiting up over these last three centuries, I was only thinking of designating to your attentive gaze the Fragonards, the Greuzes, the Delacroix', the Monets, the Degottexes, the Morettis, all bearers of a shameless exogenous discourse. I was only thinking of highlighting, *a contrario,* this initiation of specificity that comes to light with considerable effort with (once again) Matisse, Pollock, Klein (complementing one another if you classify them well) — it never occurred to me to encourage any type of regression. Blushing that I situate myself at the head of these three centuries, one can now add being mixed up, even from afar, in a current where an old fetishistic amateurism of the image converges with the cunning of business representatives.

For example, *Le Débat*[14] published an article by [Claude] Lévi-Strauss titled (somewhat insignificantly) "The Lost Profession" (a state of affairs that cannot fail to move the anthropologist, if not the amateur). This text is unfortunately far too truncated to be able to discern the precious naïveté of the author, who seems to date our miseries to Impressionism and clairvoyance when he traces them back to da Vinci — the conflict between nature and antiquity, between chiaroscuro and contour. To be continued...

On another level, with the grace that everyone envies, [Louis] Cane lumps together [Willem] de Kooning and [Alberto] Giacometti with Michelangelo.[15] It's true that Cane wants to create a new brand image and that, not looking, he also refers himself to Delacroix. Classicism becomes somewhat malleable here. Closely related to this, Michel Enrici — to mention another of our younger stars —sprinkles an article with weighty references (insistent nothings) —said in the pleasant accent of a Charles Peguy — to the "glazes of the Great Ateliers," and to Veronese.[16] Equaling Enrici's rosy humor, but more pessimistically, and standing next to the recent tomb of his sculptor friend [Jean-] Paul Belmondo, apparently [Yves] Brayer has declared: "You have to have lots of talent today to dare to be classical and to succeed in the same way as the greatest." One sees that The Grand Gallery in the Louvre hasn't stopped going through hell. The Japanese tourists and school tours soon won't be alone scuffing the floors, the battalions of New Classicists are arriving, and it looks like we'll soon be seeing Uccello allowing his horses to drink in some bistro down in the market at Les Halles.

M. P., February 1982]

1 A militant group formed in 1968 against all official art. Translator's note.

2 ARC was the contemporary section of the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, eventually gaining autonomy from the museum. Translator's note.

3 I'm not confounding avant-gardism (which, by means of the frenzied audacity of projectors, simply constitutes the fashionable fringes of the art world and the alibi of "art-as-immediate-consumption"... and which, furthermore, can abdicate on demand any semblance

of an innovative approach) with the avant-garde, which is instituted as it is, in spite of itself.

A [Louis] Cane or a [Vincent] Bioulès among others figured towards 1972 in the Parisian avant-gardist train carriage, and we see a caricatured summary — from their dated avant-gardism to their oh so contemporary national anthem celebrating Maréchal Pétain — in art as faithful reflection of the *establishment;* yesterday, enlightened Pompidouism, today, a new reactionary conservatism [*neo-poujadisme*]. (Of course, Buren is nothing like that).

4 Of course, I'm aware that my own decision to stop painting can be perplexing here. For the moment, I don't really want to return to this. I want simply to underline in passing that if my stopping painting is justified, it is precisely through the production that immediately preceded it (by which I mean what I produced between 1965 and 1968. It is the opposite of a renunciation. It goes without saying that ceasing painting after having worked like [Jacques] Monory or [Daniel] Dezeuze, for example, signifies nothing, or nothing other than a belated statement of failure). This production did not provoke my cessation as ineluctable — my stopping (perhaps) illuminates what I produced before under a supplementary light and (again, perhaps) gestures towards its meaning. If stopping painting marks a failure, it is not a pictorial failure.

5 The reference is an adaptation of an exchange in Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, II, 4. Translator's note.

6 Don't take us as being more naive than we were (and don't forget to carefully mention that the great artists have all more or less broken with art before becoming the proudest jewels) — through the impoverished literalness of the propositions out of which it was constituted, our rupture has some chance of being real. A few prize students might have been amused by the attitude they assumed for us, when they believed they recognized the obdurate language that had made the Closerie des Lilas — the chic restaurant for the avant-garde — shake certain evenings between the two wars. They couldn't go any further — the work became evasive, leaving them alone with their nostalgia. They only "saw" (and eventually acquired) it as a (slightly unattractive) illustration of some old theory that didn't exist, whilst with no ulterior motive they mocked it for what it was, a practice that only implicitly critiqued "other painting" — art, more or less (the practice of which was not the topic).

Also, don't go on believing that the trace of this gesture "which refuses to say for the author what he *isn't*" will tell him what *he is* — this gesture literally only says itself and says that it has been made. Only the gesture itself says something to me (and says it to me alone, since you will only see the result — a trace without secrets, without beauty, without ugliness, dull, a trace that has neither more nor less interest than a rubber stamp which dates it or the signature that derisively authenticates it.

Along with us, the amateurs of cleaning house and nihilism were just as vague as the amateurs of art — they bought lead which would never become gold. Besides, these poor souls weren't legion.

There are people who ruin stories when they tell children how the horrible end of the story is going to happen. Even though the great wolf Art, with its diabetic diet, would have ended up devouring us at daybreak, finding us, if you look closely, a sweet aftertaste, it wasn't necessary to lay the table ourselves like Buren and Mosset have done later on, both together and individually. At the end of 1967, with a minimum amount of vigilance, we were able to resist legitimization for a long time.

7 These digressions, these parentheses, these parentheses within parentheses — all this is extremely demanding. And the references to footnotes — quite deadly. Don't go all the way to the end — I won't be annoyed. As for myself, I've had it up to here.

8 If you don't look too closely, one could think that [Jackson] Pollock had already felt that this persistent sloppy mess was becoming untenable, and that one had to do something else. Of course, I'm only speaking about his drips. It's a shame that in the end this magnificent approach ended up doing something like Delacroix — I don't know if one day I will get over it...

Perhaps one should also speak of Matisse-the-flamboyant, no doubt, no doubt... And Klein, in spite of everything? Another day, if you don't mind. I'm telling you — the clock is ticking.

9 Actually, it doesn't really matter what, but all the same... that this little thug, who is not much to look at, was able, just like this — from a first glance, nonchalant, overlooking the cowboy boots — to reduce so simply the darkest depths of my glossed Ripolin enamel painted bands — this could leave one more than a little perplexed. [The quotation from Rimbaud is from "Clearance" in *Illuminations,* trans. John Ashbery (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2011), p. 125. Translator's note.]

10 Note in passing that when Buren pretends to want to be "the traitor among artists" (*art press*, (October 1980), p. 14), he's bragging a lot; just as it's not enough to refuse the Legion of Honor (one must not merit it in the first place), so for some time now in art to call oneself a traitor is not the same as to actually be one.

11 [André Stil was a French communist militant, the only Frenchman to win the Russian State Stalin Prize. Count von Wurmser was a field marshal during the French Revolution. Translator's note.] The comparison will be insulting for certain people. As we will see, it's not gratuitous. Pushed on by his zeal, Buren scribbles texts which recall donuts sold on the Boulevard Saint-Michel when I was a youngster. They were called *krapfen* and already had the peculiarity of being empty and indigestible at the same time, which is not exactly so common. Here's an example of a *krapfen*-1980 signed by Buren: "My refusals [to exhibit]... are never systematic or predictable. For the very simple reason that refusing in a systematic way, for reasons that are well defined in advance, is obviously playing the game of the system which, fortified by this security, would seem to invite you whenever it seems appropriate with suitable arguments, borrowed from your own principles, either for you to accept, or for you to refuse" (See "Au sujet d'un refus et d'une acceptation" in *N.D.L.R.* 5/6 (September 1980) pp. 85-87, reprinted in Daniel Buren, *Les Écrits,* ed. Jean-Marc Poinsot (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'art contemporain, 1991), p. 256). With a little effort, we can thus come to understand the following: the systematic refusal to exhibit gives the system the means to allow you to exhibit. How wonderful! Without even insisting on the presence of this hollow concept of "system," which is so dear to militant declarations in general, we can point out in this demonstration the redundant use of formulas tending to underline the guileless evidence and lucidity ("the very simple reason," "it's obvious") — the more the argument is defendable, the more the risky arguments made in its favor have to be presented as "simple" and "evident"; isn't it like reading the columns of *L'Humanité* [the French communist newspaper]?

12 It's high time that we need to create a new word to designate either the work of Toroni (or mine), or that of the others — it can't decently bear the same name. Have you noticed how this very text suffers from this semantic gap? It's unbearable. We have to do something. Perhaps we could launch a great national competition. As for me, I'm ready to leave the name "painting" to others if they want to keep hold of it.

13 See the "Open Letter to François Mathey,"**(translated p. 120)**.

14 See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Le métier perdu", in *Le Débat* 10 (March 1981): 5-9.

15 See Louis Cane, in *art press 44* (January 1981): 16-18.

16 Michel Enrico, in *Artistes: Revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain* No. 9/10 (October-November 1981). Charles Péguy was a French poet and writer whose intellectual and political allegiances shifted from socialism to Catholicism. Translator's note.

1965

1966

1967

1968

1983

[black]
January 25, 1983 – August 12, 1985

In 1983, after a fifteen-year hiatus, Parmentier resumed painting: "In short, I definitively ceased painting. Which means very exactly that I can commit another offense [*récidiver*] when I want, and without having to account for it."[1] He now made canvases with horizontal black- and white bands.[2] Whereas in 1966, 1967, and 1968 each year brought a change of color, this time the black was maintained for two years in succession.

1 See Michel Parmentier, "B.M.T., Me, and the Others" **(see pp. 112-113, translated pp. 121-122)**.

2 The blacks and whites — "black and white lacquer" — coexist more on the same level. They are unified by the varnished finish of the lacquers. In the works made in 1966, 1967, and 1968, the canvases were less primed and therefore more absorbent, and there were differences of brilliance across the painted surfaces.

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

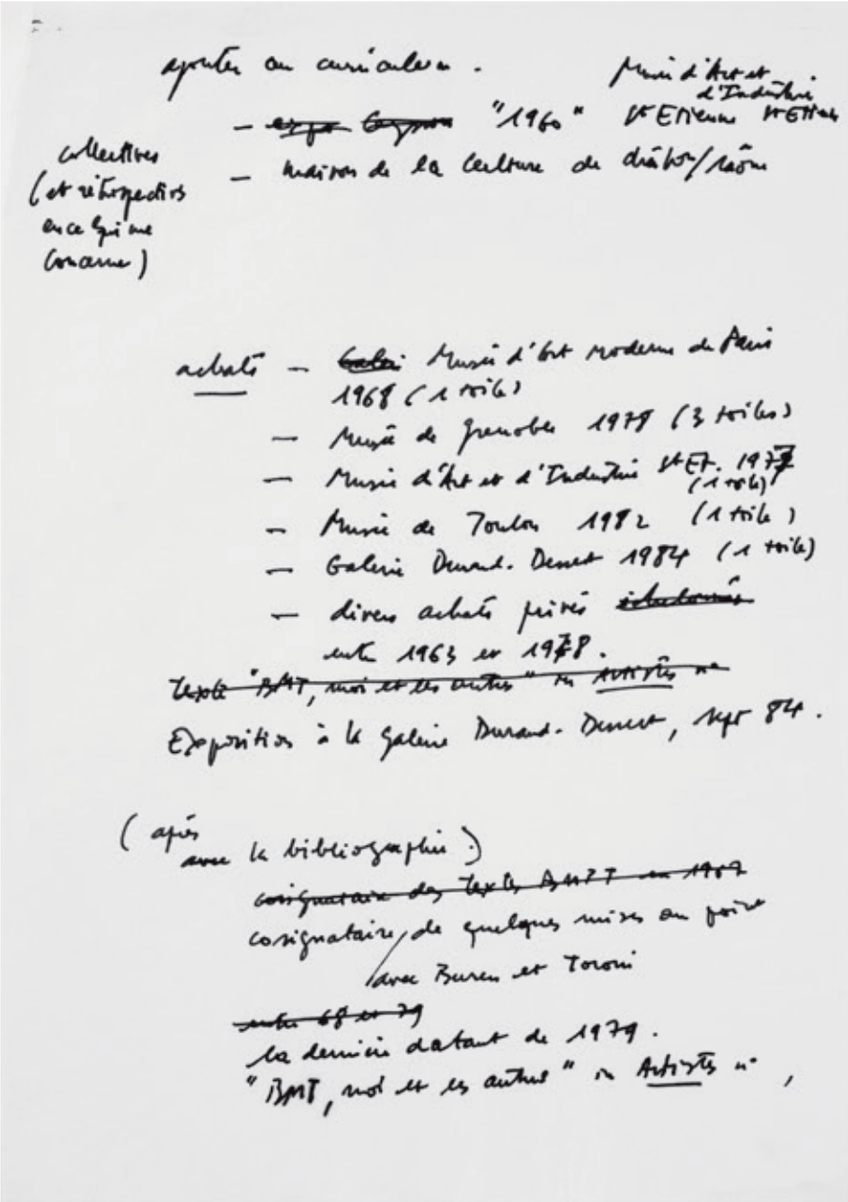
1995

1996

1997

1998

1999



ajouter au curriculum.

Musée d'Art et d'Industrie St Etienne

– ~~expo Gagnon~~ "1960"

collectives (et rétrospectives en ce qui me concerne)

– Maison de la Culture de Grenoble/Nîmes

achats – ~~Galerie~~ Musée d'Art moderne de Paris 1968 (1 toile)

– Musée de Grenoble 1979 (3 toiles)

– Musée d'Art et d'Industrie St Et. 1977 (1 toile)

– Musée de Toulon 1982 (1 toile)

– Galerie Durand-Dessert 1984 (1 toile)

– divers achats privés ~~[illegible]~~ entre 1963 et 1978.

~~texte "BMT, moi et les autres" in Artistes n°~~

Exposition à la galerie Durand-Dessert, sept 84.

(après avec la bibliographie)

~~cosignataire des textes BMT 27 en 1969~~

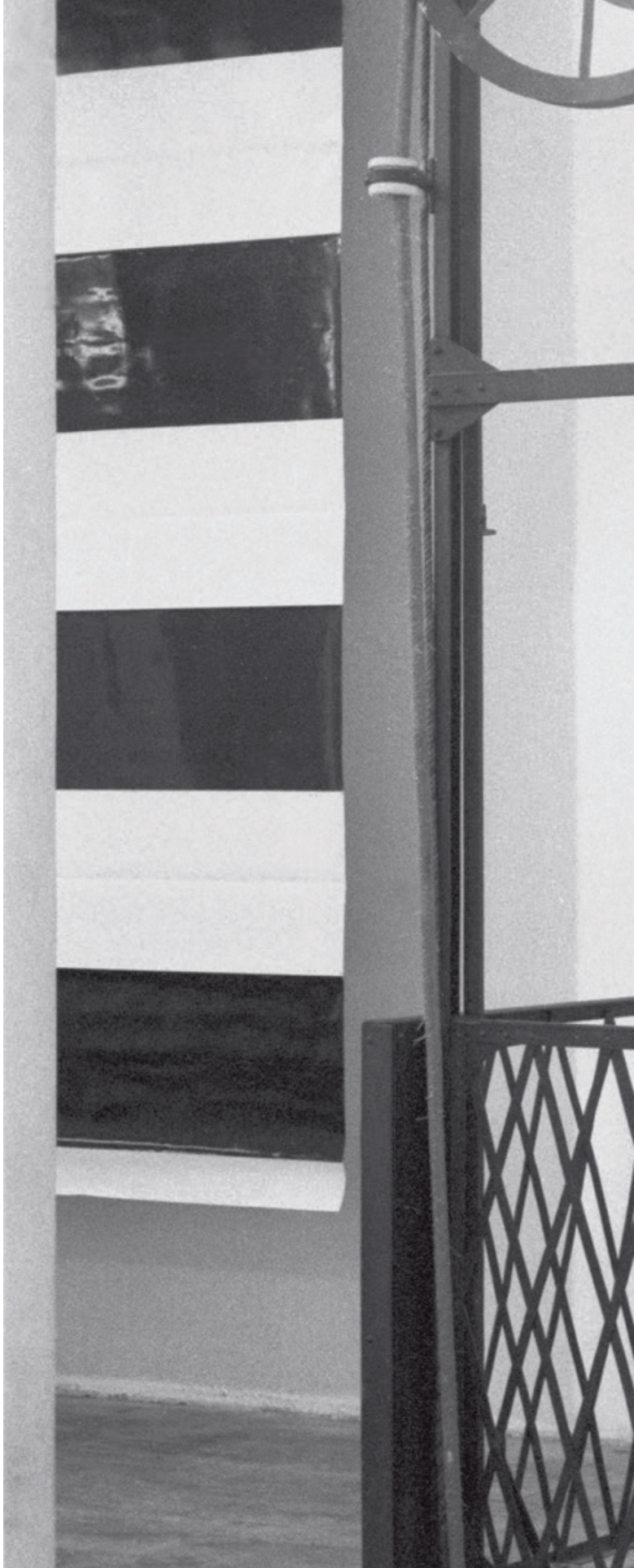
cosignataire de quelques mises au point avec Buren et Toroni

~~entre 68 et 79~~

la dernière datant de 1979.

"BMT, moi et les autres" in Artistes n°,

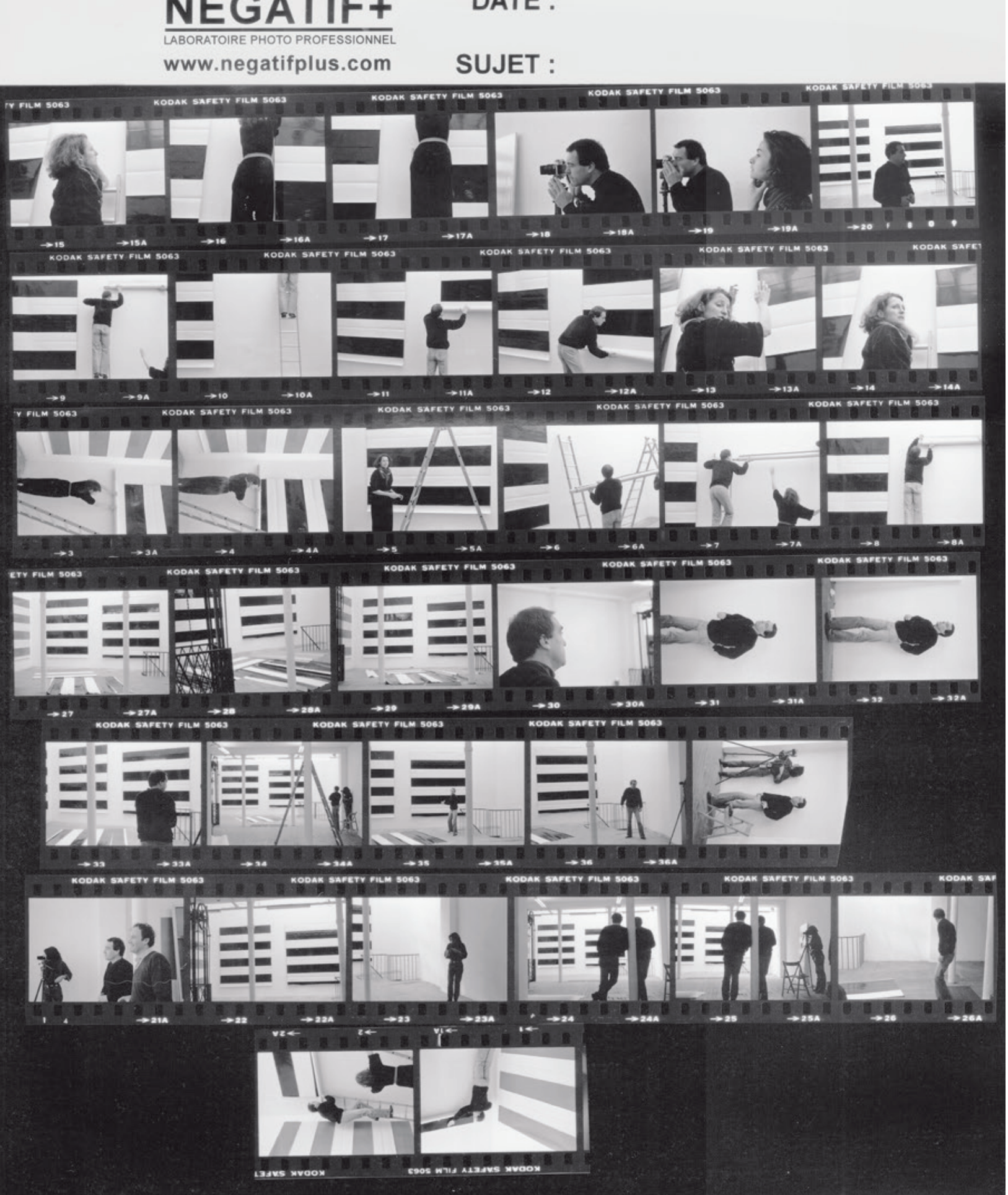
84

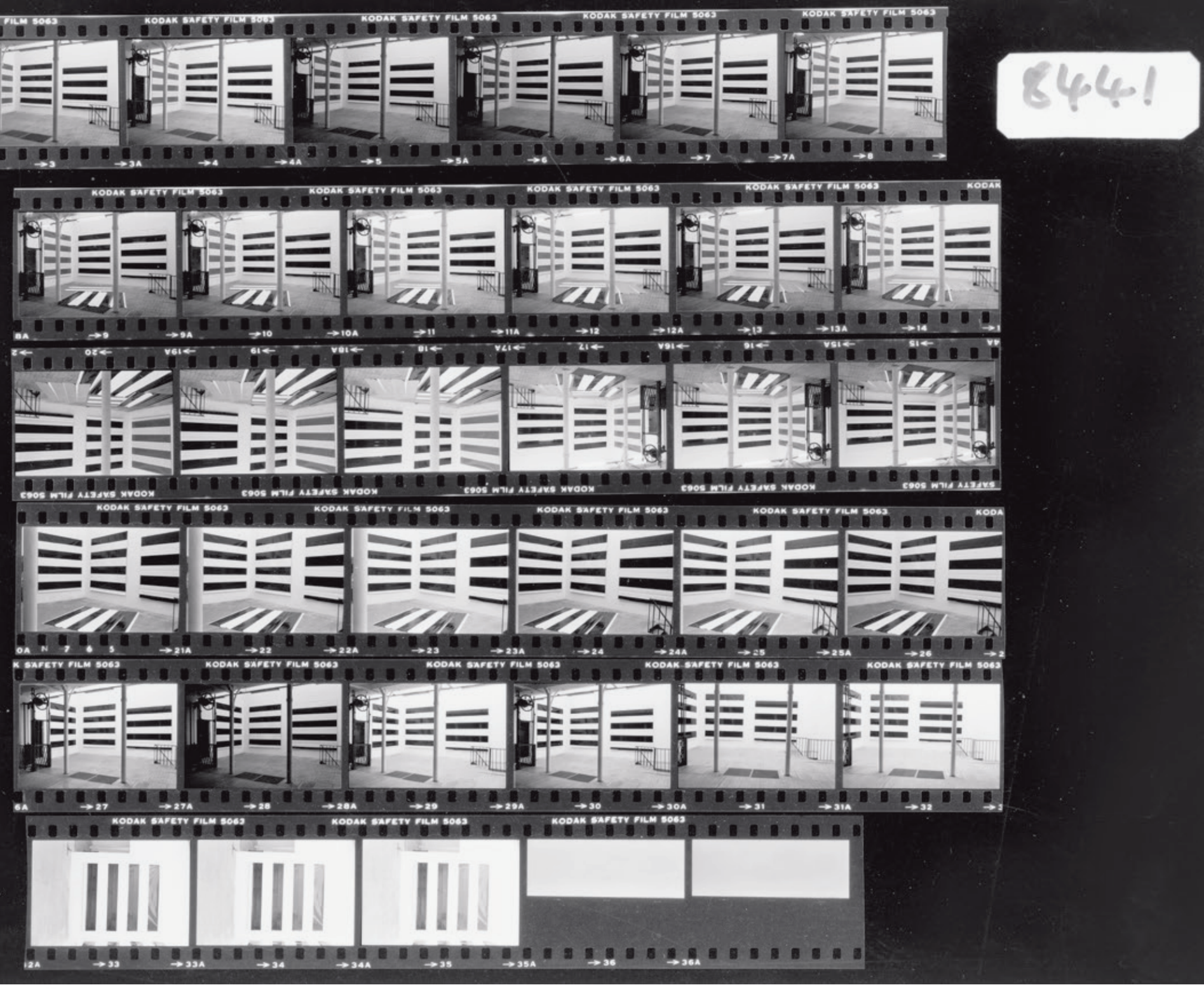


85

84 **Handwritten résumé of Michel Parmentier, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
(Handwritten) draft of a new biography.

85 **Michel Parmentier and Michel Durand-Dessert at the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, print from original black-and-white photograph, 12 × 18 cm.**
Michel Parmentier and Michel Durand-Dessert in the latter's gallery at 3, rue des Haudriettes, Paris 75003, during preparations for the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984."


NEGATIF+
LABORATOIRE PHOTO PROFESSIONNEL
www.negatifplus.com
DATE :
SUJET :
KODAK SAFETY FILM 5063



87

86 **Hanging of the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white contact sheet no. 844-2, 30.5 × 24 cm.**
Photographs taken during the hanging of the canvases.

87 **Exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white contact sheet no. 844-1, 24.2 × 30.8 cm.**

88

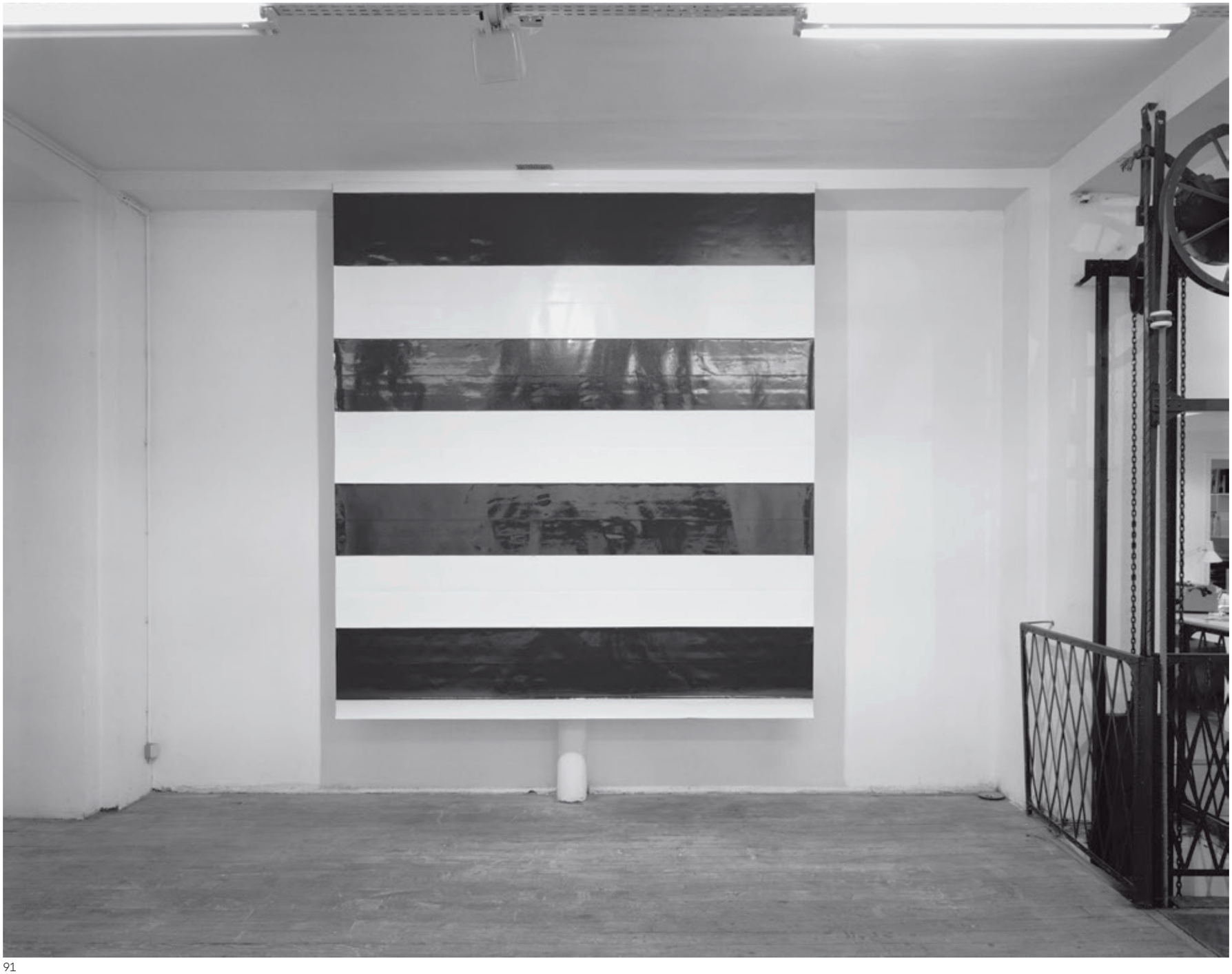
89

90

88 **Invitation to the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, 15 × 21 cm.**

89 **View of the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 10.2 × 12.7 cm.**
Left: *25 janvier 1984* (January 25, 1984),
right: *15 mai 1984* (May 15, 1984).

90 **View of the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photographic print, 24 × 17.8 cm.**
15 février 1984 (February 15, 1984).



91

91 **View of the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 10.2 × 12.7 cm.**
17 juillet 1984 (July 17, 1984).

MICHEL PARMENTIER

Né le 16 décembre 1938

- Prix Lefranc 1963

Expositions personnelles

Galerie Legendre, 1963
Galerie Durand-Dessert, 1978 (trois toiles de 66,67,68)
Galerie Durand-Dessert, 1984

Expositions collectives

- Galerie Jean Fournier, 1966 (avec Hantaï, Buren, Riopelle..)
- "1960", Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Etienne, 1983.
- Rétrospective des années 60-70, Maison de la Culture de Chalon-sur-Saône, 1979
- "12 ans d'art contemporain", 1972, Grand-Palais, Paris

Salons

Jeune Peinture, 62-67
Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, 63-66
Salon de mai, 64
Biennale de Paris, 63, 65, 67

Cofondateur, avec Buren, Mosset et Toroni, de ce qui sera désigné par la suite par le sigle "B.M.P.T"

Série de manifestations "B.M.P.T", de janvier à décembre 67, Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Biennale de Paris

Le 6 décembre 67 se désolidarise d'une exposition qui ne réunira que Buren, Mosset et Toroni chez Iris Cler et déclare le groupe dissous.

Fin 1968, cesse de peindre
1983, recommence à peindre

Publications, articles ou références (liste abrégée)

Nouvel Observateur, ?, 1963
Lettres Françaises, 25 juil. 63 (entretien avec M. Troche)
Nouvel Observateur, 11 juil. 67
Lettres Françaises, 25 oct. 67
Studio International, janv. 69
VH 101, janv. 71
l'Art en France, Jean Clair (éd. Chêne, Paris, 1972)
Art-press, août 74
l'Histoire de l'art est terminée, H.Fischer (Balland, 1982)
Formalisme et historicité, B.Buchloh (éd.Territoires, 1981, pour la traduction française)
Thèse de maîtrise de J.M. Poinsot "Les peintures et les textes de B.M.P.T. et de Support/surface"

.../...

Articles parus à l'occasion de l'exposition chez M. Durand-Dessert (sept.84)

Le Figaro, 21 sept. 84
Nouvel Observateur ? oct. 84
Libération, 23 sept. 84
Art-press, nov. 84

Outre les textes de "B.M.P.T" de 67 et le texte de décembre 67 décrétant la rupture du groupe, cosigne deux mises au point avec Buren et Toroni en 74 et 80

Textes de mise au point personnels
"Lettre à M. Mathey" in catalogue de l'exposition "72/72, Douze ans d'art contemporain", Grand-Palais, Paris

"B.M.T, moi et les autres" in Artistes n°11, juin-juillet 82

Achats

Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1968 (1 pièce)
Musée de Saint -Etienne, 1977 (1 pièce)
Musée de Grenoble, 1978 (3 pièces)
Musée de Toulon, 1982 (1 pièce)
Divers achats privés
(tous ces achats concernent des toiles de 1966, 67, 68)
Galerie M.etL. Durand-Dessert (1 pièce de 1984)

92

92 **Typed résumé by Michel Parmentier, 2 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**
Distributed after the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984"
(see pp. 128-129).

« Rentrée » euphorique dans les galeries autour de Beaubourg

Parmentier donne le ton

C'est maintenant une tradition : la rentrée, pour la peinture, se fait autour de Beaubourg, dans la seconde quinzaine de septembre. Une dizaine de galeries nous offrent, aujourd'hui, le plus étonnant des levers de rideaux.

PAR MICHEL NURIDSANY

Finie la barbouille, le prétendu « retour à la figuration », la veulerie triomphante qui avait tout envahi ! Partie. Disparue. Envolée... Comme si tout cela n'avait été qu'un mauvais rêve, comme si tout cela n'avait jamais existé... Seule à ne pas avoir compris les signes avant-coureurs du grand reflux, la galerie Gillespie-Laage-Salomon s'attarde. Les autres, comme si elles s'étaient donné le mot, ont évacué d'un même élan ce qu'hier encore elles adoraient, et nous présentent de vrais artistes. Tout simplement. Enfin !

Dans ce climat, plutôt euphorique, même Viallat (chez Fournier), avec ses grandes toiles « libres », ponctuées de séries d'« osselets » bien alignés, vous a un petit côté pimpant qui fait presque oublier son récent « flop » dans la fosse de Beaubourg. L'art provincial français, qui plaît tant à certains, si étriqué soit-il, s'il se met un peu de rose aux joues, n'est pas si déplaisant. Disons : joli, vite oublié. De l'art d'ameublement.

Oh, tout n'est pas éblouissant dans cette rentrée, tout n'est pas absolument réussi. Ainsi, Tony Cragg (chez Crousel-Hussenot) m'a déçu, en proportion même de l'estime que je lui porte. On retrouve, certes, ici, les assemblages d'objets de rebut installés au sol comme des sculptures, au mur comme des bas-reliefs ou des peintures, qu'on a aimés chez lui, naguère, mais amortis, dégonflés. Comme si Cragg, à l'évidence l'un des meilleurs représentants de la nouvelle sculpture anglaise, trop sollicité, s'était effondré.

Comme cela arrive, parfois, aux champions de tennis saoulés de matches et de voyages en avion, comme cela arrive aux pianistes, violonistes, chefs d'orchestre qui, pour être partout à la fois, comme l'exige leur carrière internationale, ne consacrent plus aux répétitions le temps qu'il faudrait. Gragg est-il victime d'un système qui de plus en plus s'aligne sur le show-bizz ? S'est-il vidé, comme Salomé ? Cragg s'installe-t-il dans la redite et le ronron ? On espère que non.

Chez Farideh Cadot, Georges Rousse, lui, même très sollicité, ne cesse de nous tenir en éveil, de nous étonner. Avec intelligence, acuité, il creuse son domaine, l'investit, tout en évoluant. Utilisant toujours des lieux voués à la destruction, il intervient un peu comme Varini, à l'aide de trompe-l'œil diaboliquement habiles qui transforment le volume en à-plat et l'à-plat en volume.

Une photo de très grand format (qui est l'œuvre exposée) enregistre le point de vue idéal où l'illusion fonctionne au mieux pour notre émerveillement incrédule. C'est superbe. Eblouissant.

Commentant la disparition des uns, la réapparition des autres, on parlera, peut-être, du retour aux années soixante-dix, sous-entendant par là qu'on revient en arrière, qu'on se protège contre la nouveauté. Encore faudrait-il que la nouveauté fût neuve et que les artistes d'hier, aient cessé d'être intéressants. Ce n'est pas le cas d'Erik Dietman (chez Bama) qui, dans son humour inquiet, si particulier, nous offre d'étonnantes petites pièces parodiques et sarcastiques où se manifeste une passion de l'art violente, plus exclusive qu'il n'y paraît.

Ce n'est le cas ni de Serra ni de Sol Lewitt qui sont venus installer eux-mêmes, le premier chez Templon un ensemble de blocs de fer sur parquet verni où se manifeste un sens de l'espace impressionnant de puissance, le second chez Yvon Lambert, tout aussi impressionnant, une série d'œuvres d'une étonnante richesse malgré le vocabulaire minimal utilisé. Il y a d'admirables dessins, une œuvre monumentale peinte directement sur le mur et même des aquarelles qui sont de parfaits anti-Sol Lewitt.

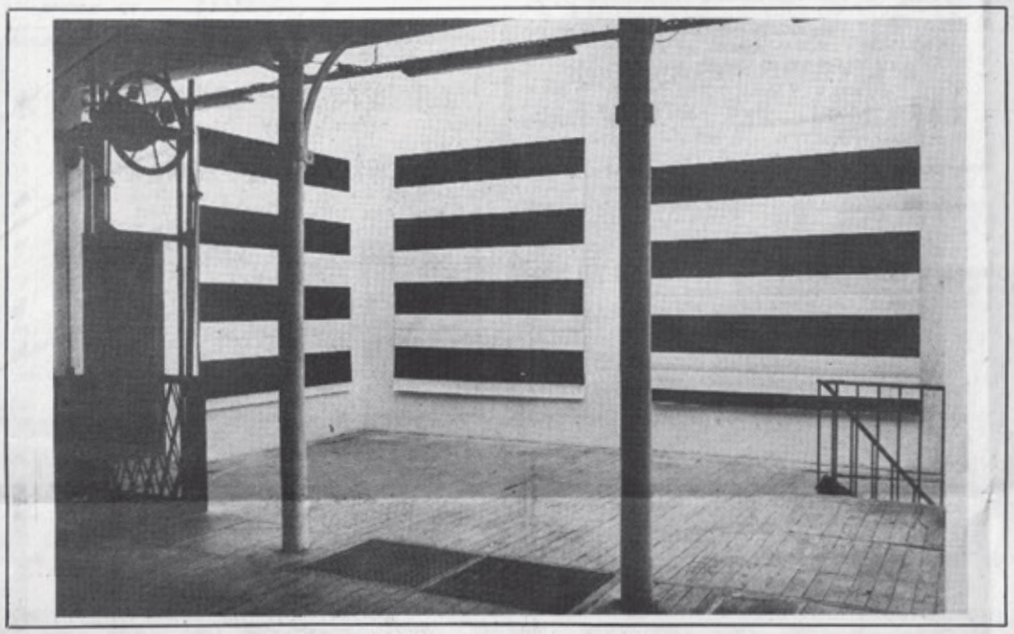
Mais ce qu'on attendait avec le plus d'intérêt intrigué, c'était le retour de Michel Parmentier (chez Durand Dessert), Michel Parmentier l'un des artistes les plus radicaux des années soixante qui, ayant débuté en 1962, s'était arrêté de peindre en 1968. Arrêt *« dicté par la qualité objectivement subversive de mon travail »*, écrivait-il dans le catalogue de « Douze ans d'art contemporain en France » (1972). *« Cesser*, disait-il, *c'est garder la trace neutre, c'est la soustraire au piège que nous voyons parfaitement fonctionner, de la reconnaissance aveugle, de la consommation béate. »*

Ami de Buren, Toroni et Mosset, il peignait des bandes horizontales de 38 cm de large alternant avec des bandes blanches de même dimension. Qu'allait-il faire ? Comment, après un silence de dix-sept ans, allait-il nous surprendre ?

De la manière la plus évidente : en nous proposant exactement les mêmes toiles qu'autrefois, faisant alterner des bandes peintes de 38 cm de large et des bandes blanches de même dimension. J'en sais qui ont été déçus : amateurs d'art trop liés à la mode à ce qui, dans la peinture, est anecdote. Moi, je ne connais pas de geste plus violemment, plus profondément artistique que ce geste-là, niant tout ce qui n'est pas lui, abolissant le temps, s'en tenant à sa radicalité fondamentale, absolue.

Aujourd'hui, Parmentier intervient sur la scène parisienne avec la violence neutre qui le caractérise. Aujourd'hui continuer, « poursuivre », comme dit Roger Laporte, c'est ce qui permet de garder « la trace neutre » : la situation a changé, se taire est trop voyant. Il faut le dire et, s'il le faut, le crier : le retour de Parmentier, c'est plus qu'un événement, c'est la manifestation d'un acte artistique dans un contexte où, au mieux, on ne parle que de culture.

M. N.



Michel Parmentier : Installation (1984).

Galerie Gillespie-Laage-Salomon, 24, rue Beaubourg, jusqu'au 11 octobre. Galerie Fournier, 44, rue Quincampoix, jusqu'au 17 octobre. Galerie Crousel-Hussenot, 80, rue Quincampoix, jusqu'au 23 octobre. Galerie Farideh Cadot, 77, rue des Archives, jusqu'au 15 octobre. Galerie Bama, 40, rue Quincampoix, jusqu'au 31 octobre. Galerie Templon, 30, rue Beaubourg, jusqu'au 20 octobre. Galerie Yvon Lambert, 5, rue du Grenier-Saint-Lazare, jusqu'au 12 octobre. Galerie Durand-Dessert, 3, rue des Haudriettes, jusqu'au 9 octobre.

93 **Michel Nuridsany, "Parmentier donne le ton" (Parmentier sets the tone), *Le Figaro*, arts section, September 21, 1984, 53.6 × 38.7 cm.**
[Parmentier Sets the Tone, Michel Nuridsany
Thickly impastoed paintings, the so-called "return to figuration," the triumphant spinelessness that has invaded everything else are all over! Left. Disappeared. Taken flight... as if all this had only been a bad dream, as if all that had never existed. The Gillespie-Laage-Solomon gallery is the only one not to have understood the early warning signs of the great ebb tide. The others, as if they had passed the word around, have discarded with the same enthusiasm what they still adored the day before, presenting us now with the real artists. Nothing less. Finally!

In this rather euphoric environment, even [Claude] Viallat (at the Jean Fournier gallery), with his large, "free-standing" canvases of series of well-aligned "*osselets*" seduces you with the work's elegant side, which makes one nearly forget his recent "flop" in the pits of Beaubourg. French provincial art, which pleases certain people so much, however skimpy it might be, is not so unpleasant if it brings a little pink to the cheeks. Let's just say — pretty, quickly forgotten. An art of furnishing.

Oh, not everything is dazzling at this start of the year. Not everything is completely successful. Thus, Tony Cragg (at Crousel-Hussenot) was disappointing to me even given the admiration I have for him. Certainly, like the previous work that we all admired, here we see again the assemblages of used objects installed on the floor like sculptures or on the wall like bas-reliefs or paintings, but softened, deflated. It's as if Cragg, reputedly one of the best representatives of the new English sculpture, had slumped through over-exposure.

This is what occasionally happens to tennis champions who have played too many matches and spent too much time in the air, just as this happens to pianists, violinists, orchestra conductors who, in order to be everywhere at once as their international career demands, don't devote as much time to rehearsals as they should. Is Cragg victim of a system that increasingly conforms to the world of show-biz? Has he run out of steam, like Salomé? Has he capitulated to repetition and a humdrum routine? Let's hope not.

At the Farideh Cadot gallery, Georges Rousse continues to arouse and astound us, even when much in demand. He carves out and invests his own place with intelligence and acuteness, all the while evolving. Always using locations that are about to be destroyed, and a little like [Felice] Varini, he intervenes using a devilishly skillful trompe l'œil effect, which transforms volumes into flat surfaces and flat surfaces into volumes.

A very large-format photograph (which is the work exhibited) establishes the ideal point of view where the illusion functions best for our incredulous astonishment. Stunning.

Commenting on the disappearance of some artists and the reappearance of others, one will perhaps refer to the return of the seventies, with the implication of going backwards, protecting oneself against innovation. Still, the innovatory must be new and yesterday's artists have ceased to be interesting. This isn't the case for Erik Dietman (at the Bama gallery) who, with his specifically troubled, anxious humor, offers us astonishing little parodic and sarcastic works, in which a passion for violent art is expressed, which is more exclusive than it might seem.

This isn't the case with [Richard] Serra or Sol LeWitt, who came over to install their own works — the former at the Templon gallery, a collection of iron cubes on a varnished floor, which reveals an impressively powerful sense of space, the latter at Yvon Lambert, just as impressive, which is an astonishingly rich series of works, in spite of the use of a minimal vocabulary. There are admirable drawings, a monumental work painted directly on the wall, and even watercolors which are perfect anti-Sol LeWitts.

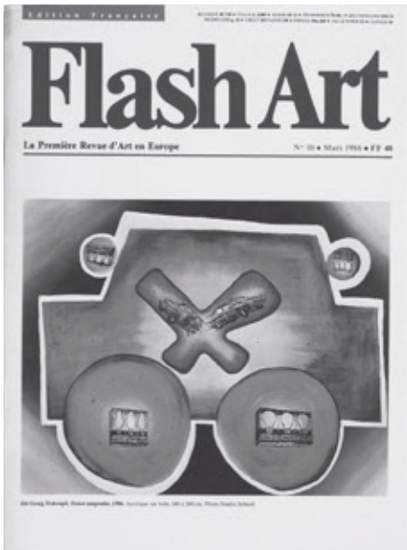
But what we were waiting for most intriguingly was the return of Michel Parmentier (at the Durand-Dessert gallery). Having started in 1962, one of the most radical artists of the seventies, Michel Parmentier had stopped painting in 1968. This was a cessation "dictated by the objectively subversive quality of my work," as he wrote in the *Twelve Years of Contemporary Art in France* (1972) catalogue." "To cease," he remarked, "is to 'freeze' the trace-neuter, to remove it from the trap of blind misrecognition that we see functioning perfectly, of blissful consumption."[1]

A friend of Buren, Toroni, Mosset, he painted horizontal bands, 38 cm wide, alternating with white bands of the same size. What was he now going to make? After a seventeen-year silence, how was he going to surprise us?

In the most obvious manner — by proposing exactly the same paintings as before, alternating painted bands, 38cm wide, and white bands with the same dimensions. I know who was disappointed with this — amateurs of art too closely bound to fashion, of what is anecdotal in painting. As for myself, I don't know a more violent, more profoundly artistic gesture than the gesture he makes here, denying everything that is not gesture, abolishing time, taking hold of gesture in its absolute, fundamental radicality.

Today, Parmentier intervenes in the Parisian scene with the neutral violence which characterizes him. Continuing today "to pursue [*poursuivre*]" as Roger Laporte says — this is what allows the "neutral trace" to be maintained. The situation has changed; keeping silent is too conspicuous. It has to be said and, if necessary, yelled out. Parmentier's return is more than an event; it is the manifestation of an artistic act in a context where, at best, one only speaks of culture.
M.N.
1 See the letter to Mathey, translated on **p. 120**.]

Michel Nuridsany (Michel Nuridsany, art critic at the daily *Le Figaro* between 1971-2002 and at *art press*, met Parmentier and Buren at the École des Métiers d'Art, Paris, in the advertising workshop (1957-1961).



94

Michel Parmentier

La "splendeur et la misère" de chaque toile de Parmentier
est qu'une n'est jamais que l'absence des autres.
"Je parle *aujourd'hui*, moi (me) faisant, et mon travail est non-reponse
qui passe nécessairement par un énoncé littéral frustrant pour l'autre.
Il ne s'adresse pas à l'autre mais à moi..."

Bernard Blistène

Bernard Blistène: *A celui qui écrivait en 1972, répondant à l'invitation de l'exposition du Grand Palais 72, après "avoir cessé définitivement de peindre en 1968", "la cessation, elle, est subversion irrécupérable", je serais tenté de demander quelle est la signification de ce recommencement?*

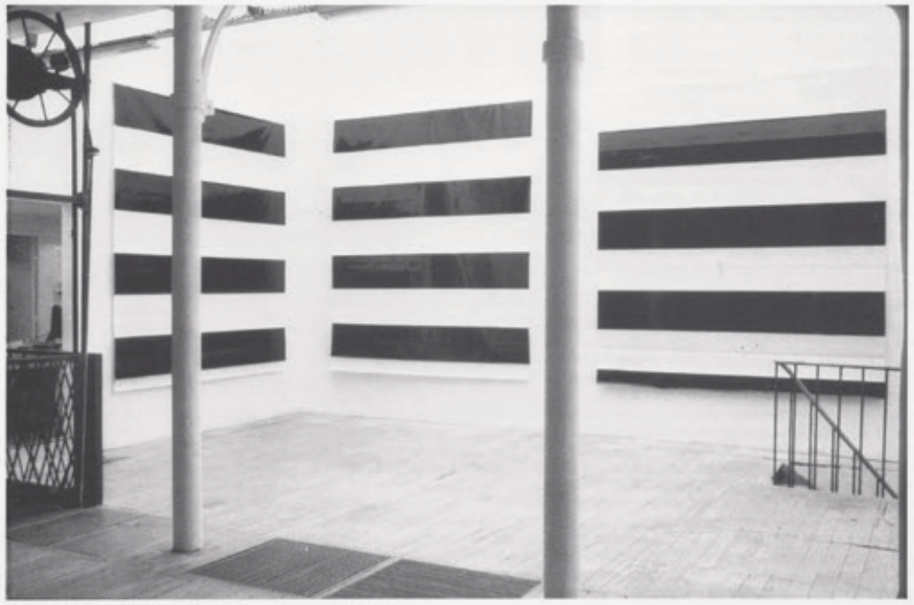
Michel Parmentier: Tout d'abord pour que ce soit le moins clair possible, je vais vous avouer que j'adore répondre aux questions qu'on ne me pose pas. Je vais peut-être faire ici exception mais je ne garantis rien. La signification de mon recommencement? Je ne la connais pas. Mais il y a *des* raisons, elles sont multiples, pas toutes du même ordre. Je ne suis pas sûr de vouloir m'en expliquer. Cela ne me gêne pas qu'on y voie une contradiction voire un reniement. Je suis relaps si l'on veut et pire que cela encore: je ne suis pas Rimbaud.

BB: *La persistance de votre méthode me conduit à me demander s'il ne s'agit pas d'abord d'un* acharnement. *Mais, et parce qu'on ne travaille pas impunément sur le masquage, sur "l'im-peint", j'en viens à vous demander si votre pratique ne se situe pas quelque part entre maïeutique et* ontologie?

MP: Breton regrettait déjà "l'utilité, la vague utilité (qui) dispose de nous ingénieusement".

BB: *Est-ce un refus de répondre?*

MP: Vous disposez donc de vos mots redoutables, peut-être dois-je faire avec.



Exposition à la galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris 1984.

Bon. Je disais ailleurs, il y a quelques années, ma crainte de toute lecture *anagogique* de mon travail. Je sais bien, ici, que la charge "ontologique" et le questionnement "maïeutique" n'autorisent pas nécessairement la distorsion anagogique, mais tout de même... Si il y avait volonté maïeutique, 1) elle n'existerait plus, puisque, énoncée en tant que telle, elle ne pourrait plus remplir son rôle, elle se ferait le coup du scorpion, 2) elle s'exercerait, pour autant que je sache, d'abord et surtout sur moi-même. Votre *ontologie* me laisse encore plus perplexe. Mon travail, moi-même, sommes devenus très irrationnels. Vers 65-68 vos mots auraient peut-être été plus appropriés, à la nuance près que l'ontique heideggerienne eût été plus juste.

Je parle *aujourd'hui*, moi (me) faisant, et mon travail est non-réponse (même pas questionnement, donc, au passage, la maïeutique...) qui passe nécessairement par un énoncé littéral frustrant pour l'autre. Il ne s'adresse pas à l'autre mais à moi... et encore. Acharnement, peut-être. A ne *pas* répondre, à fuir toute solution souveraine, si peu souveraine serait-elle.

Mais, en fin de compte, peu importe. Et même quand je doute de façon têtue de tout *pouvoir* accorder à mon travail, je sais que ce n'est pas moi qui, en dernier ressort, en déciderai. Toutefois cette si totale ipséité qui bloque tout mon travail que dirait-elle aux autres (déjà elle ne me dit rien à moi), par où? Pour parler aux autres, il faut un minimum de langage commun, non? Et, dans une plus ou moins grande mesure, parler *des* autres... Je me sers ici d'ipséité contre personnalité, un peu comme, dans d'autres catégories, on distingue le *ça* du *moi*, *l'ontogénèse* de la *phylogénèse*, le *lave-vaisselle* de la *cocotte-minute*. Quand je dis "ipséité", je pense au fin fond, ce qui ne se dévoile pas, l'opaque, ce qui ne peut se partager en aucun cas. La personnalité *causerait*, ne serait-ce qu'à travers la sensibilité, l'héritage et ce qui la transgresse, etc... L'ipséité *serait*).

BB: *Est-ce que la conscience du silence "historique" de Marcel Duchamp, dénoncé pour des raisons sur lesquelles il ne convient pas ici de revenir, qui était apparue comme l'ultime feinte post mortem, ne ferait pas apparaître votre travail comme un palimpseste?*

MP: Je voudrais quand même dire qu'entre deux risques de réduction à l'*utile*, je préfère celui qui se promène ici, de l'ordre de la morale, à cet autre qui relèverait du social ou encore du sociologique, parce que Duchamp et ses héritiers m'ennuient énormément. Ils ne sont pas les seuls.

BB: *Je sais vos réticences quant aux postérités maladroites de Duchamp... A ces "questionneurs un peu naïfs"... Mais*

94 **Interview with Bernard Blistène, "Michel Parmentier,"** ***Flash Art*, no. 10, March 1986, pp. 19-21, 27 × 20.4 cm.**
[translation **see p. 134**]

Copy annotated by Michel Parmentier.

Art critic Bernard Blistène, who wrote for several contemporary art magazines and journals, was recruited by Dominique Bozo at the Centre Georges Pompidou (1983), and taught at the École du Louvre from 1985 to 2005.

In the reproduction on page 19, from left: *15 février 1984* (February 15, 1984 **(see p. 137)**), *13 janvier 1984* (January 13, 1984 **(see p. 136)**), and *15 mars 1984* (March 15, 1984).

On page 20, left: the canvas on the wall *is 18 février 1968* (February 18, 1968); on the floor, partially folded and unfolded: *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966) and *15 mars 1967* (March 15, 1967). This rather deliberate presentation was designed to demonstrate, after a fifteen-year hiatus, the resumption and principle of folding, and the continuity of the work exhibited.

quant au palimpseste...

MP: ...Le palimpseste efface de façon barbare pour faire place à un texte prétendument plus important. Peut-être, alors, êtes-vous près du vrai: mes toiles (mais pas seulement celles de 83 par rapport à celles, disons, de 68) s'annulent. Je pratiquerais un palimpseste *pour réécrire la même chose.*

Il y a cette question du silence, de l'arrêt de quinze ans. Aujourd'hui je recommence où j'en étais resté et à la suite, avec la même méthode. Il se pourrait que la charge, ne serait-ce que subconsciente, du travail apparemment le même ait profondément changé, je crois mon travail actuel moins agi par l'Histoire - au sens large de culturel ou même ontogénique, comme vous pourriez dire.

Je fais le point: j'avais travaillé en agissant et agi moi-même. Ce qui s'est passé non pas dehors mais chez moi, pendant ces quinze années m'a révélé deux ou trois choses: 1) mon travail 65-68 était satisfaisant, mieux indépassable, 2) il ne signifiait peut-être plus, *pour moi*, ce qu'il avait l'air de signifier, 3) il me fallait absolument le poursuivre puisque, dans la nouvelle situation où *je* suis, il *tait* quelque chose de "nouveau". D'où ce travail actuel, un peu pauvre et impérieusement nul, mais aussi *a-historique*. Cela fait sans doute que je ressens une extranéité encore plus complète entre ce qu'on appelle "la peinture" et ce que je produis. D'ailleurs - et c'est comique au point que la France profonde va en rester pliée en deux un bon bout de temps - cette "peinture" à laquelle je me sens si étranger m'est d'une très lassante familiarité; et mon propre travail m'échappe, ne me donne pas de recettes, m'exclut.

BB: *Est-ce que gérer une aussi longue absence n'était pas en fait la condition nécessaire à l'effet de persistance de ce recommencement?*

MP: A partir de 65, et aujourd'hui peut-être davantage, le palimpseste, si palimpseste il y a, consiste à recouvrir le *non-dit* (les parties occultées de la toile pliée) d'un *dit excessif;* cela c'est le travail se faisant, celui qui m'importe en premier lieu parce qu'il me semble que j'y suis directement impliqué - protohistoire, *ça*, tout ce genre de trucs... L'ensemble déplié, les bandes alternées du tu et de l'excès, m'échappe, m'annule, ne dit même plus le recouvrement, ne me dit à moi-même que sa littéralité. Il dit peut-être *le dit du non-dit* mais me laisse en plan. *Je dis ce que je tais* (si vous me permettez cette formule un peu risquée), et c'est sans doute pour cela que je dois et peux recommencer: quand on touche ce problème on en finit jamais. Bon.

Exposition à la galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris 1984.

BB: *Y a-t-il la même "étourderie" qui vous amène à retravailler aujourd'hui que celle à laquelle votre autobiographie fait allusion lorsque vous avez choisi de peindre à partir de la même méthodologie que vous utilisez de nouveau? Et d'abord, y a-t-il une quelconque ambiguïté quant au choix de la peinture?*

MP: Qu'on s'entende déjà bien: il y a une insuffisance sémantique quelque part... *Je ne crois pas faire de la peinture.* Je ne suis peintre que parce que j'utilise le matériau que j'achète chez mon marchand de peinture. Rimbaud - je ne me prends pas pour Rimbaud, je suis trop bien élevé pour ça - était-il poète comme Vigny ou Verhaeren parce qu'il utilisait comme eux de l'encre? En fait Rimbaud n'était pas un poète (ou c'était le seul), c'est un loubard-voyant. On pourra objecter qu'il y a des grands et des petits poètes et des très très grands. Je ne le crois pas. On pourrait dire qu'il s'agit de topiques différentes qu'on assimile plus ou moins par manque d'exigence.

La peinture, telle qu'elle a eu sa raison d'être: mise en image des questions et réponses de son époque (y compris dans un processus conflictuel), n'est plus convoquée. Les questions, nous pouvons les laisser aux scientifiques par exemple, ils apporteront leurs réponses parcellaires et ce sera très bien comme cela.

Aujourd'hui cette peinture - la peinture - donc, n'est plus convoquée. Peut-être encore quelques gestes qui disent précisément que les questions sont aussi vaines que les réponses souveraines peuvent avoir quelque raison d'être. Peut-être... Mais cela n'est pas certain.

Ces gestes ne seront en tout état de cause pas de la peinture, ou l'on doit revoir tout notre vocabulaire.

BB: *Il y a ambiguïté - ce qui n'est pas pour me déplaire - à* parler *de la peinture. Vous citez d'ailleurs ce mot de Valéry: "On devrait s'excuser de parler de peinture". J'aime bien vous contraindre à répondre - même si vous dites plus haut que parfois vous ne répondez pas - dans un domaine que vous jugez étranger. Et puis, si vous éprouvez dans le domaine verbal la nécessité de vous contredire, vous reconnaissez que "la seule cohérence est votre travail". En quoi en fait votre travail est-il de la peinture? S'il l'est, où se trouve alors sa spécificité dans un temps qui a vu l'éclatement systématique des catégories?*

MP: Je vais répondre à votre question en anticipant sur ce que je serai amené à vous dire plus tard. Car ce que j'entends par le *spécifique* peut très bien me mettre sur un terrain où j'aurais complètement tort mais l'essentiel, là encore, est bien non pas d'avoir raison mais d'avoir *une* raison.

La recherche de la spécificité picturale va peut-être dans le même sens que l'éclatement catégoriel. Paradoxalement. En échappant à la mise en image (image qui participe aussi de multiples catégories, d'autres disciplines), en prenant la peinture en ce qu'elle n'est pas mimétique ni même communicante, mais à lecture immédiatement littérale - c'est ce que j'appelle le spécifique - on peut enfin *peindre vainement*. C'est bien évidemment en finissant de s'affranchir des codes qu'on peut espérer aborder l'essentiel.

Le schéma (et vite dit, parce que, finalement, on n'a pas le temps de dire trop de ces conneries qui ne serviront sans doute pas à grand-chose): a) on tourne le dos au code, b) on approche donc de la spécificité à l'intérieur de la catégorie, c) le spécifique nous envoie au dire *essentiel* qu'on partage alors avec d'autres catégories (comme l'écriture, la musique, la poésie par exemple). Ainsi, le spécifique annule la disciplinarité, la catégorie. Encore une fois, ce n'est paradoxal qu'en apparence. Bon, alors, qu'est-ce que c'est que le spécifique en peinture? C'est - je le décrète comme postulat, mais les tenants d'une vue osmotique artistico-ontologique seront forcément d'un avis opposé - c'est l'endroit où la trace peinte ne dit pas l'image codée en vigueur à l'époque où elle est peinte mais ce qui est donné en plus, en prime, en plus de l'image et du communicant, malgré l'artiste pourrait-on dire. Quand la peinture échappe et *peint* elle-même.

Quand Vinci ~~peignit~~ peint la Vierge, Anne et Jésus, il ~~peignit~~ peint aussi autre chose. Le spécifique chez Uccello serait ce qui se donne malgré les chevaux, les arrière-fonds et l'intelligence même de la composition. *Le spécifique pourrait être et porter la faille.* Qui est, bien entendu, indicible... J'essaie seulement de donner une vague idée du sens dont je charge ce mot. Vague et fausse idée, puisqu'*idée*.

Quant au domaine formel du verbe, à ce domaine "étranger", je voudrais dire qu'il n'est pas le seul à l'être pour moi. Il résiste, me résiste, *mais moins que mon propre travail.*

Exposition à la galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris 1984.

BB: *Vous avez choisi maintenant de travailler avec le noir et le blanc. Faut-il y voir la volonté de radicaliser l'usage arbitraire de la couleur que vous faisiez jusque là? Avez-vous songé à la lecture symbolique qui présiderait alors?*

MP: Si vous me parlez du noir et du blanc que j'utilise aujourd'hui, quand je recommence, et si vous me dites que c'est le creux contre le plein, que c'est la négation des couleurs que j'ai déjà utilisées, ou que c'est la symbolique du deuil - le blanc pour le deuil oriental, le noir pour l'occidental - vous aurez raison; parce que c'est vous qui regardez et pas moi, c'est *vous* qui lisez - je ne lis jamais mes toiles finies. Vous aurez raison parce que je ne sais pas ce que je fais, je n'en comprends plus la raison (et que, si je la comprenais, je ne la ferais évidemment pas, je ne sais pas si je ferais quoi que ce soit). Sans doute l'usage du noir n'est-il pas innocent. Sans l'envie de voir, de *voir une fois* ces bandes noires, peut-être n'aurais-je pas recommencé... et ce malgré toutes les autres raisons que je pouvais avoir de le faire. L'extrême simplicité de ma méthode et cette grande aridité du noir (a priori, parce que, maintenant, je ne le trouve ni aride ni somptueux, je le trouve noir; et, tout le monde vous le dira, le noir, ça va avec tout, ce devrait être un argument choc pour mon marchand) débouchent - malgré la parenthèse que je viens de fermer - sur un littéral incontournable, le plus dénudé, le plus offert, le plus ouvert, le plus fermé, peut-être le plus pauvre. Toutefois, on y revient, chacun le verra comme il veut, ce sera *son* cheminement, pas le mien, sa sensibilité, pas la mienne. Et c'est celui, dans ce cas, qui aime ou rejette la toile qui la fait. Je ne suis plus là.

Mais, si, par un retournement pervers, ce noir devait, *à mes yeux*, prendre une signification trop lourde et affecter la lecture littérale de ces bandes qui sont l'aveugle recouvrement monochrome brisé dans son silence souverain (amputé de sa souveraineté, de sa suffisance métaphysique), je devrais réévaluer mon travail. Nous n'en sommes pas là et il s'en faut, je crois, de beaucoup. Pour l'instant, je les fais, ne les regarde plus, je sais qu'elles sont là. Pour rien, mais là.

■

p.132 94 [Michel Parmentier

The "splendor and misery" of each of Parmentier's canvases is that one of them is only ever the absence of others. "I speak today, in making (myself), and my work is a non-response which necessarily passes by way of a literal utterance that is frustrating for the other. It is not addressed to the other but to myself...

Bernard Blistène: I would be tempted to ask the person who wrote: "cessation is irrevocable subversion" — responding in 1972 to an invitation to exhibit at the Grand Palais 72 and having "definitively stopped painting in 1968" — what is the meaning of this starting over?

Michel Parmentier: First of all — so that this is understood as little as possible — I am going to admit to you that I love responding to questions that nobody asks. So perhaps I'm going to make an exception here, but I'm guaranteeing nothing. The meaning of starting over? I don't know the meaning. But there are reasons (in the plural), multiple reasons, and not of the same order. I'm not sure I want to explain myself. It doesn't worry me that one might sense a contradiction here, even a renunciation. I haven't lapsed, as it were, and even worse than that, I'm not Rimbaud.

Bernard Blistène: The persistence of your method makes me wonder if it's not first of all a question of *tenacity*. But, and because no one works with impunity on the masking and on the "un-painted [*im-peint*]," I'll ask you if your practice isn't situated somewhere between maieutics and ontology.

Michel Parmentier: [André] Breton already lamented "utility, the vague utility [which] ingeniously casts us aside."[1]

Bernard Blistène: Is this a refusal to respond?

Michel Parmentier: You're using formidable-sounding words, so perhaps I should respond by using them myself. So, a few years ago, I mentioned elsewhere my fear of all *anagogic* reading of my work. I know well enough here that the burden of "ontology" and "maieutic" questioning does not necessarily authorize an anagogic distortion, but all the same... if there is a willingness for maieutics, 1) it would no longer exist since, announced as such, it would be unable to fulfill its role; it would end up suicidal, and 2) as far as I can tell, it would be exercised first and above all on myself. Your *ontology* leaves me even more perplexed. My work and my own self have become very irrational. Around '65-'68, your words might have been more appropriate, with a slight shift in nuance in that Heidegger's *ontic* would have been better warranted.

I speak *today,* in making (myself), and my work is a non-response which necessarily passes by way of a literal utterance that is frustrating for the other. It is not addressed to the other but to myself... and still. Tenacity, perhaps. It would be as weakly sovereign to *not* respond, to escape all sovereign solutions.

But in the end, it doesn't really matter. And even when I'm uncertain about all *power* given to my work in such an obstinate way, I know that in the end it is not me who will decide. Nevertheless, such total ipseity, which blocks all my work, what will it say to others (already it says nothing to me), and in what way? In order to speak to others, doesn't one have to have a minimum level of common language? And in more or less large measure, to speak *of* others... I'm using ipseity here against the concept of personality, a little like the way for other categories one distinguishes between the Id and *me, ontogenesis* and *phylogenesis,* the *dishwasher* and *pressure-cooker.* When I say "ipseity," I'm thinking in the depths of what does not disclose itself, the opaque, what cannot be shared in any instance. Personality would prattle, if only through its sensibility, inheritance, and what transgresses it, etc. Ipseity *would be.*

Bernard Blistène: Marcel Duchamp's consciousness of "historical" silence — denounced for reasons which we don't need to go back into here, and which had appeared as the ultimate post-mortem stratagem — would this make your work appear as a palimpsest?

Michel Parmentier: Even so, I would like to say that between two risks that reduce everything to what is *useful,* I prefer the one that is circulating here — concerning a moral order — than the other, which stems from the social or else the sociological, since Duchamp and his heirs completely bore me. They are not the only ones.

Bernard Blistène: I know your reticence regarding Duchamp's blundering descendants... these "questioners who are a little naive." But as for palimpsest...

Michel Parmentier: In a rough way, the palimpsest effaces in order to make a place for a supposedly more important text. Perhaps, then, you are closer to the truth — my canvases annul themselves (not simply those from '83 in relation to those, say, from '68). I would practice a palimpsest *in order to rewrite the same thing.*

There is this question of silence, of stopping for fifteen years. Today I'm restarting where I had remained at the time, the one following the other, with the same method. It might be only unconscious, but it could be that the work's charge, which is seemingly the same, has changed profoundly. I believe my current work is less driven by History — in the wider cultural or even ontogenetic sense, as you might have said.

In short, I had worked by taking action and acting myself. What happened, not elsewhere but for myself over these fifteen years, showed me two or three things: 1) my work from '65-'68 was satisfactory, or better, unsurpassable, 2) it didn't signify more *for me* what it seemed to signify; 3) I had to pursue it completely since, in the new situation in which I find myself, it *silences* something "new." My current work stems from this, which is somewhat impoverished and imperatively nothing [*nul*], but also *a-historical.* No doubt this means that I feel an even more complete extraneity between what one calls "painting" and what I produce. Indeed — and this is so funny that provincial France will be doubled over in laughter for quite a while — this "painting" from which I feel so estranged is of a very tedious familiarity to me. And my own work escapes me, doesn't provide me formulas [*recettes*], excluding me.

Bernard Blistène: In fact, isn't managing such a long absence the necessary condition for the persistence in starting up again?

Michel Parmentier: Starting in '65, and perhaps more today, the palimpsest — if palimpsest there is — consists in covering over the *non-said* (the parts hidden by the folded canvas) with an *excessive saying.* This is the work making itself, which matters to me in the first place because it seems that I am directly implicated — proto-history, the Id, all these kinds of things... When everything is unfolded, the alternating bands of silence and excess escape me, annul me, no longer even say a covering over, only telling me its literalness. Perhaps it says *the saying of the non-said,* but it disposes me. (If you allow me this slightly risky formula) *I say what I keep quiet about,* and no doubt it's for this reason that I must and can begin again. When you touch on this problem, it's never-ending. That's it.

Bernard Blistène: Is there the same "thoughtlessness" leading you to start working again today as the one alluded to in your past history, when you chose to paint with the same methodology which you are now using again? And first of all, isn't there a certain ambiguity in relation to the choice of painting?

Michel Parmentier: To make sure that we really understand one another, since there is clearly a slippage in meaning here: *I don't think I make paintings* [*faire de la peinture*]. I'm only a painter because I use the material that I buy at the art store. I don't take myself for Rimbaud — I'm too well raised for that — but was Rimbaud like Vigny or Verhaeren because he used ink like they did? In fact, Rimbaud wasn't a poet (or was the only one) but a visionary thug. One will object that there are great and small poets, and really great poets. I don't think so. One might say that it is about different topics that are assimilated more or less for lack of necessity.

Painting, inasmuch as it has its reason for existing — to picture [*mettre en image*] questions and answers from its historical moment (including within a conflictual process) — is no longer convoked. For example, we can leave questions to the scientists. They will offer their fragmented responses, and that's fine like that.

So today, this painting — painting — is no longer convoked. Perhaps there are still a few gestures that say, precisely, that questions are just as useless as the sovereign responses may have some reason to be. Perhaps... but all of this is not certain.

In any case, these gestures will not come from painting, or else we should rethink our entire vocabulary.

Bernard Blistène: There is an ambiguity — which I don't dislike — *in speaking* about painting. Elsewhere, you cite these words from Valèry: "one ought to excuse oneself when speaking about painting." I would like to force you to respond in an area that you judge to be unfamiliar — even if you said earlier that sometimes you don't respond. And then, if you feel the necessity of contradicting yourself in the context of speaking, you recognize that "the only coherent thing is my work." In fact, in what way is your work related to painting? If it is, where is its specificity at a time when we see the systematic shattering of categories?

Michel Parmentier: I'm going to respond to your question by anticipating something I will have to address later. Because what I understand by *specificity* can easily lead me down a path where I'm completely wrong. Again, what is essential is not being right but having *a* reason.

Research into pictorial specificity proceeds in the same direction as the shattering of categories. Paradoxically. In escaping the act of picturing (the image which also participates in multiple categories and other disciplines), in taking painting that is neither mimetic nor even communicative but as given to an immediately literal reading — this is what I call specificity — one can finally *paint in vain.* Obviously, it is by finally breaking free of codes that one can hope to approach what is essential.

The schema (quickly stated, because after all there isn't enough time to say too much about this bullshit that undoubtedly doesn't serve much purpose): a) one turns one's back on the code, b) one thus approaches the specificity inside the category, c) specificity sends us to the *essential saying* that is then shared with other categories (for example, writing, music, poetry). Thus, specificity annuls disciplinarity and categorization. Once again, this is only paradoxical in appearance. And so, what then is specificity in painting? I claim this as a postulate (although those who see it from an osmotic, artistico-ontological view will surely hold the opposite point of view); this is the place where the painted trace does not express the coded image in force at the time when it is painted. Instead, it is given in addition, as a bonus, over and above the image and the communicator — in spite of the artist, one might say. When painting escapes and *paints* itself.

When da Vinci paints the Virgin, Anne, and Jesus, he also paints something else. Specificity in Uccello's work would be what is given in spite of the horses, the backgrounds, and the very intelligence of the composition. *The specificity could be and support what is fissured* [*la faille*]. Which, of course, is inexpressible... I'm only trying to give a general idea of the meaning that I give to this word. A vague and false idea, because it is only an *idea.*

As for the formal realm of the spoken word, this "foreign" realm, I would like to say that it is not the only thing that exists for me. It resists, resists me, *but less than my own work.*

Bernard Blistène: You have now chosen to work in black and white. Should one see in this a desire to radicalize the arbitrary use of color that you have used until now? Have you thought of the symbolic reading which would then prevail?

Michel Parmentier: If you're speaking about the black and white that I'm using today when I start painting again, and if you say to me that it's the empty as opposed to the full, that it's the negative of the colors that I have used, or that its symbolic of mourning — white for oriental mourning, black for Western — then you're right, because it's you who are looking and not me. It's *you* who are reading. I never read my finished canvases. You're right because I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know the reason anymore (and if I had understood it, I obviously wouldn't have done it. I don't know if I would have done anything at all). No doubt the use of black isn't innocent. Without the desire to see, *to see* these black bands even *once*, perhaps I would never have started over again... even in spite of all the other reasons I could have had for doing it. The extreme simplicity of my method and the black's immense aridity (*a priori,* because now I don't find it either arid or sumptuous —just black. Everyone will tell you that black goes with everything, which the person selling you the paint in the store would find somewhat startling) opens up (in spite of what I have just said parenthetically) an inescapable literalness — the barest, the most offered, open, closed, perhaps the most impoverished. At the same time, we come back to the question, everyone will view it how they want to, which is *their* way of proceeding, not mine, their sensitivity, not mine. And it's this person in this context who likes or rejects the canvas that is made. I'm no longer involved.

But if, through a perverse reversal, this black *in my eyes* ought to assume an overbearing meaning and affect the literal reading of these bands, which are the blind covering over of the monochrome broken open in its sovereign silence (amputated from its sovereignty and metaphysical sufficiency), I ought to re-evaluate my work. We are not at that point, and far from it I believe. For the moment, I make the black bands, I don't see them anymore, I know they are there. For nothing, but there.

1 See André Breton, "Pourquoi je prends la direction de la révolution surréaliste" in *La Révolution Surréaliste* 4 (1925): p. 1. Translator's note.]

13 janvier 1984 (January 13, 1984)

15 février 1984 (February 15, 1984)

22 juillet 1985 (July 22, 1985)

12 août 1985 (August 12, 1985)

95 **Portrait of Michel Parmentier, black-and-white photograph taken by Malek Alloula at Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), during the exhibition "Parmentier 1983-1984," September 15, 1984.**
Malek Alloula (born Oran, 1937, died Berlin, 2015) was a French-language Algerian writer and poet who also worked as a publisher in Paris from 1967 (his most well-known work in English is *The Colonial Harem*). Parmentier met him during his own short spell in publishing. They corresponded on the subject of the black-and-white canvases Parmentier was exhibiting at the time.

May it be a question of Nothing,
ever, for Anyone.

Maurice Blanchot[1]

We should still see. Lift up the bands. Or displace them. To be assured of a verso that is less austere. More loquacious. On which the colors, finally. The lure's very old harmony. There again. Vibrations of the soul and words. Verbose cortege. The infinity of iteration. Language on pebbles. The sea like a palette. From afar. This taste of salt and spit. *Jouissance.*

The eye. It. The basement window of alchemy. Of mystery. Through which everything happens. Penetrates. Stores up like a memory. Of a (hi)story. Of a painting. Of a painting in history and vice versa. Story of the eye as well. Of all these layers that it traverses. Without change. Like a known country. Even more this doubt or indecision. It recognizes. That's enough for it. Here where the eye's story no doubt stops. Its eternity.

What unfolds. Hung up. Exhibition wall. In order to be unrolled. Remnant of a monochrome fabric. Ream of paper. Released vertically. Here by their own weight. In the meantime, something disappears. Has disappeared. Not surreptitiously. Or magically. It's still too unbelievable. One doesn't know. Even if. Not long ago.

In these creases. Themselves. Patience of effacement. Certainly. An other enormity. The most immediate risk. Of an initial stapling. But also from a generalized metastatis. And its diagnostic, which is a scandal. The only serene scandal. Like a truth.

What I look at is not the stairs, nor the roof, nor the cathedral; it is the empty space between them (Louis Soutter).[2]

Malek Alloula
July 1988

1 "Qu'il ne soit question de Rien, jamais, pour Personne." "Personne" here can be translated as both "Anyone" or "No-one." The epigraph is taken from Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 51. Translator's note.

2 The text was published in the exhibition catalogue "Michel Parmentier," Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31, 1988, p. 29.

1965

1966

1967

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

[papers] April 22, 1986 – December 18, 1989

The first works on paper (newsprint[1]) change the regularity of the constitutive elements that continued to dominate in the canvases from 1983–1985.

After the sovereignty of the black-and-white canvases, here are works on paper — ordinary, fragile, and porous.

The paper presents a surface that is not smooth but absorbent, on which no layer of primer or whitening precedes the order of the pre-folding, a pre-folding that marks each strip before the folding and stapling.[2] Instead of unilateral covering made by spraying paint on the folded apparatus,[3] Parmentier vertically aligns strokes of graphite repeated from left to right and from top to bottom.

These regular/irregular strokes vary within the work and from one work to another. They are generally oriented upwards with, at the top, the trace of the start of the gesture, a mechanical gesture, the "mechanical" gesture that produces them, and right at the bottom, the trace of that retracted gesture coming to an end.

After the single type of support/canvas that previously preceded the work, these works are now constituted by several "strips" (*lés*)[4] that are unstapled, unfolded, and pinned together, grouped. All these works are in different formats. By lateral expansion they are extensible, variable in their dimensions,[5] while the height of the strips varies between 304 and 320 cm — the works are as wide as they are high, larger than they are high, or higher than they are wide. The unfolded strips reveal the bands in reserve and the ones that are penciled: "9 alternating bands 33 cm wide (5 blank[6] and 4 with graphite marks) and, from top to bottom, two partial bands with graphite…."

From now on, Parmentier stops signing his works. These are now numbered and date-stamped on the back of each strip with the day of their execution,[7] going from left to right. Retrospectively, and in his lifetime, the contract/certificate accompanying each work sold is an indissociable part of it.

Starting with *29 avril 1989* (April 29, 1989) Parmentier returns to the 38 centimeter width for his bands on the same paper support, alternately repeated and transposed as many times height-wise (see fig. 120, p. 173) "with at the top and the bottom two partial 19 cm bands."[8] It is with this work that Parmentier introduces a square format of approximately 304 cm by 302.5 cm, which, with one or two exceptions, becomes his standard format up to the last work, *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999).

Henceforth, the transformations occur within the preordained format, and the graphite (in powder) is "rubbed" (by hand), with the density varying from one work to another.[9] The paper absorbs the "rubbing" and becomes, in a sense, tanned, muted, saturated, and polished as the grain of the graphite is dissolved in it, buried by rotation and, by conduction, rediffused and redistributed in the thickness and on the surface of the paper. The hand-rubbing exerts pressure on the paper, reaches the recessed, invisible folds. By the pressure that is exerted, the buried folds are marked in the depth of the paper and printed on its surface.

The works dated/titled *2 août 1989* (August 2, 1989) and *18 décembre 1989* (December 18, 1989) are partially marked at the precise place of the folds in white chalk or charcoal.

For *16 novembre 1989* (November 16, 1989) ocher chalk is applied "almost flat," and on *5 décembre 1989* (December 5, 1989) white pastel is "penciled and rubbed," while on *10 décembre 1989* (December 10, 1989) white chalk is randomly spread "flat."[10] Two works on tracing paper[11] are interspersed in the series on paper: *12 octobre 1989* (October 12, 1989) with rubbed charcoal, and *9 décembre 1989* (December 9, 1989) with "rubbed" graphite.

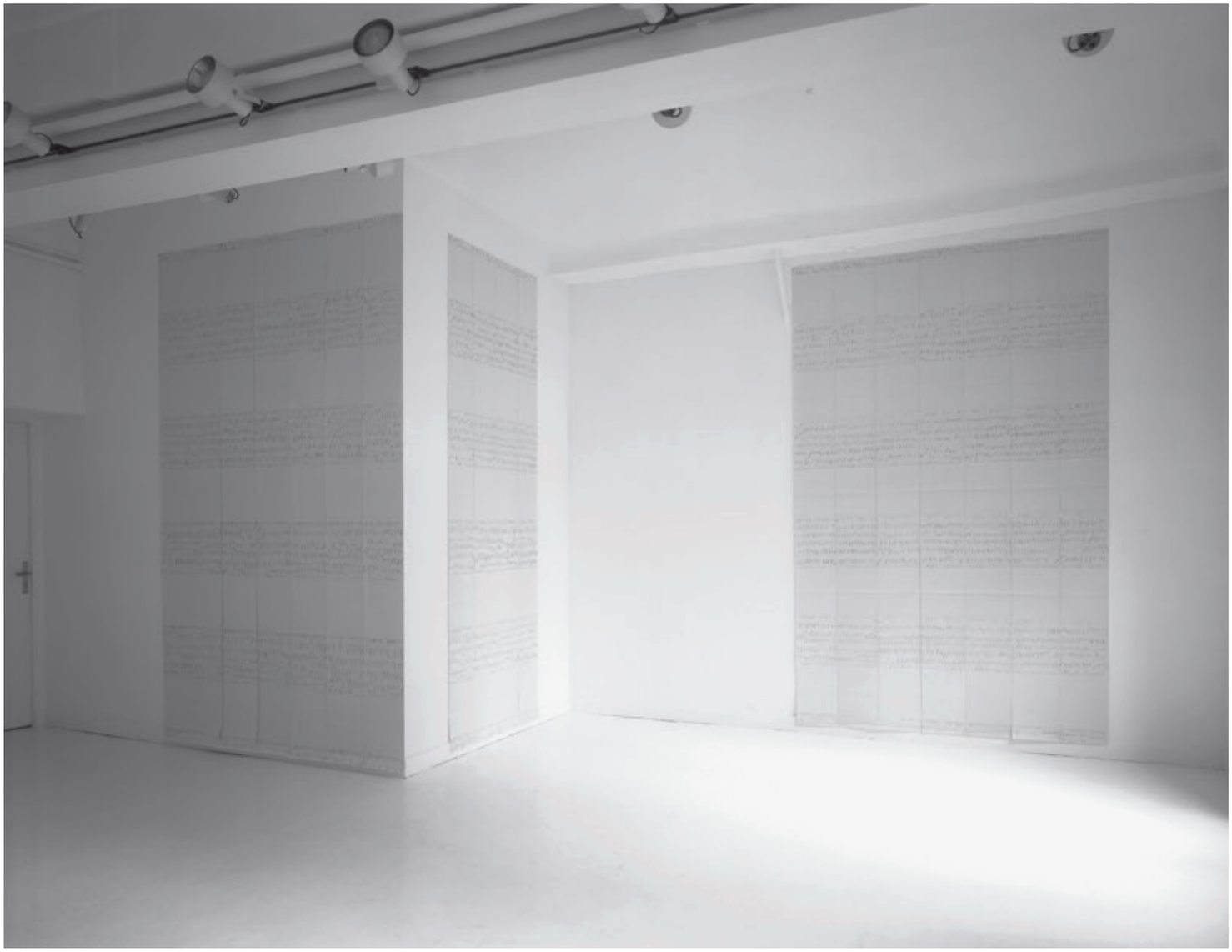
1 This printer's paper came in rolls 27.5 cm wide.
2 More surprisingly, once folded, the papers show horizontal bands 33 cm wide, as opposed to the usual 38 cm. At no moment does Parmentier expressly mention this change, except in the contracts accompanying some of his works, where the "description" section specifies "9 alternating bands 33 cm wide."
3 The graphite lines are covered with a transparent fixative **(fig. 102, p. 148)**.
4 In 1995, during the first inventory of the works, Agnès Foiret suggests Parmentier use the term *lé* to designate a sequence of folded papers.
5 The works on paper comprise at least 3 strips and the biggest, *16 juillet 1988* (July 16, 1988), has 25. The works were adapted to the exhibition space and the area on the walls available for hanging. In September 1988, on the occasion of his exhibition at Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert in Paris, the work *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988), comprising 15 strips, was divided and distributed over two walls: 7 strips and 5 strips, leaving 4 not exhibited **(fig. 97, p. 144)**.
6 The designation "blank" *(vierge)* is defined on the basis of the surface of paper reserved by the folding.
7 Dated from the day when they were covered with graphite strokes.
8 The height of the strip is divided by 8 × 38 cm (7+1/2 +1/2) and subdivided by the folds, that is 8 folds, with 5 raised and 3 recessed.
9 *8 mai 1989* (May 8, 1989), *17 juillet 1989* (July 17, 1989) **(see p. 160)**, *5 août 1989* (August 5, 1989) **(see p. 161)**, *5 décembre 1989* (December 5, 1989).
10 See the following chapter, "Tracing Paper" **(see p. 163)**.
11 This tracing paper comes in rolls. Parmentier uses tracing paper of varying thickness. The width of a roll is 37.5 cm.

96

96 **Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), September 10 – October 11, 1988, 12 × 18 cm.**

97 **Exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France), color photograph, black-and-white reproduction from transparency, 10.2 × 12.7 cm.**
From left: *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988) comprising 11 strips, 7 strips (310 × 191 cm), and 4 strips (310 × 110 cm); *12 août 1988* (August 12, 1988) with 7 strips (310 × 191 cm). Two works with graphite on paper.

On the left, *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988) is divided over two walls, with the first 7 strips on the wall to the right, and the other 4 strips on the adjoining perpendicular wall.



97

98

l'hercule des arts

octobre 1988

10 septembre – 11 octobre 1988

MICHEL PARMENTIER

LILIANE & MICHEL DURAND-DESSERT

43, rue de Montmorency
75003 Paris. (1) 42 78 29 66

l'hercule des arts
est une publication (gratuite) HERCULE de PARIS
(32 rue Rodier – 75009 Paris) qui présente régulièrement
un artiste, une galerie, une exposition.

98 **J-M Baillieu, in *l'hercule des arts*, published by Hercule de Paris, Paris (France), October 1988, cover and double page, 21 × 14.9 cm (folded).**
[translation **see p. 152**]

This photocopied freesheet regularly spotlighted an artist, an exhibition, or a gallery. This issue features a biography of Parmentier, a presentation of Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, a layout plan of the exhibition, and an article on the exhibition "Michel Parmentier" (September 10 – October 11, 1988). The publication was directed by Jean-Marc Baillieu from 1983 to 2008.
Right-hand page: detailed plan of the hanging.

MICHEL PARMENTIER

Né en 1938 à Paris où il vit et travaille. Expose à partir de 1962. Lie sa démarche à celles de Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset et Niele Toroni de 1966 à 1967. Dans le tract du 6 décembre 1967 où il se désolidarise d'eux, il affirme la constance de son travail : des bandes alternées horizontales, égales, de 38 cm de large, toiles bicolores (d'environ 2,80 x 2,50 m) qu'il cesse "définitivement" de peindre en 1968. Suivent 15 années de retrait. De 1983 à 1985, il reprend son ouvrage là où il l'avait laissé. Revenu, il change sa manière : depuis 1986, il fait du "crayonnage pauvre" sur papier, utilisant toujours une méthode de pliage chère à Simon Hantaï, dont il cite volontiers, ainsi que de Bram van Velde, les noms et travaux. Ses oeuvres sont toujours intitulées de la date du jour où elles ont été terminées. Lecteur de M. Blanchot, R-L Des Forêts, S. Beckett, entre autres, il écrit lui-même des notes dont un aperçu est donné dans le catalogue de l'exposition que lui consacre la Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques (salles du C.N.A.P., 11 rue Berryer, 75008 Paris) du 20.9 au 31.10.88, chaque jour (sauf mardi) de 11h à 18h.

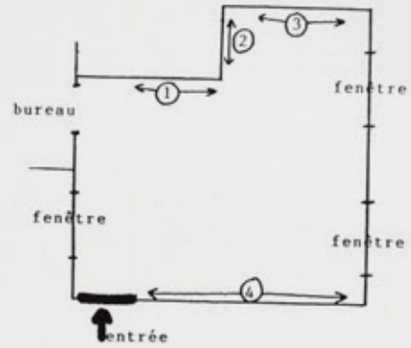
GALERIE LILIANE & MICHEL DURAND-DESSERT

De 1976 à 1982, ouverte au 43 rue de Montmorency,75003 Paris (tél. 42 78 29 66), depuis 1982 sise au 3 rue des Haudriettes, 75003 Paris (tél. 42 77 63 60), la galerie L.&M. Durand-Dessert propose, depuis février 1988, des expositions dans les 2 espaces du lundi au samedi de 14h à 19h.
La liste des artistes de la galerie (*) montre un souci de pluralité que Michel Durand-Dessert -personnellement attiré par l'Arte Povera- résume en une formule : "dans chaque tendance, les meilleurs artistes", artistes que L.&M. D.-D. laissent respirer ne les exposant que "le moment venu". L'artiste n'est pas contraint: les acheteurs -collectionneurs privés parisiens, belges,etc. ou institutionnels : les F.R.A.C.- ne s'y trompent pas.
D'ici la fin de l'année sont annoncés "Tombeaux (Stanze)" de Jan Vercruysse, au 3 rue des Haudriettes (du 16.10 au 19.11) et une exposition des oeuvres originales (**) réalisées pour l'édition de tête de La Guerre Sainte, livre que Liliane Durand-Dessert consacre à une lecture des Chants de Maldoror (du 14.10 au 6.12, 43 rue de Montmorency).
Le livre, autre préoccupation de M. D-D qui publia, à l'enseigne de "Multiplicata", des ouvrages d'artiste, est présent au 3 rue des Haudriettes avec une librairie qui propose le plus vaste panorama de catalogues et monographies relatives à l'art contemporain depuis 1960. Une caverne d'Ali-Baba dont les trésors font l'objet d'un catalogue disponible sur simple demande.
Ainsi, la galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert est réellement un élément pivot de la diffusion de l'art contemporain.

(*) Giovanni Anselmo, Joseph Beuys, Lothar Baumgarten, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Brouwn, Victor Burgin, André Cadère, Alan Charlton, Gérard Collin-Thiebaut, Ger van Elk, Luciano Fabro, Barry Flanagan, Gérard Garouste, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, John Hilliard, Kounellis, Bertrand Lavier, Mario Merz, François Morellet, Yves Oppenheim, Michel Parmentier, Claudio Parmiggiani, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Gerhard Richter, Ulrich Rückriem, Fred Sandback, Patrick Tosani, David Tremlett, Jan Vercruysse, Carel Visser
(**) G.Anselmo, C. Boltanski, G. Collin-Thiébaut, B. Flanagan, G. Garouste, J.Kounellis, M. Merz, G. Penone, G. Richter, J. Schnabel

MICHEL PARMENTIER A LA GALERIE LILIANE & MICHEL DURAND-DESSERT

Un bon schéma vaut mieux qu'un mauvais discours...



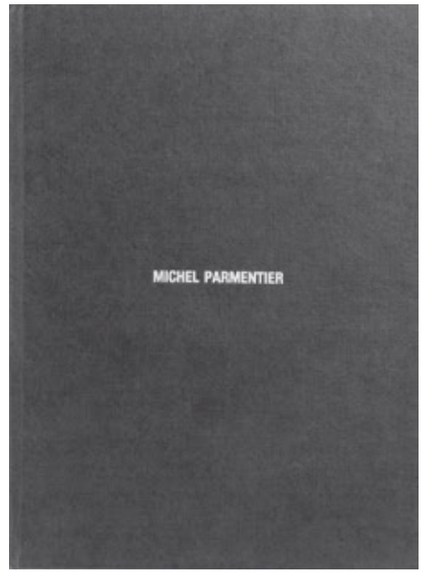
① "27 juin 1988" : 7 séquences (3,10 x 1,91 m)
② "27 juin 1988" : 4 séquences (3,10 x 1,10 m)
③ "12 août 1988" : 7 séquences (3,10 x 1,91 m)
④ "1er septembre 1988" : 19 séquences (3,10 x 5,21 m)

Malgré tout, quelques phrases...

La galerie de la rue de Montmorency, blanche du sol au plafond, éclairée par deux hautes fenêtres, semble idéale pour les travaux récents de Michel Parmentier (*). Y entrant, le visiteur est saisi.
Chacun des quatre travaux présentés est composé d'un certain nombre de séquences (paravents verticaux d'un papier de faible grammage) tenues l'une à côté de l'autre sur un tasseau fixé en haut de mur. De chaque ensemble, on remarque les bandes alternées horizontales : bandes vierges et bandes crayonnées composées de six lignes horizontales de "bâtons" plus ou moins verticaux. Sont aussi visibles les traces horizontales de pliage, les lignes verticales "vides" séparant les séquences ainsi que des traces d'agrafage.
Papier de faible grammage, séquences sensibles aux courants d'air, oeuvre sécable (**), crayonnages effaçables à la gomme, peuvent traduire une fragilité. Est-elle l'image de la fragilité relative de notre vie ?
Reste qu'il semble ici difficile d'ignorer les circonstances qui ont préparé aux travaux, difficile de ne pas chercher à connaître mieux leur auteur, un être que l'on pressent exigeant, qui a su se taire, qui ne fait pas n'importe quoi. D'ailleurs, dans ses notes de mars-juillet 1988 (cf. catalogue du C.N.A.P.), Michel Parmentier a recopié cette phrase de R-M Rilke :
" Nous savons peu de choses, mais qu'il faille nous tenir au difficile est une certitude qui ne doit pas nous quitter "

J-M Baillieu

(*) Dimanche 16 octobre 1988, vers 21 heures, P-A Boutang consacrera 10 minutes d' "Océaniques Magazine" (FR3) à Michel Parmentier.
(**)D'ailleurs, les séquences peuvent être achetées séparément, avec un minimum de 3 cependant (65 000 FF), 21 000 FF chacune des suivantes.



100

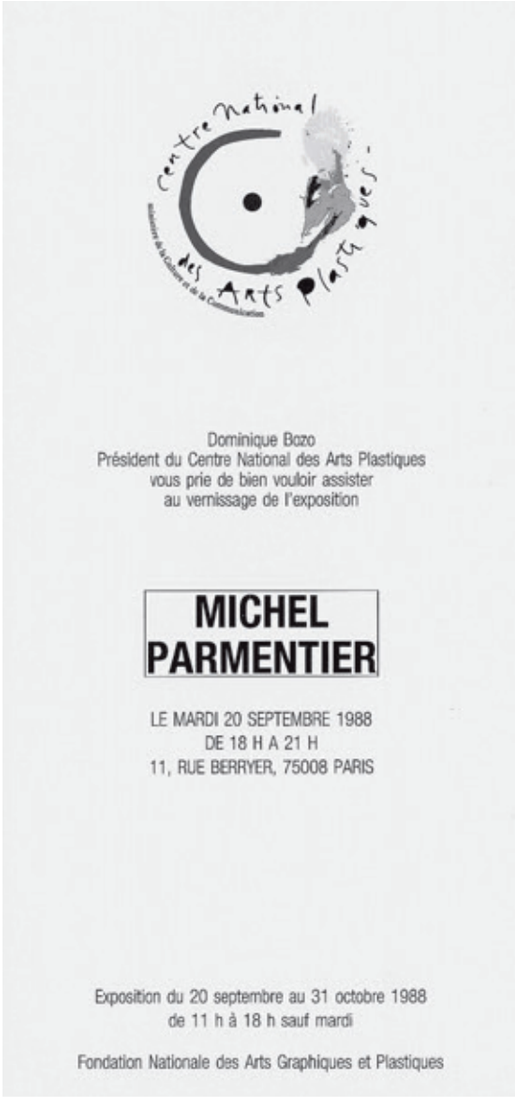

Dire,
redire
et bafouiller,
me contredire,
dévier en apparence,
digresser,
bref :
rhizomer toujours.
M'avouer.

(notes mars-juillet 88)

MICHEL PARMENTIER

57

99


Dominique Bozo
Président du Centre National des Arts Plastiques
vous prie de bien vouloir assister
au vernissage de l'exposition

MICHEL
PARMENTIER

LE MARDI 20 SEPTEMBRE 1988
DE 18 H A 21 H
11, RUE BERRYER, 75008 PARIS

Exposition du 20 septembre au 31 octobre 1988
de 11 h à 18 h sauf mardi

Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques

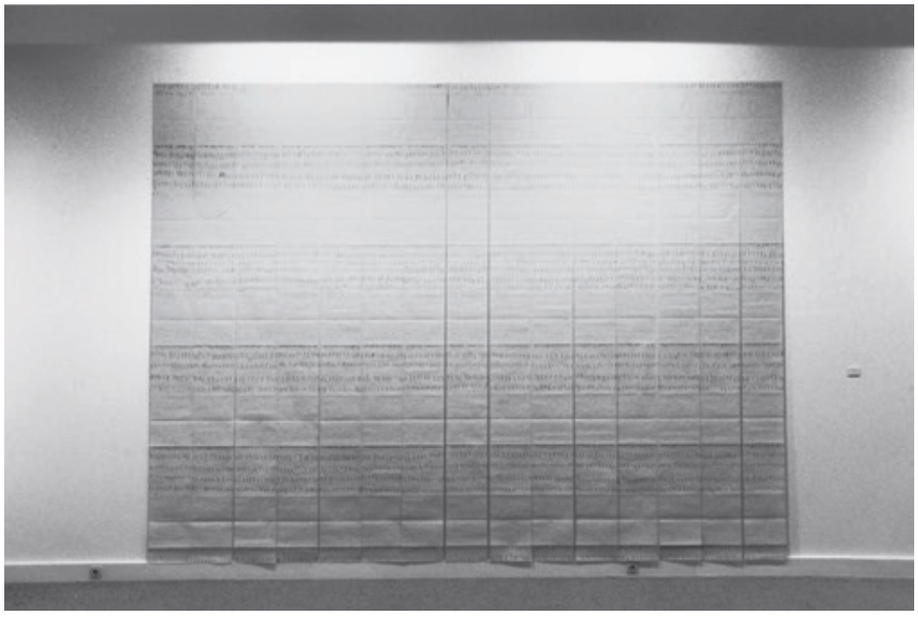
99 **Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris (France), September 20 – October 31, 1988, 21 × 10 cm.**
100 **Catalogue of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris (France), September 20 – October 31, 1988, cover and p. 57, 27.8 × 20.5 cm.**
[translation **see p. 152**]

This remarkably conceived catalogue by Parmentier and Alfred Pacquement,[1] the curator of the exhibition, is the only monograph covering the 1966-1988 cycle of works and documents. It contains Parmentier's densest text: "Say, repeat and stutter, contradict myself, deviate in appearance, digress: in short, keep rhizoming. Self-avowal. (Notes, March-July, 1988)."

This publication features contributions by Malek Alloula, Bernard Blistène, Michel Nuridsany, Alfred Pacquement, Jean-Marc Poinsot, and Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet, plus transcriptions and facsimiles of the main tracts and sheets. In addition to reproductions of a certain number of works, it has photographs by Georges Alazraki (portrait of Parmentier) Bernard Boyer, Christine Fleurent, André Morain, and Marc Tulane ; layout: Françoise Parraud and Annemarie Decru.

1 Alfred Pacquement was curator of contemporary art at the Centre Georges Pompidou from 1974 to 1987, and Inspecteur Général de Création Plastique at the Délégation aux Arts Plastiques in 1988.

101



101 **Exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris (France), September 20 – October 31, 1988, black-and-white photographic prints, 11.5 × 18 cm each.**
Top left: *17 juillet 1988* (July 17, 1988),
right: *18 août 1988* (August 18, 1988),
bottom: *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988)

102

103

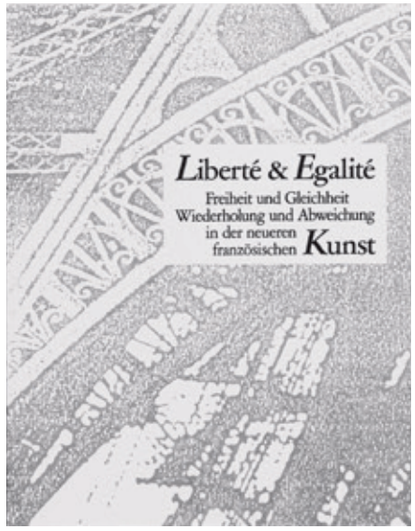
102 **Michel Parmentier in Max Wechsler's studio, black-and-white photographic prints, 18 × 11.5 cm and 11.5 × 18 cm.** Before unfolding, Parmentier using an aerosol spray to fix the graphite on paper, photographed in the Parisian studio of the painter Max Wechsler, which he occupied from April to September 1988.

103 ***25 mai 1988* (May 25, 1988), black-and-white photograph, 24 × 18 cm.**

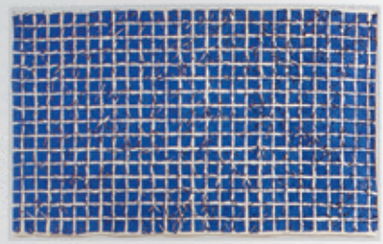
104 **Exhibition catalogue (cover and appendix), "Liberté & Egalité, Freiheit und Gleichheit. Wiederholung und Abweichung in der neueren französischen Kunst," Erich Franz and Dieter Schwarz (eds.). Exhibition at Museum Folkwang, Essen (Germany), June 4 – August 27, 1989, Winterthur, Kunstmuseum, September 24 – November 12, 1989, Essen (Germany) and Winterthur (Switzerland), Museum Folkwang and Kunstmuseum. Cover, pp. 40-41, and unpaginated double page, 27 × 21.1 cm.**
On page 40, top: *Sans titre* (Untitled), a work by Simon Hantaï from the "Tabula, 1974" series, acrylic on canvas, 245 × 395 cm, private collection, inv. CF 3.4.40; bottom: *18 février 1968* (February 18, 1968).

On page 41 of the catalogue: *15 février 1984* (February 15, 1984), photograph by Christine Fleurent **(see fig. 90, p. 128)**. Contrary to what is indicated in the catalogue, the work by Parmentier is not *25 janvier 1984* (January 25, 1984). The work by Hantaï is not held by the Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne and the dimensions of the canvas are erroneous.

In the appendix of the catalogue, page left: on the wall: *18 février 1968* (February 18, 1968), and page right, on the wall: *Sans titre* (Untitled), a work by Simon Hantaï from the "Tabula, 1974" series, acrylic on canvas, 245 × 395 cm, private collection, inv. CF 3.4.40.



104



SIMON HANTAÏ
Ohne Titel, aus der Serie der *Tabulae*, 1974. Acryl auf Leinwand, 240 x 400 cm. *Musée d'art moderne*, Saint-Etienne.

mit sich, daß der geometrische Effekt nur dominiert, indem die Kanten der monochromen Quadrate unregelmäßig und mit Einbrüchen des weißen Grundes versehen sind. Was in den früheren Faltungen noch als eine sublimierte Form der Gestik und der Komposition überlebt haben konnte, ist jetzt zum Schweigen gebracht, real auch darin, daß Hantaï sich oft für mehrere Jahre von der Malerei zurückzog, um sich der Lektüre und der Reflexion zu widmen. In der Faltung wird der eingeschlagene Teil der Malfläche negiert und der exponierte Rest indifferent der Färbung übergeben. Dies ist nicht bloß eine Methode, denn Hantaï findet in den sich ins Unendliche verlierenden unpersönlichen Intervallen bemalter und weißer Flächen, diesem grundlegenden Differenzsystem, eine Metapher für die Essenz der Malerei.

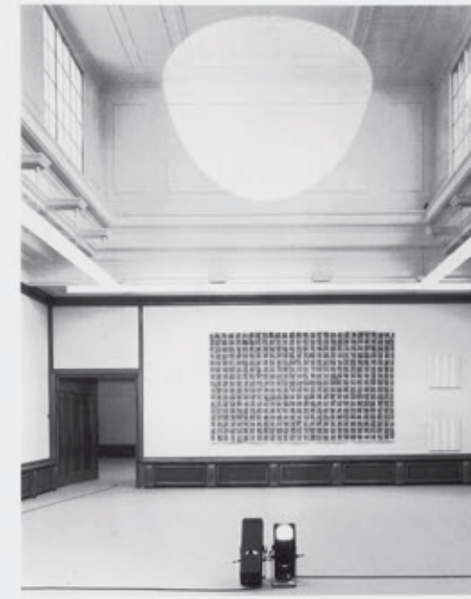
Der direkte Reflex auf Hantaïs Methode findet sich bei Michel Parmentier. Auf eine Serie groß-

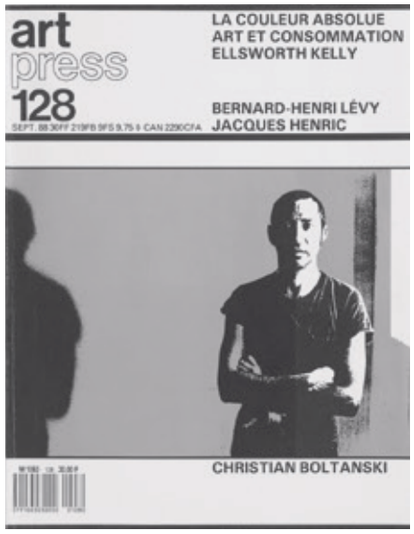
MICHEL PARMENTIER
19. février 1968, 1968. Lack auf Leinwand, 279 / 215 cm. Slg. Liliane und Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris.

formatiger, unter dem Eindruck der amerikanischen Malerei entstandener Bilder folgen Ende 1965 erste Werke mit horizontalen Streifen, deren nicht bemalte Zwischenräume mit Abdeckband gegen die frei verlaufende Farbe abgegrenzt sind. 1966 begann Parmentier mit der Anwendung der Faltmethode, indem er eine beinahe quadratische grundierte Leinwand in einer Richtung regelmäßig zusammenlegte und die entstandene Oberfläche mittels Spraydose oder Spritzpistole mit Farbe bedeckte. Nach dem Auffalten der Leinwand zeigte sich ein horizontales Streifenmuster, dessen Streifen stets eine Breite von 38 cm hatten. Die Wahl der Farbe verlangte in Analogie zur Faltung ebenfalls nach einer Methode, und Parmentier legte deshalb von Jahr zu Jahr eine neue Farbe fest, die jeweils typisch sein und nicht spezifischen Charakter haben sollte. Im ersten Jahr wählte er ein Blau, 1967 ein Grau und 1968 ein Rot, Farben, die jeden Verdacht auf eine symbolische Intention zurückweisen. In der Ausstellung *Triptyque* zeigte Parmentier diese Arbeiten, die für ihn in einem strikt malerischen Kontext funktionieren, erstmals öffentlich. Aus der Ablehnung des Informel und des Nouveau Réalisme zugleich (wovon er jedoch die Plakatabrisse ausnahm) entwickelte er eine Malerei, die mit malerischen Mitteln versuchen sollte, »den Betrug der Malerei zu korrigieren«[17]. Ein Betrug, der in der Signatur eines Bildes liegt, das die Subjektivität notwendig hinter sich lassen muß, wenn es überhaupt dem Anspruch von Absolutheit entsprechen will. Parmentier bewegt sich hier in der dialektischen Negation der Autorschaft im Akt des Autorisierens selber, wie sie in der französischen Literatur bei Blanchot oder Beckett, in der Malerei bei dem von Parmentier zitierten Bram van Velde zu finden ist. Die Auslöschung des Autors geschieht hier symbolisch und nicht so sehr in dem semiotischen oder politischen Sinn, den ihm die Plakatabrisse Hains' und Villeglés gegeben hatten. Ende 1968 gab Parmentier die Malerei auf, schränkte seine Ankündigung aber dadurch ein, daß er sich die Möglichkeit des Ausscherens vorbehielt: »Kurz, ich habe definitiv zu malen aufgehört. Was sehr genau bedeutet, daß ich rückfällig werden kann, wann ich will, und ohne darüber Rechenschaft abzulegen.«[18] 1983 malte Parmentier eine Serie von Bildern, wofür er die Farbe Schwarz wählte.

MICHEL PARMENTIER
23 janvier 1984, 1984. Lack auf Leinwand, 282 / 250 cm. Galerie Durand-Dessert, Paris.

MICHEL VERJUX
Superposition de deux angles «mur-plafond» en vis-à-vis, 1989
2 Verfolgerscheinwerfer 1000 W CID mit gleicher Öffnung





105

105 **Interview with Michel Nuridsany, "Michel Parmentier: une voix de fin silence" (Michel Parmentier: A voice of fine silence), *art press*, no. 128, September 1988, cover and pp. 31-34, 28.4 × 22.2 cm.**
[translation **see p. 155**]

Article published under the heading "crayonnage" (penciling).
Contrary to what is stated on page 31, the work reproduced is *8 juin 1988* (June 8, 1988).

art press
crayonnage

entretien avec MICHEL NURIDSANY

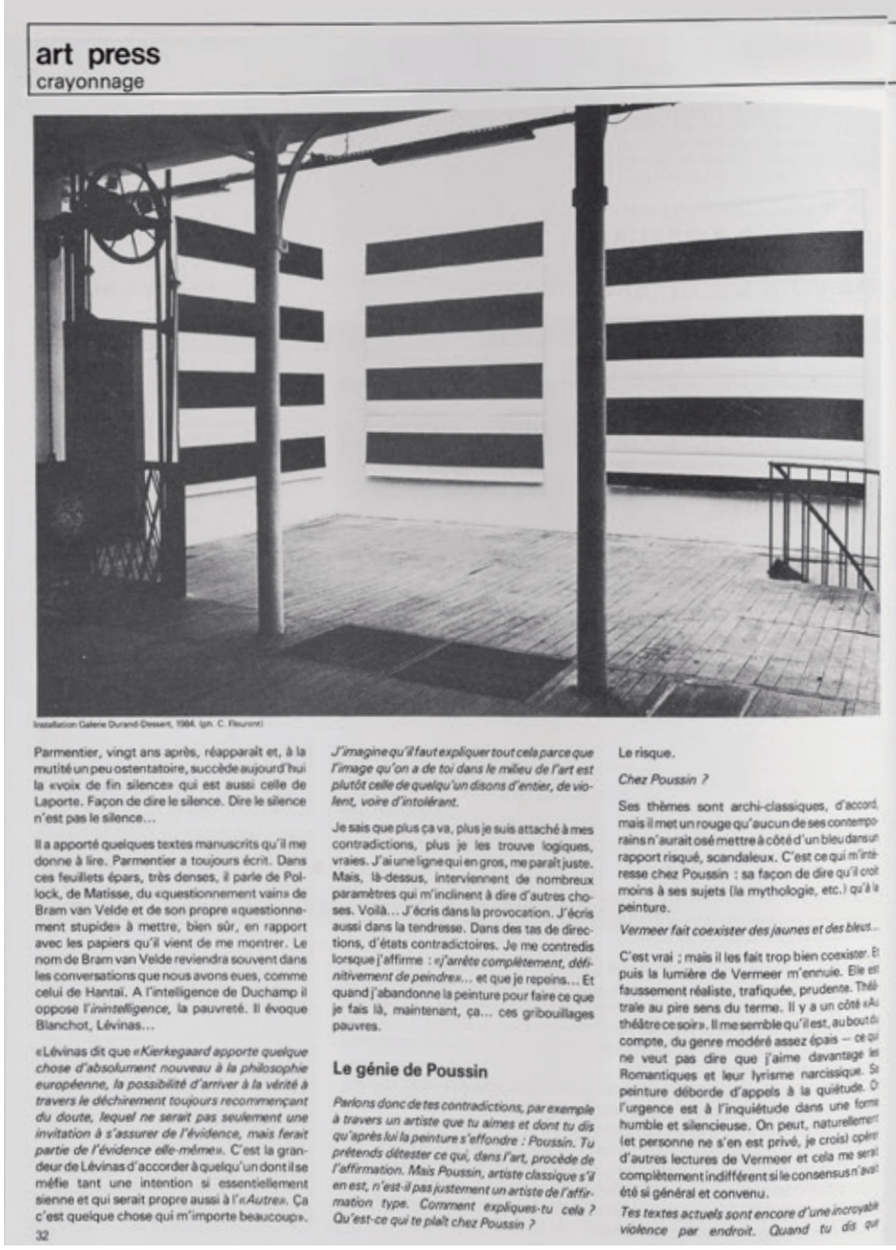
MICHEL PARMENTIER : une voix de fin silence

«8 juin 1988». 300 x 385 cm. (ph. M. Tulenel

En 1967, après une décennie très néo-dadaïste (pop art, nouveau-réalisme), quelques jeunes artistes affirmèrent que la peinture «commençait avec eux». Ils se manifestaient ensemble. Ils s'appelaient Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni. Leur position, comme leur manière de l'affirmer au travers d'une pratique réduite à l'essentiel, fit scandale.
Les œuvres de Buren, de Mosset, de Toroni, ont évolué ou ont perduré comme on sait. Parmentier, lui, a cessé de peindre pendant quinze ans, puis a recommencé il y a quelques années. A lire l'interview qui suit, on se rendra compte que si le principe formel n'a pas changé, le discours, lui, renonçant au terrorisme d'antan, ne prétend plus qu'à un balbutiement. Mais ce balbutiement ne serait-il pas l'effet à long terme du terrorisme ayant atteint son objectif ? N'aurait-il pas retardé l'avènement de la peinture plutôt que favorisé son «commencement» ?

■ Il est arrivé chez moi avec deux bandes de papier de trente centimètres de large environ, roulées. Assez vite, il les a déroulées. Le papier révèle les pliures qui ont été faites à intervales réguliers, ménageant une surface pour ce que Michel Parmentier appelle le «non-dire», et une autre où sont visibles des «gribouillages» au crayon gras : le «dire», donc, manifestation la plus pauvre qui soit, mais aussi la plus ouverte à ce qui, dans la création, est cet «incessant» à l'œuvre dont parle Blanchot et que Parmentier manifeste là de façon bouleversante.
Voilà donc le dernier travail de cet artiste rare, saisi entre le mythe et l'oubli, qu'on découvre ou qu'on redécouvre dans son exigence toujours aussi vraie, aussi tendue. Très différente de celle d'hier.

31



art press
crayonnage

Installation Galerie Durand-Dessert, 1984. (ph. C. Fleurent)

Parmentier, vingt ans après, réapparaît et, à la mutité un peu ostentatoire, succède aujourd'hui la «voix de fin silence» qui est aussi celle de Laporte. Façon de dire le silence. Dire le silence n'est pas le silence...

Il a apporté quelques textes manuscrits qu'il me donne à lire. Parmentier a toujours écrit. Dans ces feuillets épars, très denses, il parle de Pollock, de Matisse, du «questionnement vain» de Bram van Velde et de son propre «questionnement stupide» à mettre, bien sûr, en rapport avec les papiers qu'il vient de me montrer. Le nom de Bram van Velde reviendra souvent dans les conversations que nous avons eues, comme celui de Hantaï. A l'intelligence de Duchamp il oppose l'*ininteligence*, la pauvreté. Il évoque Blanchot, Lévinas...

«Lévinas dit que *«Kierkegaard apporte quelque chose d'absolument nouveau à la philosophie européenne, la possibilité d'arriver à la vérité à travers le déchirement toujours recommençant du doute, lequel ne serait pas seulement une invitation à s'assurer de l'évidence, mais ferait partie de l'évidence elle-même»*. C'est la grandeur de Lévinas d'accorder à quelqu'un dont il se méfie tant une intention si essentiellement sienne et qui serait propre aussi à l'*«Autre»*. Ça c'est quelque chose qui m'importe beaucoup».

J'imagine qu'il faut expliquer tout cela parce que l'image qu'on a de toi dans le milieu de l'art est plutôt celle de quelqu'un disons d'entier, de violent, voire d'intolérant.

Je sais que plus ça va, plus je suis attaché à mes contradictions, plus je les trouve logiques, vraies. J'ai une ligne qui en gros, me paraît juste. Mais, là-dessus, interviennent de nombreux paramètres qui m'inclinent à dire d'autres choses. Voilà... J'écris dans la provocation. J'écris aussi dans la tendresse. Dans des tas de directions, d'états contradictoires. Je me contredis lorsque j'affirme : *«j'arrête complètement, définitivement de peindre»*... et que je repeins... Et quand j'abandonne la peinture pour faire ce que je fais là, maintenant, ça... ces gribouillages pauvres.

Le génie de Poussin

Parlons donc de tes contradictions, par exemple à travers un artiste que tu aimes et dont tu dis qu'après lui la peinture s'effondre : Poussin. Tu prétends détester ce qui, dans l'art, procède de l'affirmation. Mais Poussin, artiste classique s'il en est, n'est-il pas justement un artiste de l'affirmation type. Comment expliques-tu cela ? Qu'est-ce qui te plaît chez Poussin ?

Le risque.

Chez Poussin ?

Ses thèmes sont archi-classiques, d'accord, mais il met un rouge qu'aucun de ses contemporains n'aurait osé mettre à côté d'un bleu dans un rapport risqué, scandaleux. C'est ce qui m'intéresse chez Poussin : sa façon de dire qu'il croit moins à ses sujets (la mythologie, etc.) qu'à la peinture.

Vermeer fait coexister des jaunes et des bleus...

C'est vrai ; mais il les fait trop bien coexister. Et puis la lumière de Vermeer m'ennuie. Elle est faussement réaliste, trafiquée, prudente. Théâtrale au pire sens du terme. Il y a un côté «Au théâtre ce soir». Il me semble qu'il est, au bout du compte, du genre modéré assez épais — ce qui ne veut pas dire que j'aime davantage les Romantiques et leur lyrisme narcissique. Sa peinture déborde d'appels à la quiétude. Or l'urgence est à l'inquiétude dans une forme humble et silencieuse. On peut, naturellement (et personne ne s'en est privé, je crois) opérer d'autres lectures de Vermeer et cela me serait complètement indifférent si le consensus n'avait été si général et convenu.

Tes textes actuels sont encore d'une incroyable violence par endroit. Quand tu dis que

32

«Cézanne, Picasso, Mondrian achèvent une révolution stérilisantes», *ce n'est pas tendre ! Cela dit, on peut aussi considérer ça comme le contraire du terrorisme puisque, en t'élevant ainsi contre des valeurs établies, tu cherches à faire en sorte que la stérilité que tu crains n'advienne pas.*

C'est ça. Les terroristes, ce sont eux. Même si cette «révolution formelle» qu'ils ont voulue a amené Matisse, Pollock, Bram van Velde. Et Yves Klein qui est un grand terroriste. On en a fini, j'espère, avec le terrorisme en art. De toute façon on ne peut pas aller plus loin, formellement, que Pollock, que Matisse avec ses papiers découpés, ou même que, parfois, bizarrement, Bram van Velde. Alors j'essaie de creuser un peu, de faire quelque chose d'un peu invisible, d'un peu souterrain. Plus du tout d'affirmer des choses. Je sais : j'ai été pris pour un terroriste avec Buren : c'était une sorte de passage obligé pour nous faire entendre parce qu'il y avait en face le terrorisme de l'Ecole de Paris. Il fallait cogner pour se faire entendre. Peut-être aussi était-ce dans notre caractère... Moi, je règlais un problème avec la peinture que je n'aimais plus. Enfin que j'aimais à la fois trop et plus du tout. J'aimais désespérément Piero della Francesca, Uccello et Poussin. Et après ça ne m'intéressait pas. Cela dit, j'ai vu des Klee, des Kandinsky fantastiques. Mais si j'ai rayé la peinture, c'est par le moyen de la peinture.

Que faisais-tu avant de montrer ce qu'on connaît de toi ?

Je draguais les filles...

J'espère que ça marchait. Dans le fond tu veux me dire par cette dérobade que tout cela n'a pas grand intérêt. Si quelque chose a de l'importance ce sont ces papiers que tu viens de me montrer, ces gribouillages. Il y a là quelque chose de proche de ce que tu nommes le «balbutiement atterré» de Bram van Velde et tu l'opposes donc à la «révolution stérilisante» de Cézanne, Picasso, Mondrian. Parlerais-tu comme Dubuffet, «d'asphyxiante culture» ?

Dubuffet avait ses raisons sûrement. Ce ne sont pas les miennes. En revanche, Duchamp fait partie de notre culture. Je ne rejette pas Duchamp. Le procès qu'on lui fait est aussi injuste que l'encensement dont il était l'objet il y a quinze ans. Duchamp, artiste très intelligent, posait, sans doute, les bases d'un problème intéressant mais qui n'existe plus maintenant. Peut-être que ça n'a servi à rien. Mais peut-être aussi qu'à cause de cela, *a contrario*, en 1988, quelques personnes vont être obligées de penser la peinture hors de la provocation, hors du geste, hors de l'esthétique, hors du formalisme — hors du silence souverain du monochrome.

Je sens une nuance péjorative dans ta façon de parler de ce silence-là...

Le silence, dès qu'il est souverain est impérialiste. Ce qui m'intéresse c'est le presque silence quand on peut encore et malgré tout dire le

crayonnage

MICHEL PARMENTIER

silence, dire l'envie de silence. Blanchot parle de cela à propos de Bram van Velde. Ce n'est pas une nuance du tout.

Mais cela, n'est-ce pas ce vers quoi tendent tous les vrais grands artistes, de la Renaissance à nos jours ?

Non. Je ne vois ça presque nulle part. Je ne vois que des gens qui crient pour se faire entendre. A la Renaissance, il fallait expliquer les découvertes. L'humanisme se développait. Il fallait se faire comprendre. *Parler*. Après, ça a été de plus en plus du «pia pia pia» avec tous les artistes des 18e, 19e siècles. Les Fragonard...

Et Caravage, Goya ? Et Rembrandt ?

Bien bavards.

Tu n'en parles jamais. Tu vas de la Renaissance (réduite à Piero, Uccello) et Poussin, directement à maintenant en passant par-dessus Cézanne, pour arriver à Matisse, Bram van Velde, Hantaï.

Rembrandt, c'est talentueux mais nul dans la tête. Cela dit, j'aimerais bien peindre un chapeau comme lui... encore que non, ce n'est pas vrai : je n'aimerais pas... Je trouve ça bien. Magnifique même. Mais qu'est-ce que j'en ai à faire ?... De quoi nous parle-t-il ?... Poussin peint n'importe comment. Sans talent. Il n'avait pas de talent, il n'avait que du génie.
Sa peinture n'est pas séduisante. Après Poussin, il y a le vide. Il y a cette horreur de Delacroix avec ses coups de pinceaux qui partent dans tous les sens, pire encore que de Kooning. Et Cézanne enfin (hélas !) qui commence à remettre en question les acquis formels, qui restructure le champ visuel, puis les cubistes, bref tout l'art moderne : Kandinsky, Malévitch, Mondrian. Des artistes fantastiques mais qui ont fait cette révolution dont on a parlé, stérilisante parce qu'en route ils en ont perdu l'âme.

Kandinsky a pourtant parlé du «spirituel dans l'art»...

crayonnage

Chagall aussi, ce sont des *mots*.

Au fond, toi, qu'attends-tu de la peinture ?

Rien. Mais ce que je sais faire c'est à peu près de la peinture. Et encore... J'abandonne maintenant la couleur et la peinture elle-même comme matériau pour que ce soit un peu plus transparent, un peu plus silencieux. Je n'en attends rien. Je voudrais simplement, qu'à partir de là, quelques autres aient envie de faire passer ce discours non violent, cette espèce d'interrogation vaine contre la somptuosité impérialiste. Il y a des tas de peintres très talentueux actuellement... mais ils ne veulent pas briser leur talent. Ils développent une stratégie de «réussite» qu'on peut dire «impérieuse», ou même «terroriste» (je ne parle naturellement pas de la réussite sociale). Les gens qui ne doutent pas systématiquement, en 1988, me font gerber. Dès qu'on fonctionne avec le talent, on occulte toute recherche possible. On devient aveugle. Sourd. Dans la peinture il faudrait presque disparaître, oublier le talent qu'on pouvait avoir. Sa force de conviction. Se gommer. Je crois m'être bien gommé mais je me rends compte que je dois maintenant me gommer encore plus. Et ça n'est pas fini.

Un vrai balbutiement

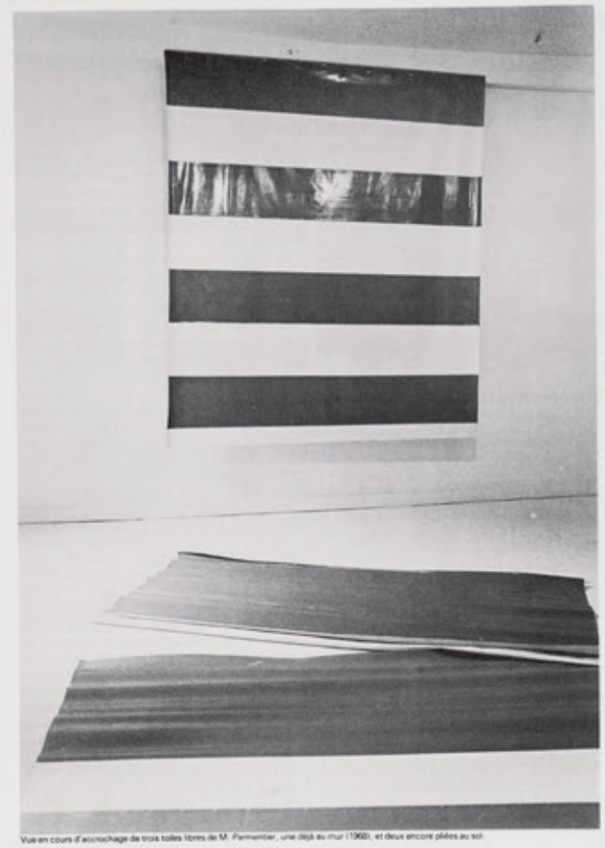
Ce silence qui a été le tien pendant vingt ans était-il un silence impérieux ?

Peut-être. Parce que finalement les critiques arrivaient à dire que *j'avais* une position absolument «inattaquable». Une position inattaquable c'est une position très impérieuse. Tu deviens l'*exemple*. Tu t'arrêtes de peindre : c'est le bras d'honneur que tu fais à la peinture. Donc ce n'est pas la peine : tu t'es fait récupérer. Y compris à travers ton silence... Peut-être faut-il recommencer pour donner tort à ceux qui te figent dans cette attitude et font de toi une figure symbolique. En fait, ce qui m'a paru stupide, un jour, c'est que le silence était extrêmement prétentieux. Genre : *«J'ai tout dit, je vous emmerde»*. Ce n'est pas possible. En fait, l'intéressant c'est de *ne pas arrêter de dire qu'on ne peut pas dire*... C'était déjà dans mon travail précédent : la pliure était le négatif de moi peignant et puis, quand j'ouvrais, quand je dépliais, il y avait le non-dit qui apparaissait... Mais ça me donnait un résultat plastique, esthétique, un peu impressionnant. Trop fort, trop violent. Aujourd'hui je suis dans le balbutiement. Un balbutiement de bébé qui, paradoxalement, arrive tard, difficilement. Mais ce n'est pas propre à la peinture...

Non : c'est aussi dans Louis-René des Forêts.

La chambre des enfants, oui. Il y a là un dialogue entre deux enfants. Le premier dit au second (je cite de mémoire) : *«mais à la fin n'êtes-vous pas las de parler pour ne rien dire»*. Et l'autre répond : *«toujours trop pour dire quelque chose, jamais assez pour me taire»*. C'est là que ça se passe. La grande sagesse que Des Forêts

crayonnage



Vue en cours d'accrochage de trois toiles libres de M. Parmentier, une déjà au mur (1968), et deux encore pliées au sol.

prête à ses enfants, ce grand vide fait qu'il faut qu'on parle et qu'il faut qu'on se taise.

C'est aussi «l'incessant» dont parle Blanchot. Je me souviens : c'était il y a quelques mois à Bordeaux. Pendant toute une journée Buren avait répondu à des questions posées par des critiques proches de lui et par le public. Nous rentrions à l'hôtel et je lui avait dit : «c'est incroyable par moment ce que tu as dit c'était du pur Blanchot». Il m'a immédiatement répondu que c'était quelqu'un qui avait beaucoup compté pour lui. Et pour toi ?

On en avait parlé. Mais maintenant Daniel soulève une autre question qu'il résoud apparemment d'une autre façon : on casse le lieu culturel... comme si c'était important, le lieu culturel ! Il y avait aussi Bataille, Leiris... Ils représentaient un contrepoint à la littérature triomphante. Blanchot parlait de la disparition et du silence. Du parler haletant.

Et du «neutre». Est-ce que c'est ce que vous aviez en commun, au départ, avec Buren, essentiellement ?

Je ne crois pas. On avait peut-être ça en commun mais ce n'était pas le seul point commun. On se battait aussi contre une peinture qui nous paraissait assommante. C'est vrai qu'on a essayé d'être le plus neutre possible ; mais Blanchot, ce n'était pas notre Bible. Il ne nous a pas dicté notre attitude — même par livre interposé.

Quels sont, avec Buren, vos désaccords ?

Je n'ai pas du tout envie d'attaquer Daniel. Nous sommes en désaccord mais c'est (avec Hantaï, dont je me sens plus proche encore) l'un des deux ou trois peintres respectables en France ; mais s'attaquer au socio-économique comme il fait ou comme il l'a fait ce n'est pas du tout mon propos. Le problème pour moi n'est pas de casser le musée, c'est de faire dire autre chose à la peinture. Nous sommes donc en désaccord. Il le sait. On en parle calmement. Maintenant on se voit, on sait qu'on est en désaccord mais aussi en accord sur tellement de choses que ça va. Mais il y a une ligne jaune qu'il ne faut pas dépasser.

Tu viens de citer le nom de Hantaï. Il a beaucoup compté pour toi. Il compte encore beaucoup. De quelle façon ? A travers le pliage ?

A travers le pliage, oui. Au début. Pour moi c'était l'équivalent du dripping de Pollock. Aussi important. Je ne peux pas parler davantage de lui parce qu'il ne souhaite pas apparaître comme cela en pleine lumière. Disons que maintenant j'aime son silence. Hantaï est très important. Très important.

L'écriture est-elle importante pour toi ?

Il m'arrive de croire plus au verbe qu'à la peinture.

Que veux-tu dire par là ?

Rien.

Alors où en es-tu ?

Je fais le deuil de la subversion pour faire un travail de quête, de questionnement. Pas terroriste. Même pas subversif.

Comme dans tes dernières œuvres, avec ce que tu appelles tes gribouillages ?

Oui, il faudrait que je puisse faire ça sans arrêt : ce crayonnage pauvre. Ce n'est pas du dessin. Surtout pas ! Pas de l'écriture non plus. Pas évocateur. Un pauvre truc, pas séduisant du tout. Ça... Un balbutiement. ■

MICHEL PARMENTIER
Né en 1938 à Paris. Vit et travaille à Paris.
Principales expositions :
1965 Premières bandes alternées. Envisage avec Daniel Buren, une série de manifestations critiques.
1965 Biennale de Paris.
Mai 1966 Exposition de groupe Galerie Fournier, Paris
1967 Manifestations communes avec Buren, Mosset et Toroni
- 2 janvier, au Salon de la Jeune peinture.
- 2 juin, au Musée des Arts Décoratifs
- Septembre, troisième et dernière représentation
- le 6 décembre 1967, Parmentier annonce par un texte qu'il se désolidarise de la manifestation Buren-Mosset-Toroni de la rue de Montfaucon, Paris, et annonce la dissolution de l'association.
Fin 1968, Michel Parmentier cesse de peindre et ne reprendra la peinture qu'en 1983.
1972 Présentation de trois toiles (1966, 67, 68), *Douze ans d'art contemporain en France*, Grand Palais, Paris 1972.
1978 Présentation de trois toiles (1966, 67, 68), Galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris
1984 Exposition personnelle Galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris
1988 Cnac, rue Berryer, 20 septembre-31 octobre

p.145 98 [**l'hercules des arts, MICHEL PARMENTIER** October 1988: September 10 - October 11, 1988, LILIANE MICHEL,DURAND-DESSERT 43, rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris

Michel Parmentier

Born in 1938 in Paris where he lives and works. Started exhibiting in 1962. Shares an approach with Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Niele Toroni between 1966 to 1967. In the tract from December 6, 1967 in which he breaks with them, he affirms his work's constancy: equal alternating horizontal bands, 38 cm wide, two-colored canvases (around 2.80 × 2.50 m) that he "definitively" ceased painting in 1968. Withdrew from painting for 15 years. From 1983 to 1985, he picked up painting from where he had left it. After returning, he changed his approach: since 1986, he does "impoverished penciling" on paper, always using a method of folding dear to Simon Hantaï, whom he willingly acknowledges, as well as Bram van Velde, both their names and their works. His works are always titled by the date, the day when they were finished. A reader of M. Blanchot, R-L Des Forêts, S. Beckett, among others, he publishes his own notes, which can be seen in the catalogue for the exhibition devoted to his work at the National Foundation of Graphic and Visual Arts (the space at the National Center for Visual Arts (C.N.A.P.), 11, rue Berryer, 75008 Paris), from 9/20/88 to 10/31/88 every day (closed Tuesdays) from 11h to 18h.

Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert

From 1976 to 1982, situated at 42, rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris, and since 1982 located at 3, rue des Haudriettes, 75003 Paris, since February 1988, Galerie L&M Durand-Dessert offers exhibitions in both spaces from Monday-Saturday, 14h to 19h.

The list of gallery artists* demonstrates a concern for plurality that Michel Durand-Dessert (with personal leanings towards Arte Povera) sums up in a phrase: "the best artists within each artistic movement," artists that L. & M. Durand-Dessert allow to breathe, only exhibiting them "when the time comes." The artist is not constrained: buyers — private collectors, Parisians, Belgians, etc. or institutions, the FRACS — are not mistaken.

Announced between now and the end of the year: "Tombs (Stanze)" by Jan Vercruysse, at 3, Rue des Haudriettes (from 10/16 to 11/19) and an exhibition of original works** created for a limited edition of *The Holy War*, the book that Liliane Durand-Dessert is devoting to a reading of [Lautréamont's] *The Songs of Maldoror* (from 10/14 to 12/6, 43, rue de Montmorency).

Books — which is another of M. D-D'S concerns, who publishes artist's works in the "Multiplicita" series — are available at 3, rue des Haudriettes in the bookstore, which offers the largest overview of catalogues and monographs related to contemporary art since 1960. It's an Ali-Baba's cave, whose treasures are contained in a catalogue easily available on demand.

Thus, the Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert is truly a pivotal site for the diffusion of contemporary art.

* Giovanni Anselmo, Joseph Beuys, Lothar Baumgarten, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Brown, Victor Burgin, André Cadere, Alan Charlton, Gérard Collin-Thiébaut, Ger van Elk, Luciano Fabro, Barry Flanagan, Gérard Garouste, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, John Hilliard, Kounellis, Bertrand Lavier, Mario Merz, François Morellet, Yves Oppenheim, Michel Parmentier, Claudio Parmiggiani, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Gerhard Richter, Ulrich Rückriem, Fred Sandback, Patrick Tosani, David Tremlett, Jan Vercruysse, Carel Visser.

** G. Anselmo, C. Boltanski, G. Collin-Thiébaut, B. Flanagan, G. Garouste, J. Kounellis, M. Merz, G. Penone, G. Richter, J. Schnabel.

MICHEL PARMENTIER AT GALERIE LILIANE & MICHEL DURAND-DESSERT. A good schema is better than a bad commentary:

1. *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988): 7 sequences (3.10 × 1.91 m)
2. *27 juin 1988* (June 27, 1988): 4 sequences (3.10 × 1.10 m)
3. *12 août 1988* (August 12, 1988): 7 sequences(3.10 × 1.91 m)
4. *1er septembre 1988* (September 1, 1988) : 19 sequences (3.10 × 5.21 m)

In spite of this, a few sentences:

The gallery at rue Montmorency, white from floor to ceiling, lit by two high windows, seems ideal for Michel Parmentier's recent works.* Entering the space, the visitor is gripped.

Each of the four works exhibited is composed of a certain number of sequences (vertical screens of low-quality paper), hanging adjacent to one other on a rod fixed at the top of the wall. In each piece, you can see the alternating horizontal bands, blank bands, and bands with crayon marks composed of six horizontal lines of "traits" that are more or less vertical. The horizontal traces of the folds, the "empty" vertical lines separating the sequences, and traces of the stapling are also visible.

Low-quality paper, sequences exposed to currents of air, a work that can be divided up into parts**, pencil marks that can be effaced with an eraser — all this can translate into a sense of fragility. Is it the image of fragility relative to our lives?

Still, it seems difficult here to ignore the circumstances that went into the preparation of the work, difficult not to know their author better, someone who must be pressed, who has kept quiet, who does not do anything. Besides, in his published notes from March/July 1988 (see the CNAP catalogue cited above), Michel Parmentier cited this phrase from R-M Rilke: "We know little, but that we must hold to what is difficult is a certainty that will not forsake us."[1]

J-M Baillieu

* On Sunday, October 16, 1998, around 21h, P-A Boutang will devote 10 minutes of "Océaniques Magazine" (on channel FR3) to Michel Parmentier.

** In addition, the sequences can be bought separately, with a minimum of 3 (65 000 FF), 21 000 FF each.]

1 The phrase is from Rainer Maria Rilke's "Letter Seven" (May 14, 1904) in *Letters to a Young Poet* (1939), trans. M.D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1934), p. 53. Translator's note.

p.146 100 [**Say, repeat and stutter, contradict myself, deviate in appearance, digress: in short, keep rhizoming. Self-avowal.** (Notes, March-July, 1988).

State of Affairs

Twentieth-century pictorial practice recapitulates and completes painting (it's not a certainty but it is something to be worried about — by and large, as a fundamental and foundational activity, doubt is lost in exact relation to the quality of formal revolutions). Cézanne or Picasso or Mondrian have pursued and achieved a **sterilizing revolution**. The more they dazzle us, the more they bore us.

In spite of everything, a miracle has already appeared, **fortuitously** — in spite of the filiations, in spite of the revolution, and to different degrees — with [Henri] Matisse, [Yves] Klein, or [Jackson] Pollock (I'll come back to this), but more clearly with Bram van Velde, who provokes a **stupid questioning** (I say "questioning" for want of a better term; it's perhaps more like a dismayed stammering, like Sisyphus not pushing a rock but an enormous snowball in the sun — when he gets to the top, exhausted, he will only have hauled along... himself and his fatigue). **Vain questioning** (and not **sterile** because non-sovereign[1]), Bram van Velde's questioning is not only without response, **it also expects none**. Bram van Velde neither closes off a mystificatory obfuscation of art nor makes it start over, and he does not fill the void left hollow with the assumed death of God (besides, it's telling that I can only speak here in negative terms).

In essence, Bram van Velde is unsuitable for consummation (his unbelievably subdued side, the horror that he inspires in the [Leo] Castellis and gallery dealers, alone proves this, if we are ridiculous enough to take these things seriously).

Behind Matisse (occasionally), Klein (if you like), Pollock (the drips), and Bram van Velde, only [Simon] Hantaï alone or nearly alone (and especially today) poses these problems correctly (in other words, that he also doesn't pose or **dispose** them, but that he only works — **and this "only" says everything** — to hollow out this end where we find ourselves from the sumptuous hegemony of the formal, all of which is never self-evident, nor without pain or paralysis). March 4, 1988

State of Affairs (II)

Through an apparent withdrawal at the moment — but perhaps this isn't what is essential — Simon Hantaï seeks to escape the snares of a sovereign speech that has favored a certain modern, sovereign, and surreptitiously utilitarian art. Those who have the taste or even the idea of trying at least to pose the questions that Hantaï raises are very rare. I don't know anyone else who shows such acuity. Besides, the machine runs along smoothly (and our thanks to them for this) — of course, you must know the famous silence of a Rolls-Royce car-door. Many people practice not thinking, believing that this suffices to paint. Thus, Sam Francis, this new [Bernard] Buffet, this new [William-Adolphe] Bouguereau. Sam Francis is listed on the stock-market, the Palais Brongniart which houses the French stock-exchange, gets what it deserves, and that's just as it should be — a little of Ben [Vautier], the way one goes on a lazy jog, a little of the graffiti artists, of [Julian] Schnabel, of [Joan] Mitchell, or whomever, the way one stuffs oneself with Big Macs, or that one forgets oneself at the Louis XIV restaurant and our own poor breathless century which doubts nothing, ridiculously pulling in one's stomach in front of pretty young girls (even as this gives you a fat purple face). In this way, by not thinking, one not only becomes stupid but also very ugly and ridiculous.

With all due respect to a young [Alain] Finkielkraut, the Galerie de France or Bercy-Hallyday stem strictly from the same purview, and you have to have a thick skin to hierarchize these two examples of utilitarian culture.[2]

The Sorbonne shouldn't despair — there is Hantaï — I've already said this and there are others — there is Toroni (when he doesn't fool around with the unfortunate [Bertrand] Lavier), Buren (if one day he decides to put down his suitcases). Don't think that I'm forgetting myself; I don't have time to be modest, even less pretending to be. Yes, the track record is thin; you can count us on the fingers of an amputated hand — four "kind of painters" who raise new problems or suspect they exist, who raise new problems and **leave them suspended**, problems that are renewed. An urgent and **untimely** questioning — or worse, **uncertain**. And the artists offer these problems to you. No doubt it's too much for us to impose such a painful responsibility — you will die quietly, gently acculturated, by following the latest news about Heidegger or the little Gregory affair in *France-Soir*,[3] you become passionate about some opinion poll, you read your [Marguerite] Duras weekly, and here you have this handful of sick artists (not even terrorists, eh? Not the Duchamp types and the rest) who make you an offer to use what remains of your life. No, people like you and you). You hadn't asked for anything? A thousand pardons. Above all, pretend as if we weren't here. Besides, we're only passing through.

Questioning nothing, but relentlessly

Levinas, Blanchot, or Beckett tunnel along in an old and obscure vein of questioning. The weapons of painting would be the least appropriate precisely among those that must be used. When they appear used up, it is indeed now that they can really begin to be used.

Today it still remains for us to impoverish ourselves after the flamboyant successes (which are also the most stupefying abdications from, say, an ontological point of view). It remains for us to prepare a place where the questions to come are delicately and poorly hanging, questions which are not posed (or little or no longer posed) by philosophers, which are posed by the human sciences fragmentarily, without getting too much lost in a facile humanism[4], without dwelling too much on the problem of God-yes-or-no-and-to-what-end.

The anagogic sign and the apologetic image have been obsolete for three centuries and everything makes one believe that a comatose figuration is victim of a therapeutic tenacity that one shouldn't count on too much (one thinks of Franco or Tito dying in bed — speaking of which, what's become of Dalí?). The formal revolutions have very usefully given painting its specific field over the last one hundred and fifty years; modern painting has shined, survived, and been completed, before becoming totally sterile (I'm told that its embalmed corpse can be seen on certain days in the Red Square in Moscow, but I believe than my informants confuse this with another great dream which is contemporary with it and which was also assassinated elsewhere, but no matter — modern painting starts in a pitiful way, dies, and pretends to be reborn. [Jean] Degottex is a zombie, so are the minimalists).

Good. This is where we're at. Worn out, stunned, and vaguely conscious that everything isn't finished (indeed, it's a shame — one can easily imagine the beautiful neo-romantic tears this umpteenth end might trigger). It's not even this "tabula rasa" which excites. It's only what follows, **what happens next**, with other goals, perhaps, and making do with what's at hand, which isn't much.

Perhaps what possibly remains to be attempted

What possibly remains to be attempted no doubt must turn around an unintelligible and finally transparent trace — not limpid like a trickle of water at the end of the garden but **transparent**. You slip through; there's nothing to hold onto. As for myself, I can no longer find my way (this obsession with disappearance gets on my nerves — how I drag my feet!). Transparent. And that's not even Alice's looking glass. Transparent, and nothing shows through, nothing appears.

Almost nothing unintelligible, the first cry of a newborn, an impoverished act, **from the poor** (even more or scarcely violent — this violence of those who themselves have renounced power). Especially not shouting; we've had enough of these superb cries — they've filled our shelves. Thanks all the same to Sade, Rimbaud, Kafka, and several others (and too bad for the naive Van Gogh who will have succeeded in reconciling the yachts of the rich and famous with the campgrounds of the petite bourgeois — in painting, shouting is only subversive for the time it takes to burst out laughing).

Thus, an impoverished act, neither happy nor sad, neither talented nor useless; almost invisible but which puts pressure on a little bit of morality to come.

The impoverished, Arte Povera, the "Décollagistes"

This poverty has nothing to do with the artists from Arte Povera, who constitute a new aesthetic, as many others have done. After Duchamp and the New Realists, they displace the **edict of the beautiful**. They make significant what isn't. They "rehabilitate" the ordinary in staging it. In fact, they pervert it and I don't see much interest in this approach. The artist's **appropriative gesture**, beyond the fact that it is threadbare, is today completely opposed to doubt — again, an imperialism.

Since we are speaking of the New Realists, there is a single attitude (apart from Klein) that I at least find somewhat interesting (but only from what one might call a literary point of view): the *affichistes*, the "décollagistes" (as Anne Baldassari somewhat strangely says) — in short, [Raymond] Hains and [Jacques] Villeglé, [François] Dufrêne, and, before he listens too closely to the sirens of Pop Art, [Mimmo] Rotella.

I've never under-estimated their look (even today, during the run up to the elections which encourages various lacerations of posters, I almost succumb to the beauty of this brutal and circumstantial art). The fact remains that it's still Duchamp who lies behind this (the best, certainly), or the [Louis] Aragon of *Paris Peasant* — an enthralled and lucid gaze. Hains and Villeglé are very great artists. It's true that looking at them too closely, they show us (if differently) the influence of André Lanskoy — offering us aestheticism. **But I don't want to confuse everything;** I'm not insulting anyone today. Truly attentive observers, Hains and Villeglé are especially poets first of all. That's no small achievement.

Nietzsche says:

In the name of "truth" and "suffering man," Nietzsche rejects the elegance that comes from France, an influence to which his contemporaries in Germany have been subjected. Against this good taste, Wagner and Schopenhauer alone find favor with him. Nietzsche was right but (like everyone who is right) he was wrong.

Poor Nazi taste and its exercise have brutally told us that avoiding elegance doesn't suffice — that **things happen elsewhere**, beyond good taste and beyond its refusal.

In painting (since we have to be resolved to speak about it from time to time) — beyond academicism, formal revolution, avant-gardism, or even derision.

If this remains true, avoiding the "virtuosity of mastering to dance or of the upholsterer" is not (or no longer) a goal. (The virtuous abomination that Nietzsche devotes to the 3 Ms — *Moment, Meinungen* (opinions), *Mode* — is, on the surface of course, also admitted among the common spaces of living-rooms and boudoirs.) Of course, his argument has not been understood but it has been recuperated.

In spite of this, when Nietzsche makes Schopenhauer's formula his own, according to which "one always does well to remain behind one's time when one sees it go backwards," he is being quite contemporary. Observing the new good taste, the new "culture," one sees that violence has become academicism, derision a lazy jerking off, topo-sociological reflection-denunciation a resignation like any other... **elegant** and even **beautiful**, which changes nothing. (As we will see later, I make one exception.)

The fashion which Nietzsche speaks of and that takes hold here and there precisely allows us to follow it closely — to make it **speak again**.

Of course, we are waiting in turn to be recuperated... and **fashionable**. And everything tends to show that today this happens more quickly than a century ago.

Levinas, Blanchot

Levinas notes that Kierkegaard (whose "overcoming of ethics" appears to him disturbing, and he's not wrong) gives meaning to life through the unicity of the subject, in spite of death, and that through this, "Kierkegaard brings something absolutely new to European philosophy: **the possibility of attaining truth through the ever-recurrent inner rending of doubt, which is not only an invitation to verify evidence, but part of evidence itself."**[5]

This is from *Proper Names*. All of Levinas is there — to grant to someone who he distrusts essentially as much attention to **the Other** as himself. "Consensually," we ought to find this a nice lesson. This is a little like what I wanted to say in speaking of this humility that will allow us to (perhaps) draw a little moral lesson.

A few lines further on, Levinas tells us of "the opposition... between truth triumphant and truth persecuted... Persecution and, by the same token, humility are modalities of the true."[6]

Blanchot also says: "to fail without fail: this is a sign of passivity," "there is no silence if not written; torn reserve" — phrases included in a collection of texts for Bram van Velde, in which Blanchot participated.[7]

In other words

— Scribbling [*griffonnage*] (which could be a "conceptualization" of the flatness created by an aerosol can or spray-gun) substitutes, if only in appearance, for the monochromatic field;

— gesture — unreadable as such since it covered over uniformly, constitutive of and constituted by the dialectic of said/unsaid — gives way to its 'conceptualization" (hatchings [*griffures*]) which is paradoxically a readable gesture, itself, for itself; another manner of articulating this return to the said/unsaid (or, more exactly, **the said of the unsaid/silence, muteness**);

— one might also say that gesture disappears when it appears;

— it disappears under the form of the absolutely unreadable — the monochrome which was **imperial,** imperialist, even "terrorist" as certain people said — violent and irreproachably non-discursive.

It's empire stems from the violence of the lacquer that was used so impudently, in opposition to such a radical color, etc. So, this unreadable (indecipherable) gesture has thus disappeared, in order that something different comes into appearance, this scribbling [*gribouillage*] which is apparently more readable (but I hope that's not so certain);

— a "readable" scribbling (but in order to be better forgotten) is perhaps the moment that is needed so that, technically, the gesture of the monochrome is abandoned (even denied), and so that an approach of the un-finished comes into effect;

— that's it for the moment.

These notes

These notes, which I feel obliged to set in place, make me want to vomit. It's not only because they contradict the silence in which I would like so often to camp out.

I don't like them. Not at all. I'm having one of those "nothing-is-important" days. It will pass. It better. Accepting the ridicule of speaking. A sought after discomfort, with so much obstinacy, makes me laugh, me first of all... or vomit. I'm hesitating.

Bram van Velde

I believe that Bram van Velde is great because he often fails. I no longer remember (happily) which critic said that his brother, Geer, was better than him. Absolutely ridiculous to be so useless and to make his profession out of this uselessness. Don't differentiate between [Louis] Verneuil and [Jean] Eustache, Keith Jarrett and Coltrane, [Marguerite] Duras and [Louis René] des Forêts — between those who "assure" and those who seek, those who simply die older than they are born and those who die to be born.

Bram van Velde, again

Without Cézanne, without the Fauves or the Cubists, there would perhaps be no Bram van Velde — there's no doubt. **And yet, Cézanne, etc. are not nothing**. More exactly, they constructed useless, social splendors (there's no need to disagree by saying they were antisocial — their great aim was to change the world; they produced great and useless **social** gestures). These simpletons with their formal revolutions who feasted on their audacity have been rejected by Bram van Velde for their profound vulgarity. I know that I'm simplifying a little, that I'm exaggerating here, that my analysis is crude. Elsewhere, I swear that I'll try to be subtler... but I'll be also considerably less clear.

So, going back to Bram van Velde, when he escapes the flamboyant space that Cézanne created — a space void of the slightest ethical concern — as well as nearly all of modern art, he does a lot more than question these — **he annuls them**. He pushes them gently, noiselessly, **into the City**, in their intelligent, efficient and... superficial approach.

Perhaps what possibly remains to be attempted (II) despite the great chess-player who is so intelligent

So, perhaps what possibly remains to be attempted must undoubtedly turn around an **unintelligent** work — despite Duchamp, against Duchamp. He's not as stupid as the "Bad" painters — **but worse than that**. So, let's speak about Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp fulfilled his role, and at just the right moment, a role that wasn't so repugnant as all the new fashionable criticism wants to tell us and also not so important as has been endlessly repeated to us. He created the groundwork... and then accordingly got in the way. Good, it's finished. He has become part of our culture, like Peiro [della Francesca], like Poussin, like Kandinsky, and there you have it. So, perhaps what possibly remains to be attempted is around this unintelligence (not even this unintelligibility — just so that we understand one another well: **unintelligence**).

It's a difficult gamble for us because we really are so intelligent (smile).

Or again, everything can be formulated the other way round: to work around a **fumbling intelligence**.

I would like my work to be the least talented possible... nor intelligent; the least provocative, and the least convincing.

If there are superfluous parts to my texts, paradoxes, disrespectful contradictions, and evasive responses, these are fairly secondary (I'm telling you this, but you are not obliged to believe me). I perhaps let off steam in order to work more severely, and that what I am trying to explain to you is something new, and that an unexpected, undesired stupidity also comes across me from time to time, like everyone else.

It's not really new

To see painting, think painting, erase painting, redo painting,erase painting again, etc. We'll never be finished with it (except when we're dead, of course). Is this new? No, not really. And yet, in the last phase, perhaps a little new — erasing oneself.
What one puts back in place and **which is never in place**.

In passing

In passing, it seems appropriate to laugh at breathless references to history. [Louis] Cane's path of going backwards — but could he move further backwards from where he was? — can be understood insofar as, flowing along in his avant-gardism, he obviously understood nothing about history. (I mention Cane because he is caricaturally stupid[8] and because, with him as an example, perhaps you'll immediately see more clearly what I'm getting at). Cane today wants us to believe that he revives a thread by inflicting on us (along with Delacroix!) his weighty exercises in a Picasso-*Las Meninas* style — talent minus virtuosity, but, as you already know perhaps, talent doesn't impress me much. With Cane, the comedy comes rather from his Bouvard and Pécuchet side.[9]

The situation of Cane and those around him is a little like this old idea (which is not necessarily true, any more than false) that one only learns how to play bridge and make one's bed when doing military service (I believe one now says "armed service," which is an obscure change in etiquette yet again for saying the same thing). Well, history and culture — in their roots and wanderings — are a little like this; there are those who, whether in the armed services or not, who will **never** know or never have culture. Everything happens for them as if considering history is limited to remaking it, parodying it, "paying homage" to it, embellishing on top of it. Nothing more.

At least Picasso amused himself, finding pleasure with his variations on *Las Meninas* (and that's a start). The Canes **paddle along.** And of course, in this way, avoid history, and are lacking history. But they never fail, our splendid Bouguereaux'
Sic transit gloria mundi.[10]

Delacroix, etc.

I have to be completely unconscious to say such bad things about Delacroix (those who are specialists in painting will be on my side). In his writings, Delacroix venerated Poussin among a few others—as I do myself. He distrusted writings on painting coming from others who were not painters themselves — I am wary of myself about this as much as him. In fact, it's his century that I loathe, and especially Delacroix's profusion — which is so representative of this century and of romanticism when this isn't lamenting everything — a slightly hasty sensuality which excludes the soul (which romanticism however speaks so much about), and eroticism. His ardor, his "pictorial machismo." And the door he opened to all this impoverished genital painting. Do we understand one another? Cossack-type painting...

Delacroix, his drawing... let's accept that. But his painting is just as distressing as an uncle at a communion dinner with his funny stories. He nearly killed painting. He's not the only one. With a virtuosity which occasionally confused his ideas, Picasso nearly did it too — his balls were bigger than his conscience. Good. In spite of everything, the Constructivists and the Bauhaus somewhat saved something in their period. They held their heads above water. They were also objects of pleasure, of recuperation, of exegeses, and of the marketplace. That that's coming to all of us changes nothing. On the contrary, I know in the best of cases that I don't exist. At worst, I exist alongside Malevich, Kandinsky, and Buren, as [François] Mathey cynically remarks.[11] And why — for what end — would they have existed? And why would we exist? For the museums, the dreary parades in the future at the Grand Palais on a Sunday afternoon. It's a desperate perspective.

The exception and the rule

Delacroix distrusts the discourse of others on painting except painters. Yet, Baudelaire is not so bad (if one accepts his choices), or Valéry, for staying quiet at the right words. Closer to us, Beckett or Paulhan have spoken about painting, more or less. Painting is only in this **more-or-less**. Necessarily. Fautrier cannot be summarized in Paulhan's discourse. Bram van Velde escapes from Beckett's speech but also from all speech. (Of course, Beckett is not in question; again, it's still his language applies the least harm to Bram van Velde).

Nevertheless — and it's wonderful to see the exception once again prove the rule — there are two twentieth-century poets who forgot to speak about painting but who nevertheless painted, and infinitely better than the majority of painters at the time — [Henri] Michaux and [Georges] Perros. Wouldn't this suggest something? That a profession and talent would be the surest means to fail?

Hesitate about the use of color, like Perros; be decisive with the ink, like Michaux, but be trembling. Clear-sighted. Stop sweating so much and getting your fingers dirty, **that's not the problem, you poor soul**! Sam Francis — for all your great cunning and talent — you will never understand this. But you're a good money-maker[12], and that's already not such a bad thing for your widow. Michaux and Perros — who are not of this "profession" — had both understood.

Self-critique

Uncouthness as opposed to vulgarity is an old problem.

People who think well of me find that my allusion to the widow of Sam Francis was in poor taste. It's true. It's not very good style [*pas de Vuitton*]. But it happens that I treat Vuitton handbags and accessories as the height of vulgarity (far worse than hats advertising Ricard worn by boule players on camping sites in August in Palavas-les-Flots). If a lady shows off this fashion and also wears sunglasses on her head, I find it incredibly difficult not to throw up.

Uncouthness as opposed to vulgarity; one might object justifiably that I'm not obliged to subscribe to either one or the other. True again. I could be a polite boy. I could even die being civil to make you happy, my darlings.

However, I'm confused. I realize that it's the second time that I've had a go at Sam Francis; one might say that I have it in for him. This would be wrong. But I believe that he is fairly representative of a certain painting — a small business useful for a society that's looking just for that... hence, "money-maker." The widow? All right, yes, I said widow, but couldn't that signify that Sam is thinking of the future of those close to him rather than of his art? An artist who is not egocentric is rare. So, let's praise Sam Francis. Obviously. I'm not looking for him to die. Long live Sam Francis. There you go!

So as to not cause myself too many worries, I'm going to make a supreme concession to everyone: everywhere please replace Sam Francis (whom we have already forgotten anyway) with Frank Stella, a good representative for painting, of this boring unthought hysterical opportunism that is so fashionable. Stella — whom we have already forgotten.

Inner suburbs, lost steps

Two painters (which tends to prove that one can be a painter and not necessarily paint like a filthy slob, that everything is not lost), two painters — Pierrette Bloch and Max Wechsler — that you don't know or hardly know (that's a good sign for them) are in the inner suburbs of this new emerging situation, making forays only to then leave again. They are never far away. My tone might seem condescending, but that's not the case, not at all. They simply leave me a little short of explanations; I'm unreasonable. Too eager, impatient. I must be wrong — their demands are not necessarily the same as mine. I don't know. However, a work on paper from 1972 by Pierrette Bloch that I saw at a home of a friend in common, and Max Wechsler's entire body of work over the last few years, make me believe that, in spite of everything, we are speaking about the same thing — sort of. Perhaps they ought to look more actively for an apartment in town; the suburbs are calming.

Bauhaus, Kandinsky

They saved painting from the disaster only to astonish the architects. Duchamp saved painting as a profession only to inflict on us his succession of little pretensions.

Together, in spite of everything, they constitute our entire recent culture, which we have to deal with, and from which we have to often untie ourselves, even if this is only to come back to it. And then to re-untie ourselves, and so on.

And to change the morality behind these artistic and iconoclastic forms of intelligence — to go, with and against them, towards what we really do not know.

In passing (post-scriptum)

I have nothing to say about this somber adventure with its surprising turns that the history/modernity, culture/subculture confrontation gives us. A pretty saga.

Symmetrically opposite to history's cheats, we ought to find the video generation (incidentally, it's possible that today, in many cases, one finds these two flaws in the same person). It's possible that the "historicists" paint with the Pink Floyds and Michael Jackson, etc. as muses; they could listen to Strauss's *Four Last Songs* — by Gundula Janowitz — they would fare no better. Once again, I affirm that the Finkielkrauts create a very cosy cultural life, no doubt media-friendly, and spectacular.

The problem is not choosing between disco and Bayreuth with Wagner's operas.

Being vigilant ought to suffice.

To love and distrust oneself in turns, and according to whatever the day brings forth. To love it to death or like it a little and distrusting oneself knowing that it's not serious — that it's also good to like songs from a convenience store.

Not to take oneself so seriously. To stop imagining a role for oneself. There's Finkielkraut for you.

In painting as anywhere else, we are more or less watertight. There is really only painting that summons me to speak; if you prefer [Claude] Zidi to [Ingmar] Bergman[13], I won't hold that against you... on the condition that you know that Pollock is better than de Kooning or Poussin than Delacroix. Here Mozart or Michel Delpech, Johnny [Hallyday] or Sheila or Richard Strauss offer no help for us.[14] They provide no true reference. Fortunately.

With Buren, in spite of everything

Opposed to these false historicists, Daniel Buren has a genuine regard for history.

Our disagreements are almost as widely known as our work in common. Or if they aren't known, it doesn't matter.

So, let's go back over what was and wasn't broken with.

In his work toward 1970, Daniel made what at first seemed to me a very dangerous turn but which no doubt was only a logical continuation (which doesn't lessen the danger).

At the beginning, the material that everyone knew that he used constituted his **painting** (so that this wasn't read as a ready-made, up until 1966, he ringed the store-bought canvas with a line of glycerin paint. In 1967, he only covered over the outer bands with this same line. This never fully escaped being ambiguous since one of his supporters, Pontus Hulten, in the introduction to *Entrevue* (written with Anne Baldassari), situates him in the lineage of Duchamp-Klein.[15] I don't think that this type of compliment goes to the heart of Daniel, unless in the manner of a bullet. His approach is complex in a different way.

Since 1970, Daniel has used his raw material as a **tool**, and so no longer with a final purpose. Painting only refers back to itself; a tool, by definition, serves an exogenous purpose.

One might find the nuance byzantine in the sense that one can claim that painting in the making refers back to a made painting and the latter to a painting that is seen and (more or less) a bearer of discourse — that these three types of painting are (more or less) exogenous to one another. One never paints innocently.

But what Buren and I shared in common (and Toroni and Mosset as well) was the certitude that the trace in our work only returned to itself, for itself. We underestimated the recuperative force of art and its connoisseurs.

We live and evolve. I understand. I'm the first to admit that we had been naive (relatively and for a short amount of time) in believing that our work and approach wouldn't be disguised by an insufficient gaze or its recognition and by a public little prepared for that.

Where Buren and I depart radically from one another (and I have already said this elsewhere somewhat violently) it's over an appreciation of the place where our efforts ought to be focused **today**. What should be our initial object of attention? Up until what point can we work in the polis without losing moral focus and weight (even applied to "almost nothing")? Up to what point can one develop an **explicit** critique without a sovereign discourse — which seems to me the worst possible thing?

I'm far from knowing what Buren has been doing over the last twenty years but I believe that his material-tool plays out in two ways: 1) as a naked and intact intervention, it in effect risks being of the order of a ready-made; 2) fragmented, organized, and composed, he decorates or modifies the place where it is presented.[16] In the first case, it is imposed through its critical and provocative charge, and in the second through its artistic efficacy. In both cases, the *a priori* empty material assumes the weight of an intervention, of a topo-sociological and/or cultural attitude which are not the heart of the problem.

From my point of view, this is a major impasse. What we have here are obsolete (artistic) gestures.

I don't take the positions we held in 1966-67 as immutable. I don't want to be guardian of the temple; that would be absurd and far too morbid. After '68, several choices could have been made afterwards. I don't think some are **better** than others, but they emphasize the essential confrontations concerning the use of pursuing "painting" (it's use, its role, the place where it criticizes or interrogates, where it tends to appear or disappear, how and

why — and for what?). To me, for Buren there are neither **good** nor bad choices; there is a completely different appreciation of what is "useful." Buren denounces "by emphasizing," as it were, while I denounce "by hollowing out." Without stopping, he strikes everywhere through means that are always new (and intelligent, thought out, and deliberate). He **appears** everywhere. And sees himself recognized as a member of the family (even if often as a bit of a clown); an exaggerated (in other words, **interesting**) denunciation is naturally inscribed in the logic of consumption... even if it is made with a noteworthy belatedness in comparison with other, easier logics of consumption (lyrical abstraction, pop, minimalism...).

In other words, based on just and very lucid premisses, a bad object choice (as one says in psychoanalysis) perhaps made him lack his real object. **Daniel appeared in order to be swallowed up**... or to risk being so.

I **disappeared** (through repetition, through stopping painting, through a fastidious resumption of the same thing or through these recent works and their hopeless pencil strokes). Perhaps I will be swallowed up all the same, but — stemming from **the same initial reflection** — based on a quite opposite practice.

Nevertheless, what is essential is that Buren is one of the few to have **actively** posed for himself fundamental questions. His choice — his choices — are his business, but it's a shame to see such an active thinking knowingly address the **polis**, who make short work of it and reduce it to nothing.[17]

Still, greetings Daniel. We're distant cousins or close enemies, even if I believe of the same family.

Terrorism

Anyone who says or still says that we (Buren or Toroni or me) were — or are — terrorists is an idiot. Recently, my friend Roland Castro, reading one of my old texts, treated me as a terrorist. It only took him a good night's sleep and digging out a *post-scriptum* in the text (it's true, very badly formatted on the page) to call me back and tell me that he was wrong. Violence is not necessarily terrorism. And besides, there isn't one kind of terrorism.[18]

Violence is healthy precisely when it combats the terrorism integrated into societies of the spectacle (to take up here more or less [Guy] Debord's formulation — I'm not a Situationist either, so don't trouble yourself trying to label me).[19]

No, I'm not finished with this subject. I'll never be finished with it; it's been too long that I've been repetitive in painting to not be repetitive when I'm speaking to you. I know, it goes round in circles. My only excuse (if I'm looking for one), is that I'm working with the unknown — in art, beyond art, close to art. Okay.

Thus, one can say (differently, but with difficulty) that terrorism, at least for some time, is constituted by **given responses** — responses given to who asked nothing more of these moronic artists — neither the Church, the Princes, the bourgeoisie. All the same, the artists give their two cents worth, showing off for the pleasure. (The only exceptions: the official Nazi or communist artists — for them, in effect, biting their tongues, they didn't take themselves for artists. In essence, [Yves] Brayer shouldn't either take himself for...). Terrorism in art is articulated especially around an avant-gardist derision (for which people increasingly keep harping on that it supports "subversion" — this is only the sugarcoated version, it's the soft porn of *Emmanuelle* compared to *Deep Throat*, but it's still terrorism... that it no longer bores us, that it doesn't disturb us changes nothing). The only function of these "desecrating" gestures, which are only little tricks, is to put us to sleep. Which is always what terrorism does.

On the other hand, along paths as yet completely undiscovered, a new mode of inquiry draws out this celebrated little thread of morality.

N.B. Here I should no doubt explain this ambiguity that I develop in saying earlier that Klein, along with Pollock, is very important and also that he nevertheless participates in a terrorist type of provocation. (I could also say the same thing of the late Matisse — this provocative splendor that, if not terrorist properly speaking, is at least completely imperialist, in any case, dangerously authoritarian). Klein, like Matisse — the one with a sleazy metaphysics, the other with his astonishing artistic mastery — are at once very great ("unavoidably canonical" the other would say) while stifling reflection and **inquiry** through an excess of the visual, of plasticity, of **modernity**. Pollock as well.

Immense, yes, but insolently closing off research when, with impudence, a Bram van Velde is the first to open this path.

So there. And too bad if you still think that I contradict myself or if I'm speaking nonsense.

So, the non-dupes continue to err[20]

Will we say enough about the terrifying ravages of the mode of intelligence?

Intelligence — this one at least — renders one stupid (and then very stupid), but the opposite, however, is not true; stupidity rarely makes one intelligent. But, in addition, this perverted intelligence has supported the terrorism mentioned above, the practice of a dandy that I hate.

Don't pretend to be astonished when you discover that I'm also anti-terrorist — you'll disappoint me a lot. (Come on, smile, this was a slightly masochist joke. I know very well that I've been **in the word** — and, would you believe, perhaps even in my work? You have regarded me darkly — strong terrorist intonations, in the lineage of the Surrealists and Situationists. Come on [*Allons*]...)[21]

My work was perhaps quite brutal. Because I was just a kid, I wanted to change things somewhat radically.

In part, this is what was done.

But it was the opposite, in the École de Paris, that the true terrorism existed — with their gesturalism that thought itself free and that lay in the still lukewarm bed of the votaries of the golden ratio — which is where, in all good faith, you did not believe to see only art. The very learned Bauhaus, even Kandinsky's delights, Duchamp — what exactly do all these great artists give you? A generation of idiotic jokers, like [Bertrand] Lavier, or slightly less stupid like Ben, the graffiti artists, the "Bad" painting artists, etc., small moralizers without any morals, entertainers who aren't funny. And terrorism — of the market, of socialites (in the style of reformed members of the Red Brigades).

No, we weren't the terrorists. We were taking action. We took another path, and it was never with the same aim. Not for Buren. Not for me. We didn't capitulate. We're still not dead. But that's coming, that's coming, don't you worry about that.

So, what are the things that will start again differently that I spoke about earlier?

An address (or a sign) towards the Other that would no longer be authoritarian, whether through its beauty, its force, or its staging... a non-discursive speech that would be developed for nearly nothing. (Neither angelic nor masochistic in this new approach, but a **resistance** to what has become perverted, has become soft... and ossified... within the functions of painting and looking at painting.)

An address that would also say: "**I'm not absolutely sure I know what I am speaking about.**"

Our survival (but yours especially) does not consist, or does not entirely consist in consuming a little Bonnard or Piero della Francesca (for those of you who are on holiday in somewhere other than Club Med), nor especially the very latest dandy promoted by the Galerie Templon. Our survival is to find a small thread that leads to a simple morality, in the way that elsewhere Levinas or Blanchot or Beckett or Laporte do. We always return to this point. **Almost silence. But said**.

Bram van Velde knew and sensed this, and tried to practice it (obviously with his occasionally intrusive background).

Something around silence which would not be silence.

This doesn't mean that "one stops and reflects" but quite the opposite: one pursues something by trying to bend the order of authoritarian discourse and, by extension, the conditions of the market. This is an almost impossible wager to hold on to (99%), but if only 1% remains, what if this miniscule 1% makes life possible and essential?

I can see here that once again this is perhaps a way for me to come back to Bram van Velde. However, to be honest, I don't know what life is. Apparently, he did know. In his "Conversations" with Charles Juliet, he even speaks about it a little too much.[22] (Nevertheless, there is Bram van Velde's manner of addressing "life": "Of course painting is ridiculous. But it is the only way that I have for approaching life." I would almost get my bearings through it, even if I am tempted to say simply: "... but it is the only way I have of approaching painting." And then he follows with: "I'm more on the side of weakness." This is something to which I completely adhere.)

Good. So, let's move on. To say this differently: the greatest successes are not immortal; **they are dead. Garrulous,** they only speak of the weekend's sports results and what the weather is like. Only what we pursue counts (or perhaps will count) for those who will remember the Holocaust, of the awareness that we have of it and how it almost imposes silence on us, a murmur, and rebuilding.

Nowhere

Don't tell me once again that you are surprised that I'm hardly a terrorist when you read me. Certainly, don't tell me that my "new" way of painting caught you by surprise.

First, as regards this last point, because it seems to me there is no essential difference but only a difference in degree, and secondly, and **above all**, because your opinion is only anecdotal. (I won't even say to you that I don't give a damn about your opinion — I don't give a damn about anything, or almost — in spite of everything, I don't give a damn about many things, so let's move on... I will suggest to you, on the other hand, to really think things over before you speak — as for me, thinking things over before speaking is really not the question. You. You, exactly, contrary to Kleist.[23]

You find this unjust? Come now, come now — it's not really you, the public, to be paranoid.

You say that in order to be poor, you have to be rich?

That's not so sure... we'll have to see...

For example, because it's been so affluent for more than the last fifty years, American painting only gives us a nauseating and stupid wealth of nouveaux riches.

They believed they sold everything to us (and they had) — Action Painting, Pop Art, Minimalism... and everything in fifteen examples, by the truckloads (I'm making an exception for Pollock because I'm having a good day[24]); not so long ago, who did the folks on Wall Street have the bright idea to re-import and re-impose? De Kooning. Such a fat piece of crap, such a cross-breed of Ensor, Mathieu, Picasso, the bastard (why not?) but disrespectful and stupid.[25]

This "affluent American painting" shows its profound immaturity; it's still at the stage of spectacle, of the market. On Wall Street or elsewhere, those who decided to show De Kooning rather than, say, a phony Ellsworth Kelly or this charming old man, [Mark] Tobey — who are not at all fashionable over there — believed they were smart to support the "Bad" painters and other subway artists by inflicting on us their grandfather. One makes up a history the way one can to support what's in fashion.

In choosing to be poor, perhaps you have to be rich, but all those who are wealthy are not capable of becoming poor, even when there is an urgency. Especially for the nouveaux riches.

One day, the Americans will understand all this and will decree a general impoverishment, on a large scale, and with a logistical support equal to what we have already suffered with all their other fashions. Now there will only be this "impoverished questioning" (for two years). The wealthy have this tendency — to make the big bucks with their brightest ideas.

I'm insulting the Americans. I must be mad. Everyone knows that you have to work over there or, at least, exhibit from time to time.

What Pollock? What did I say?

Amongst the stars of this affluent American painting, next to [Franz] Kline, [Mark] Rothko, [Robert] Motherwell, next to Jasper Johns, [Robert] Rauschenberg, [Roy] Lichtenstein, [Andy] Warhol, next to Louise Nevelson, [Robert] Morris, [Donald] Judd or [Dan] Flavin, [Sol] LeWitt, [Frank] Stella (you can be sure I'm forgetting some). All the same, there is still Pollock. He alone saves everything — the first gesture that owes nothing to the Orient, nothing to comic strips, nothing to a "go-west" narcissism, little to aestheticism, and only owes — in an almost negligible fashion — the smallest of things to [André] Masson: the dripping.

Masson made a serious mistake. In producing his drip paintings, he thought he was only giving us the equivalent to automatic writing, nothing more. In a moment of sheer genius, Pollock took up what was only an exercise as an ethic — he appropriated it for himself. Well spotted! And of course, he extended this gesture to the scale of his country. Augmented, a lot of elegance still often lingers in the work, but still, it's one of the very first **blind** gestures. Thanks to him for this. Pollock is easily more important than all the American painting put together. Greater than Masson, however much he owes him his only discovery. I think Pollock screwed up at the end, as if he hadn't understood his own work, as if the drips had only been an accident. He paid for it with another accident which will forever prevent us from knowing how the story turned out. Let's dream and persist in thinking that Jackson Pollock would have returned to the drips.

He is more important than all the **European** painting at the time, Bram van Velde excepted.

I don't have the impression that I'm being very original in saying all this, but I only insist that one doesn't imagine that I assume all Americans are idiots.

So as to not to fall out for good with the Americans who perhaps might give me some money

As everyone acknowledges, when it comes to jazz and cinema, the Americans teach us lessons, and have taught us lessons. Even forgetting "historical authors," I also think that their literature is better than ours. I'm not speaking of Faulkner, Dos Passos, Steinbeck, and certainly not Hemingway (even though he wrote *Green Hills of Africa* which might almost justify the craze he has been subjected to).

So as to mislead you a bit more, I'm speaking then of contemporary American literature. (What on earth am I mixing myself up in?)

It's glaring that Saul Bellow is better than Michel Tournier, that the great absentee J.D. Salinger is better than everyone, that the spry Jerome Charyn better than Patrick Modiano (whose profession is certainly not writing), this scandalous WASP J.P. Donleavy is funnier than Milan Kundera. One can even convince oneself that the otherwise terrifying Bernard Malamud is less boring than J.M.G. Le Clézio (as you have understood, we are trying to stay among good company; we not going beat ourselves up to the point of comparing Philip Roth to Philippe Sollers. We have a deficit that even a government minister like Edith Cresson in her best moments couldn't overcome.

Ah! I already hear you hollering: "... and Pound? And James?" You know what? I don't give a shit. Go for Joyce, go for Céline (I find that there is some kinship; I have a right to, no?) But Pound is just as boring as Saint-John Perse, or nearly.[26]

So, I've not been speaking about painting here? I have. That's all I have been speaking about.

Sunday

Just reread these notes — crap. Logorrhea that rambles on. I ought to scribble, to sketch — I ought to do **that** and not reread myself, not write, especially on Sunday. Sundays don't bring me luck. It's the Lord's day and we have a jealous God.

Painting-object, the spectacular

Painting-object, finished, spectacle, all that... insufferable self-righteous authoritarianism.

Among my friends (and those painters that are very close to me, that I consider the best), I identify these two traps from time to time that sum up a lack of vigilance. That concerns only them, but what concerns **me** is that perhaps I still haven't escaped these traps. Thus, it's not really what I say that is important but what I cough up.

Perhaps work that is impotent will disclose flashes of silence, elsewhere, later. We will never know anything. And that's how things should happen — not knowing anything, ever.

Do that

Paint the **fissured fracture** [*la faille*], scrawl what lacks... but to which one doesn't resign oneself to doing. It's not pious mortification but lack that bears a certain (very uncertain and precarious) future. I don't know too much... **Lack as means**, perhaps, as approach...

My only two certitudes (again this very word catches my pen as it writes), are: 1. That the sovereign-saying has no reason to perpetuate itself today — the Italian churches, the Louvre, the Prado, the Metropolitan, etc. ought to largely suffice for our need for amazement and submission; and 2. That the painting-object is a very mediocre trap. One can encounter the sovereign-saying without painting-object, but rarely the other way around. (Thus, Yves Klein can — occasionally — avoid the object... but he puts metaphysics in its place. At the end of the day, the painting-object always supports a **sovereign** finitude.)

The artist as a propaganda tool has seen life, the flagship artist is just as obsolete as the wretched artist. The artist-savant in the Renaissance is a touching souvenir. (The scientists today are themselves completely out of their depth once they leave their strict and specialist domain. Subsequently, what **responses**, what **explanations** would the artist give at the end of the twentieth century that wouldn't be a complete farce? A placebo?) In contrast, what remains as an (urgent) necessity is only an obscure and obstinate questioning or, better, a stubborn re-questioning. The form itself of the questioning must be an **obscure** questioning. Suppose that I am an artist. So, then I must find a new unknowable land — of myself — with strict and elusive borders, setting out on a frustrating voyage, disappointing as much for me as for you and not really knowing where I am, what it is that this "it" that I do might be. Nor what it is for. Knowing only the obligation that I must do "it."

On re-reading *Flash Art*

The "entrevue" (it's curious that one is practically obliged to put scare quotes around the French word so that it substitutes for the English "interview" without too much ambiguity, which was perfectly adapted. The fashionable gimmick — ought one say "amusing and new object"? — which comes to the defense of the French language forces us into exhausting and sometimes comic somersaults. Thus, what is this portmanteau word "fioule" that should be able to heat our homes better than the usual "fuel" and even better than "heating oil." On a lighter note but just as worrisome: will the "starlettes" — at once small stars and starlets in the movies — become the "étoilettes" — small stars become toilets — and if so, will they be public or not? This last question is going to make

me lose the thread, I feel it. *Go ahead, Mimi, pray to Our Lord… and be lucky).*[27]

So, I shouldn't have reread the "interview" with Bernard Blistène that appeared in *Flash Art*.[28] Even if there are several justifications which appear to me a little laborious, apart from the semantic framework there is this insufferable problem that (everything **endlessly** wavering and **without reason**) what I say to Blistène *was* true, that everything *was* more or less false. First of all, this: that my poverty wasn't already poor enough.

Saying this, I know that my current impoverishment in 1988 — the pencil drawings — might appear to me as being still too imperious the next day. Perhaps I should stop making one last time? Or living? Ah, ah. It's tempting, idiot; reactionary and tempting. Icarus is waiting for me and laughing at this idea that occupies me and that he doesn't find very new. How he's right.

The letter to Mathey[29]

It goes without saying (as we might say) that in this letter to Mathey I'm only stating things that no longer interest me. Or not in the same way. My contradictions are exposed, and I acknowledge them just as strongly as my current "certitudes." This text makes me laugh; it's marked with wrinkles and often naive. It's old-fashioned, and I myself am today in the process of making myself unfashionable in relation to tomorrow, when I'll be seen as perhaps even more naive still.

I take responsibility for this. Nevertheless, the intuition of what was going to happen for others proved to be true. One only ever makes a mistake about oneself.

I still like the idea I formulated there: "Subversion in art is **also** its inefficacy." It's about the only thing I like.

I know, I'm speaking in the abstract

Speaking of painting is always to speak of something other than painting. Or else, one speaks about technique (and even then, it's a long way from painting). Valéry says: "One must always apologize for talking about painting."[30] Could one say it better? But keeping quiet, wouldn't that be to shut oneself away?

I hate theoretical texts as justifications. But settling the accounts or establishing some sort of provisional balance are detestable attitudes which I nevertheless accept because, with a bit of luck, they might contribute to a transformation or mutation in the role of "painting."

Art, the market, the function

One ought never to sell painting but donate it.

To pay so that we can get painting from out of our hands and eyes.

Let's dream a little more: one ought to pay us for not painting.

If this isn't possible, then the extreme solution: banning painting for everyone for at least ten years. Exactly ten years. Is ten years too much to ask? All the painters can be exiled off to Devil's Island. I'm prepared to go there myself to serve as an example (yet I hate traveling), to cut off my hands and gouge out my eyes (yet mutilations bore me). What bullshit… I should have been a musician.

I'm not going to recount my life, but…

I'm not going to recount my life, but (I'm frightened to say), for those who might have forgotten theirs at home, I'm going to offer some sticks here to beat me.

Often — too often — I know I am tempted by the idea that "Nothing is important, that everything's worth the same as everything else, etc." Put everything in the same bag. Everything. And stop. (However, when I completely stopped painting for fifteen years, don't start imagining that this was the same thing, responding to these same temptations. It was quite the opposite. Not the beautiful nonchalance of a dandy but through an excess of seriousness (a passive prolongation of my work, extremely critical but not cynical). In order to carry on, there are mornings when I have to do harm to myself; doing this, I know well that I'm not alone, far from it — clocking in at the Citroën factory demands good health. I'm neither exemplary nor a hero — it's only to continue and move beyond this attraction of the "nothing." But when one moves beyond that (if one moves beyond that), then you have to look at it closely, **very closely**, and separate out strictly what is and isn't important, what is and isn't (more) interesting in relation to what is essential. And do that all the time. Suspect everything and always more harshly, setting light what fades away from what is essential, which always remains to be defined (beginning of course with getting you own house in order, which is the least one can do, the least courtesy that one can show).

For quite some time now it is well known that burning is specific to hell; one is surprised to find to what extent it is infernal — perhaps something remains, **but not much**. One asks oneself what's the point of this purification. This increasingly demanding sorting, would it still be terrorist, in spite of everything (I'm not persuaded by the platitude that our age renders everything truly indulgent)? After everything I said above, I really hope not, I'd look good… [Jean] Carzou or [Pierre] Alechinsky or [Robert] Combas or [Victor] Vasarely seem to me to make a **simple** porridge, but if this gruel does them some good, so much the better for them… and too bad for Rilke ("We know little, but that we must hold to what is difficult is a certainty that will not forsake us."[31])

Thus, there is perhaps little difference between this extremely abrupt sorting and terrorism. I think — I wish that it's like ginger ale and whisky which resemble one another but aren't the same. I believe my most frequent references here are Levinas and Bram van Velde. It would be easier to guess the six numbers of the Lotto than to find anyone more opposed than they to terrorist thought. Will this suffice to give me credibility?

It's not so sure. I see some frowning skeptically at this. It's my tone which forsakes me. It's always been like that (already when I was in school…). Never mind, I'll more likely die from some kind of cancer than from you doubting me (and my own doubt about all this), even as it distresses me.

Michel Parmentier, July 3, 1988

1 In order to dot the i's, a sterile questioning is that which responds or pretends to respond in your place — basically, the opposite of a maieutic approach.

Painting's charm stems from its way of turning the most assured of maxims inside out (I'm still speaking of Buren, Hantaï, Toroni). For those that I cite, for myself (and perhaps for several others who I don't know or hardly know), **better sorry than safe**.

2 Alain Finkielkraut is a widely known author, in part for his texts denouncing multiculturism as responsible for the decline of Western civilization. Bercy is a sports arena and concert hall in Paris. Johnny Hallyday was a popular French singer-songwriter and actor. Translator's note.

3 Grégory Villemin was a small French boy whose murder was widely discussed in the press at the time. *Paris-Soir* was an evening newspaper. Translator's note.

4 To distrust humanism as an alibi of an insipid consumption does not imply its opposite; to distrust this democracy that fabricates its enemies. Terrorism does not imply that one adheres to terrorism or that we are enemies of democracy. On the contrary.

5 See Emmanuel Levinas, "A Propos of 'Kierkegaard vivant,'" trans. Michael B. Smith in *Proper Names* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 77. Translator's note. Parmentier's italics.

6 Ibid., pp. 77-78.

7 See Maurice Blanchot, "Fragmentaire" in Pierre Alechinsky, Geneviève Asse, et al., *Celui qui ne peut se servir des mots* (Montpellier: Éditions Fata Morgana, 1975), pp. 19-31, reprinted in *L'Écriture du désastre*. See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 11 and p. 8 (translation modified). Translator's note.

8 I know I'm doing him a favor. My friends often reproach me for speaking about idiots *and* citing them ("Be careful, the jerk has unpredictable reflexes. One day he'll brag about having been insulted by you"). This is my "let-them-live" side; I'm absolutely against euthanasia. Cane is entitled to be insulted like a human being in his own right.

9 The reference is to Flaubert's satirical work named after the two characters. Translator's note.

10 *And so passes away the glory of the world.*

11 François Mathey was the senior curator for the "Artistic Creation in France 1960-72" exhibition, to whom Parmentier addressed an open letter **(pp. 98-99, translated p. 120)**. Translator's note.

12 In English in the text.

13 Claude Zidi is a French film director known for his burlesque comedies; Ingmar Bergman is often considered one of the great twentieth-century filmmakers. Translator's note.

14 Michel Delpech, Johnny Halliday, and Sheila are all popular French singer-songwriters. Richard Strauss was a famous German composer. Translator's note.

15 See Daniel Buren and Anne Baldassari, *Entrevue* (Paris: Musée Des Arts Décoratifs and Flammarion, 1987). Translator's note.

16 When he considers the decorative as one of the attributes of all major art, he says here radically what separates us; no doubt not what essentially separates us but the **modalities** of this questioning that we share in common, in the same way that we share a critical language in common.

17 Conversely, I know that Daniel Buren compliments me (compliments me like a poisoned present) for being a great *classical* painter. I'm choking in astonishment because I really don't know what that means today.

18 Terrorism in art is everywhere. Along with political and economic terrorism, the three complement one another. Bayer's pharmaceutical laboratories are no better than a violent revolutionary group like *Action directe;* at the level of terrorism, they are just as effective but by other means. It's the Mafia compared to a pickpocket. Artistic terrorism is clearly articulated in an immediately perceptible way in avant-gardism, in the heritage of Duchamp, etc. However, doctors buying paintings that will liven up their waiting room on Avenue Matignon or chic areas of Paris are in fact **victims and agents** of this terrorism — that of artists like [Olivier] Debré or [Yves] Brayer (according to the doctor's age and cultural standing — I'm not going to insist on this; it's already been very clearly taken apart by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Routledge, 1984)). They are from the same right bank of the river Seine (I know there are doctors on the left bank and that sometimes they are left-leaning politically, thank you very much. I also know that when one can see Bram van Velde, it is at the Galerie Maeght on Avenue Matignon. Again, thanks very much for pointing this out). On the right bank of the Seine in Paris, to the west of Place Concorde, there is only terrorism. On the left bank or around Beaubourg, terrorism is only at a miserable 90 percent. One can see avant-gardism and the establishment are both terrorist. And everything that contributes to spectacle and imposes it is terrorist.

19 The reference is to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), one of the primary texts of the Situationists. Translator's note.

20 The phrase within this title in French — *les non-dupes errent* — is the title of a seminar (XXI) given by Jacques Lacan in 1973-74. The phrase can be read in a number of ways: *le nom du père* (the name of the father), *le non du père* (the father's no), and *les non-dupes errent* (the non-dupes err). The phrase refers in this context to a form of misrecognition taken up throughout the following section. Translator's note.

21 ["Allons enfants de la Patrie" is the opening line of *La Marseillaise*, which Parmentier may be hinting at here. Translator's note.] However, there is nothing terroristic about them (except old reflexes inherited from the worst Jacobins… or whatever was in the air at the time. The Surrealist or Situationist exclusions are curiously reminiscent of Leninism, its puritanism included). But above all else, they lived (or live) the dream against illusion. These were not — **these** are not the terrorists; they are their enemies. In short, I'm no Situationist (whether with Vaneigem or Debord, or who knows whom. With Debord the cleric — a little less according to the latest news — or Vaneigem, the happy widow? No, I'm not with them. But I respect them. Both of them. And, if they are reading me, I will be hated by both of them. I'll console myself.

22 See Charles Juliet, *Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram van Velde*, trans. Axel Nesme, Janey Tucker, and Tracy Cooke (McLean, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2009). Translator's note.

23 "The idea does not preexist language; it is formed in and by it."

24 Pollock, a founding myth, and perhaps more interestingly the founder of nothing — at least up to the present.

25 I didn't always neglect De Kooning when I was young. A youthful misconception (I don't know if youth is ever really a viable excuse. I'm ashamed. In short, it's well and truly over).

26 I'm told: "In France, there's [Michel] Leiris, [Pierre] Guyotat, [Louis-René] des Forêts, [Angelo] Rinaldi…" I ask that they keep quiet; they might hear us. Among other faults, the Americans can be sensitive.

27 In English in the text.

28 Parmentier is referring to the interview with Bernard Blistène in *Flash Art 10* (March 1986): 19-21 **(see pp. 132-133)**. Translator's note.

29 Parmentier is referring to the open letter he addressed to François Mathey, the senior curator for the "Artistic Creation in France 1960-72." exhibition **(pp. 98-99, translated p. 120)**. Translator's note.

30 Paul Valéry, "About Corot," in *Degas, Manet, Morisot*, trans. David Paul (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 134. Translator's note.

31 The phrase is from Rainer Maria Rilke's "Letter Seven" (May 14, 1904) in *Letters to a Young Poet* (1939), trans. M.D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1934), p. 53. Translator's note.]

p.150 105 [**MICHEL PARMENTIER: A Voice of Fine Silence**.
Interview with Michel Nuridsany

In 1967, after a very neo-Dada decade (Pop art, New Realism), a few young artists affirmed that painting "begins with them." They exhibited together. They call themselves Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni. Their position, like their manner of affirming this position through a practice reduced to what is essential, caused a scandal.

As everyone knows, the works of Buren, Mosset, and Toroni have evolved or endured. Parmentier himself stopped painting for fifteen years, then started again a few years ago. Reading the interview that follows, one comes to understand that if the formal principle hasn't changed, the discourse itself renounces the terrorism of before, now only affirming a stuttering. But wouldn't this stuttering be the long-term effect of a terrorism that has achieved its objective? Wouldn't it have delayed the advent of painting rather than favoring its "beginning"?

He arrived at my home with two strips of rolled-up paper, around thirty centimeters wide. Quite quickly, he unrolled them. The paper revealed folds that had been made at regular intervals, clearing a surface for what Michel Parmentier terms the "non-saying" [*non-dire*], and another where "scribbled marks" from a wax crayon are visible. The "saying," then, the most impoverished manifestation, but also the most open to what [Maurice] Blanchot calls the "incessant" at work [*à l'œuvre*], which Parmentier shows in such an extraordinary way. So, here's the latest work by this uncommon artist caught between myth and oblivion, whom we discover or rediscover in his exigencies that are always so true, so taut — and quite different from any exigency shown in the past.

Twenty years later, Parmentier reappears and, after a slightly ostentatious muteness, today follows the "voice of fine silence," to which Laporte also refers.[1] A way of saying silence. To say silence is not silence…

He brought several manuscripts that he gave me to read. Parmentier has always written. In pages that are scattered and dense, he speaks of [Jackson] Pollock, [Henri] Matisse, of Bram van Velde's "useless questioning," and of his own "stupid questioning," obviously situated in relation to the works on paper that he had just shown me. The name of Bram van Velde comes up often in the conversations we shared, as well as that of [Simon] Hantaï. He opposes *unintelligence* and impoverishment to [Marcel] Duchamp's intelligence. He evokes Blanchot, Emmanuel Levinas…

"Levinas remarks: 'Kierkegaard brings something absolutely new to European philosophy: the possibility of attaining truth through the ever-recurrent inner rending of doubt, which is not only an invitation to verify evidence, but part of evidence itself.'[2] It is part of Levinas's greatness to grant someone he distrusts an intentionality that is so essentially his own which would also be specific to the '*Other*.' That's something that is so important to me."

Michel Nuridsany: I imagine you have to explain all of this because the image one has of you in the art world is rather, let's say, of someone with integrity, violent, intolerant.

Michel Parmentier: I know that the more I continue, the more I'm attached to my contradictions, the more I find them logical, true. I follow a line which appears to me basically true. But numerous parameters intervene here, which dispose me to say other things. You see… I'm writing to provoke. But I also write in tenderness, in numerous different directions and contradictory states. I contradict myself when I affirm "*I'm completely, definitively, stopping painting*"… and that I'm painting again… and when I abandon painting to do what I'm doing here, right now, these… impoverished scribbles.

MN: Let's speak of your contradictions, for example in light of an artist you like and of whom you say that after him, painting comes to nothing: Poussin. You claim to detest what proceeds from an affirmation in art. But being the classical artist that he is, isn't Poussin an artist known precisely for this type of affirmation? How do you explain this? What do like in Poussin?

MP: The risk.

MN: In Poussin?

MP: Very well, his themes are ultra-classical. But he puts a red where none of his contemporaries would have dared put it, next to a blue in a risky, scandalous connection. That's what interests me in Poussin, his way of saying that he believes less in his subjects (mythology, etc.) than in painting.

MN: Vermeer puts yellows next to blues.

MP: But he puts them there too well. And then Vermeer's light bores me. It's falsely realist, manipulated, prudent. Theatrical in the worst sense of the term. There's a sense of: "And for tonight's show…" It seems to me that, at the end of the day, Vermeer is the moderate sort, fairly crude — which doesn't mean that I like the romantics and their narcissistic lyricism. His painting overflows any appeal to tranquility. For what's urgent is anxiety in a humble and silent form. Naturally, one can offer other readings of Vermeer (and I believe no-one is restricted from doing so), and that doesn't bother me if the consensus hadn't been so general and so formulaic.

MN: Your current writings are still unbelievably violent in places. When you say that "Cézanne, Picasso, Mondrian achieve a sterilizing

revolution," this isn't exactly tender! That said, one can also consider this as the opposite of terrorism since, raising yourself in this way against established values, you seek to do something in such a way that the sterility you fear doesn't happen.

MP: That's it. The terrorists, that's them, even if this "formal revolution" they sought led to Matisse, Pollock, Bram van Velde. And Yves Klein, who is a big terrorist. I hope we've finished with terrorism in art. In any case, we can't go further, formally, than Pollock, than Matisse with his cut-outs, or even sometimes, bizarrely, than Bram van Velde. And so, I try to dig a little, to make something a little invisible, a little clandestine. Not at all to affirm anything. I know — I was taken to be a terrorist by Buren. It was like a rite of passage to make us understood, because facing us was the terrorism of the École de Paris. You have to butt heads to be understood. Perhaps that had something to do with our characters... But I was resolving something in painting that I didn't like anymore, or that in the end, I liked at once too much and not at all. Desperately, I loved Piero della Francesco, Uccelo, and Poussin. Anything after didn't interest me. That said, I saw extraordinary works by Klee, Kandinsky. But if I erased painting, it was by means of painting.

MN: What did you do before showing what we know of your work?

MP: I chatted up girls.

MN: I hope that worked. Essentially, your evasive remarks tell me that all of this was of no interest. If there is something that's important, it's these works on paper that you've just shown me, this scribbling. Here's something close to what you call Bram van Velde's "distressed stutterings," which you then oppose to Cézanne, Picasso, and Mondrian's "sterilizing revolution." Would you speak like [Jean] Dubuffet of an "asphyxiating culture"?[3]

MP: No doubt Dubuffet had his reasons. They're not mine. On the other hand, Duchamp is part of our culture. I don't reject Duchamp. The trial being done to him is just as unfair as the censure to which he was subjected fifteen years ago. No doubt such an intelligent artist like Duchamp established the basis of an interesting problem which doesn't exist today. Perhaps this served no purpose. But perhaps also on account of this, *a contrario*, in 1988 a few people will feel obligated to rethink painting beyond provocation, beyond gesture, beyond aesthetics, beyond formalism — beyond the sovereign silence of the monochrome.

MN: I sense a pejorative tone in your way of speaking about this silence.

MP: Once it is sovereign, all silence is imperialist. What interests me is the near silence when, in spite of everything, one can still say silence. Blanchot speaks of this in relation to Bram van Velde. It's not a question of nuance at all.

MN: But from the Renaissance to today, isn't this what all the true great artists have aimed towards?

MP: I don't really see this anywhere. I only see people crying out to be understood. During the Renaissance, it was necessary to explain discoveries. Humanism was developing. One had to be understood. *To speak*. After that it was more and more a case of "blah, blah, blah" with all the artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Fragonards...

MN: And Caravaggio, Goya? Rembrandt?

MP: Very verbose.

MN: You never speak about them. You go from the Renaissance (reduced to Piero, Uccelo) and Poussin directly to nowadays, passing over Cézanne in order to arrive at Matisse, Bram van Velde, Hantaï.

MP: Rembrandt has talent, but vacuous. That said, I would love to paint a hat like him... although no, it's not true, I wouldn't like to... I find it good, even magnificent. But what have I got to do with all that? What are we speaking about here? Poussin paints any old how. Without talent. He didn't have talent but only genius. His painting is not seductive. After Poussin, there is nothing. There is this horror with Delacroix, with his heavy brushstrokes that spin off in every direction, even worse than De Kooning. And finally, Cézanne (alas!) who begins to put established formal innovations into question, who restructures the visual field, then the Cubists...in short, all of modern art: Kandinsky, Malevich, Mondrian, all extraordinary artists, but who created this revolution that we were speaking about, sterilizing because in the process they lost their souls.

MN: But Kandinsky spoke of the "spiritual in art"...[4]

MP: Chagall as well. These are only words.

MN: So, what essentially do you expect from painting?

MP: Nothing. But what I know how to do is more or less paint. And still... Now I'm abandoning color and paint itself as material so that it is a little more transparent, a little more silent. I expect nothing from this. Starting from here, I would simply like some others to want to bequeath this non-violent discourse, this type of useless questioning against an imperialist extravagance. At the moment, there is a whole bunch of very talented painters... but they don't want to ruin their talent. They develop a strategy of "success" that one could call "authoritarian," or even "terrorist" (obviously I'm not talking about social success). Here in 1988, the people who do not systematically doubt make me throw up. From the moment one operates with talent, one obscures all possible research. One becomes blind. Deaf. One has to almost disappear in painting, forgetting the talent that one was able to possess. Its force of conviction. Efface oneself. I thought I had effaced myself, but I realize that I must efface myself even more. And that's never finished.

MN: Was the silence you maintained for twenty years an authoritarian silence?

MP: Perhaps, because in the end the critics turned up to say that I had an absolutely "unassailable" position. An "unassailable" position is one that is very authoritarian. You become an *example*. You stop painting. You give painting the finger. And so, it's not worth it; you get assimilated, even through your silence. Perhaps you have to start again to prove wrong those who stuck you in this position, who made you into a symbolic figure. In fact, what appeared stupid to me one day was that silence was extremely pretentious, of the type: "I have said everything, I'm pissing you off." It's impossible. In fact, what's interesting *is not stopping to say what one cannot say*... which was already in my previous work. The fold was the negative of the me who paints and then, when I was opening and unfolding, there was the non-said that appeared... but that gave me an artistic, aesthetic, a slightly impressive result. Too strong, too violent. Today, I'm in my infancy, the infancy of a stuttering baby who paradoxically arrives late and with difficulty. But that's not what is specific to painting.

MN: There's also Louis-René des Forêts.

MP: Yes, *The Children's Bedroom*.[5] In it there's a dialogue between two children. The first says to the second (I cite from memory): "But in the end, aren't you tired of speaking in order to say nothing?" And the other responds: "Always too much to say something. Never enough to keep me quiet." That's where it happens. The wisdom that des Forêts gives to the children, this great void means that one has to speak and one must keep quiet.

MN: It's also the "incessant" to which Blanchot refers. I remember, it was a few months ago in Bordeaux. For an entire day, Buren had been responding to questions posed by critics that were close to him as well as the public. We were returning to the hotel and I said to him: "It's unbelievable what you were saying at times — it was pure Blanchot." He immediately responded that Blanchot was someone who had been very important to him.

MP: We had talked about Blanchot. But now Daniel raises another question that he apparently resolves in another way: one demolishes culture sites... as if cultural sites are important! There's also Bataille, Leiris... They represent a counterpoint to the literature that exults. Blanchot spoke of disappearance and silence. Of breathless speech.

MN: And the "neuter." At the beginning, is that essentially what you had in common with Daniel?

MP: I don't think so. Perhaps we had that in common, but it wasn't the only thing. We also fought against a painting that seemed oppressive to us. It's true that we tried to be the most neutral as possible, but Blanchot wasn't our bible. He didn't dictate our attitude — even through his books.

MN: What are your disagreements with Buren?

MP: I've absolutely no desire to attack Daniel. We disagree, but (along with Hantaï, with whom I feel even closer) he's only one of the two or three respectable painters in France, but to attack the socio-economic as he does or has done is not at all my aim. My problem is not to demolish the museum but to say something else to painting than Daniel does. We disagree. He knows it. We speak about it calmly. We see each other now, knowing that we disagree, but agreeing on so many other things means that everything is fine. But there's a line that shouldn't be crossed.

MN: You've just mentioned Hantaï. He's been very important to you. He's still important to you. In what way? Is it through the folding?

MP: Yes, the folding. At the beginning. It was the equivalent of Pollock's *drips* for me, and just as important. More difficulty, I can't really speak about him because he doesn't want to appear in the limelight in this way. Let's say that I now like his silence. Hantaï is important, very important.

MN: Is writing important for you?

MP: I happen to believe more in the word than in painting.

MN: What do you mean by that?

MP: Nothing.

MN: So, where are you now?

MP: I'm going through a mourning process regarding subversion in order to pursue a work of questing, of questioning. A work that is not terrorist — and not even subversive.

MN: As in your latest works, with what you call your scribblings?

MP: Yes, I have to do this impoverished scribbling incessantly. It's not drawing. Especially not! Not writing either. Nothing evocative. An impoverished thing that's not seductive at all. It's... a stuttering.

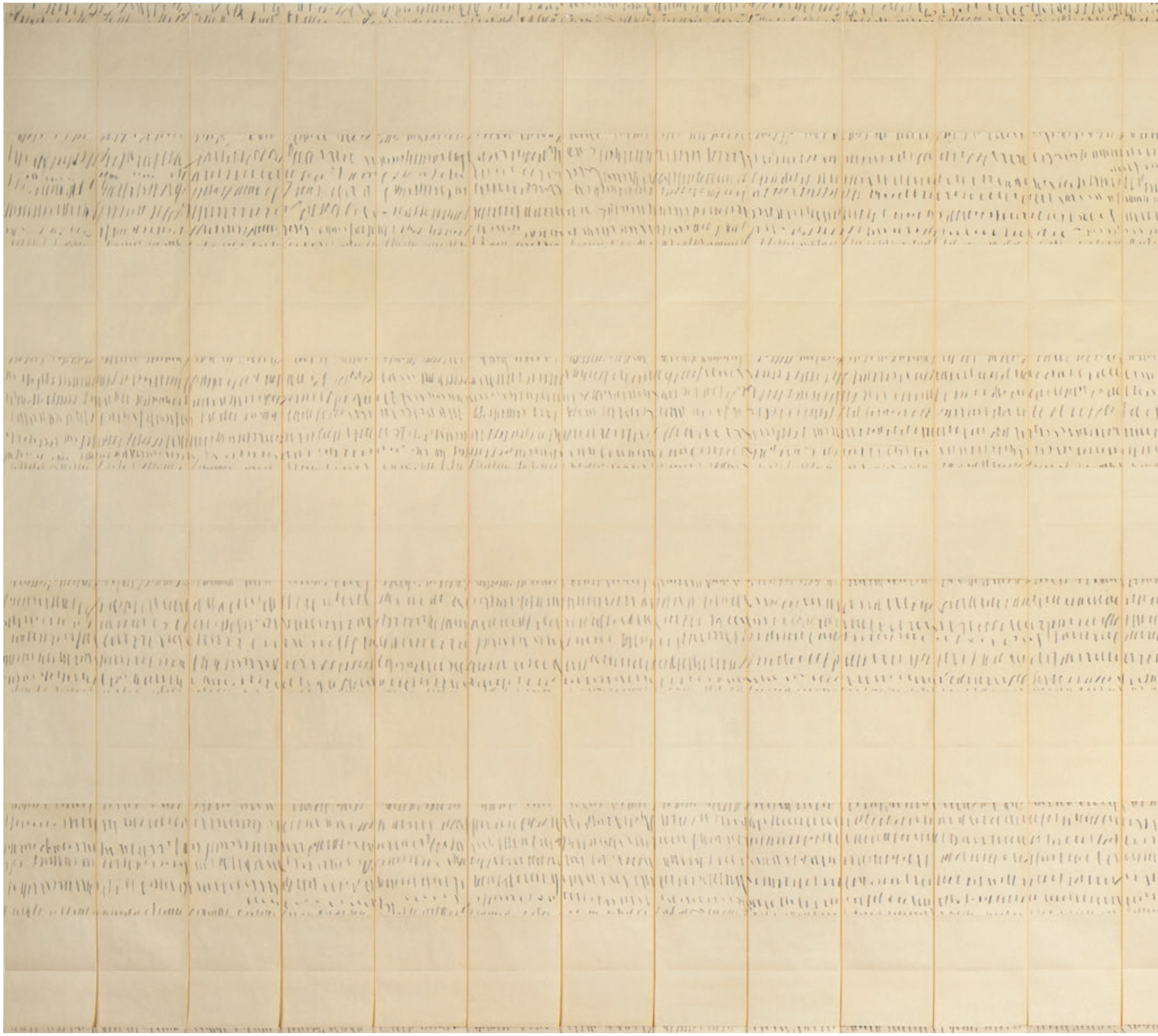
1 See Roger Laporte, *Une voix de fin silence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). The *fin* in the title can also be translated as "end," an ambiguity that Nuridsany explores in his text. Translator's note.

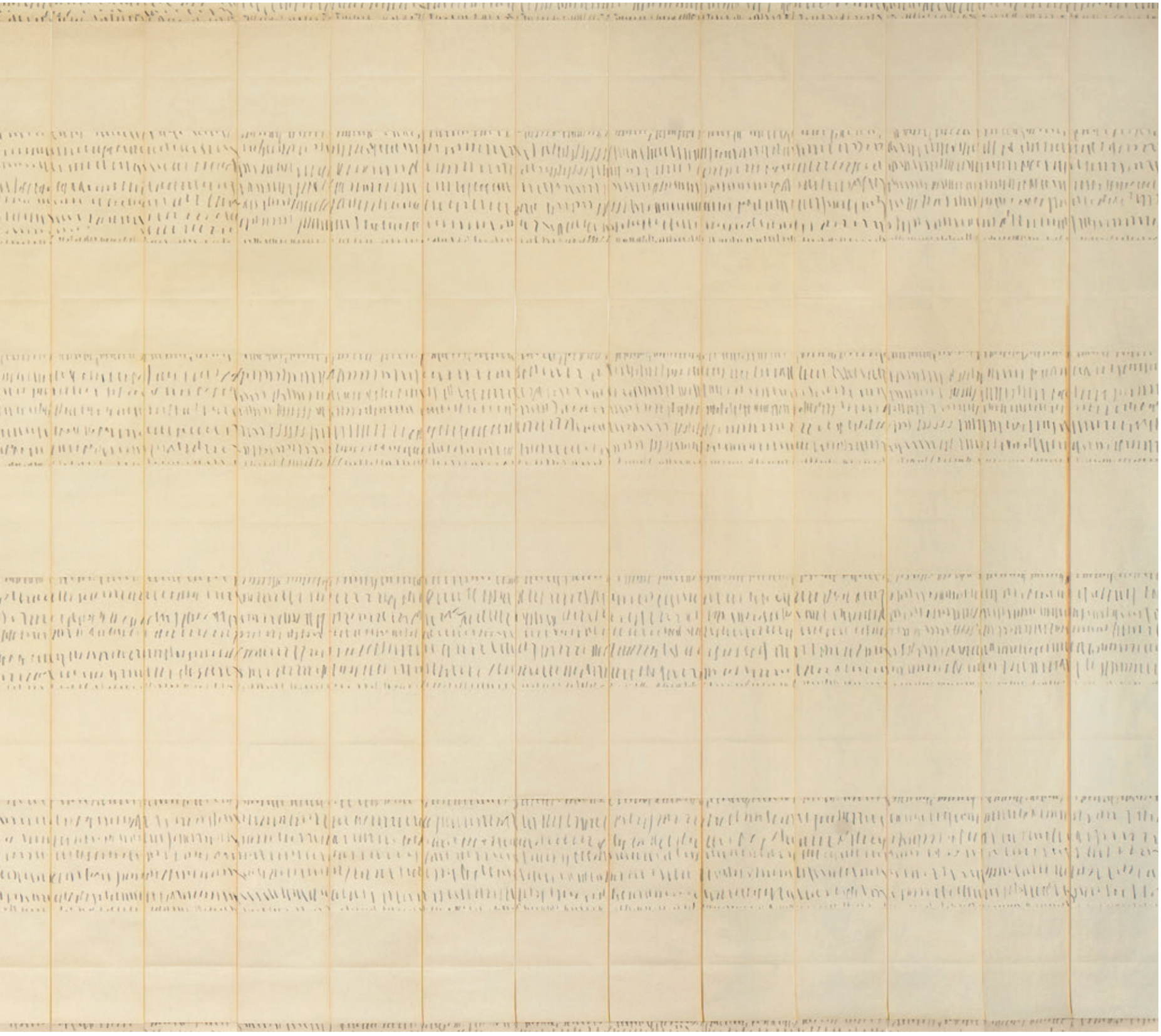
2 See Emmanuel Levinas, "A Propos of 'Kierkegaard vivant,'" trans. Michael B. Smith in *Proper Names* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 77. Translator's note.

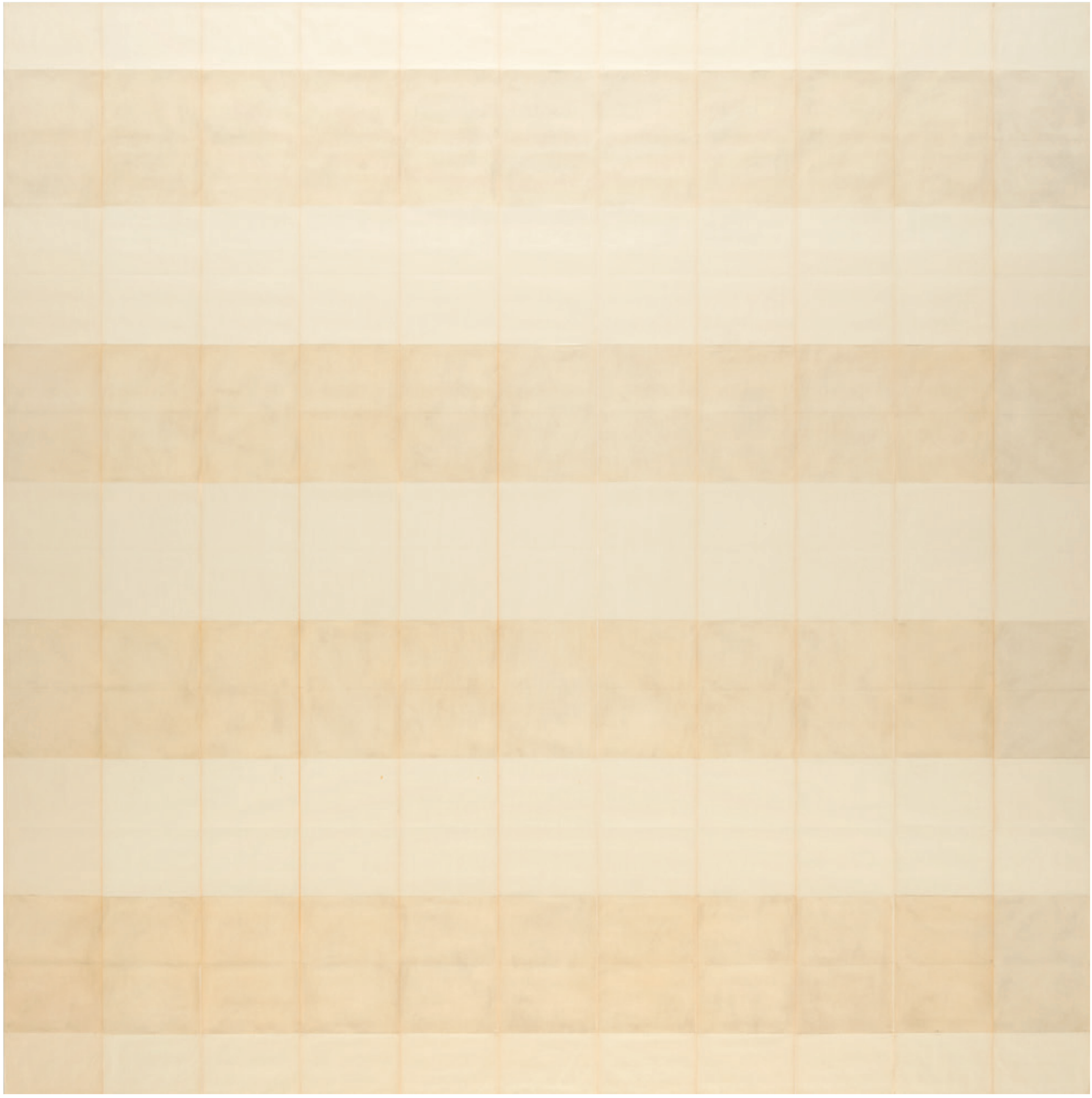
3 See Jean Dubuffet, *Asphyxiating Culture and Other Writings*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1988). Translator's note.

4 See Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977). Translator's note.

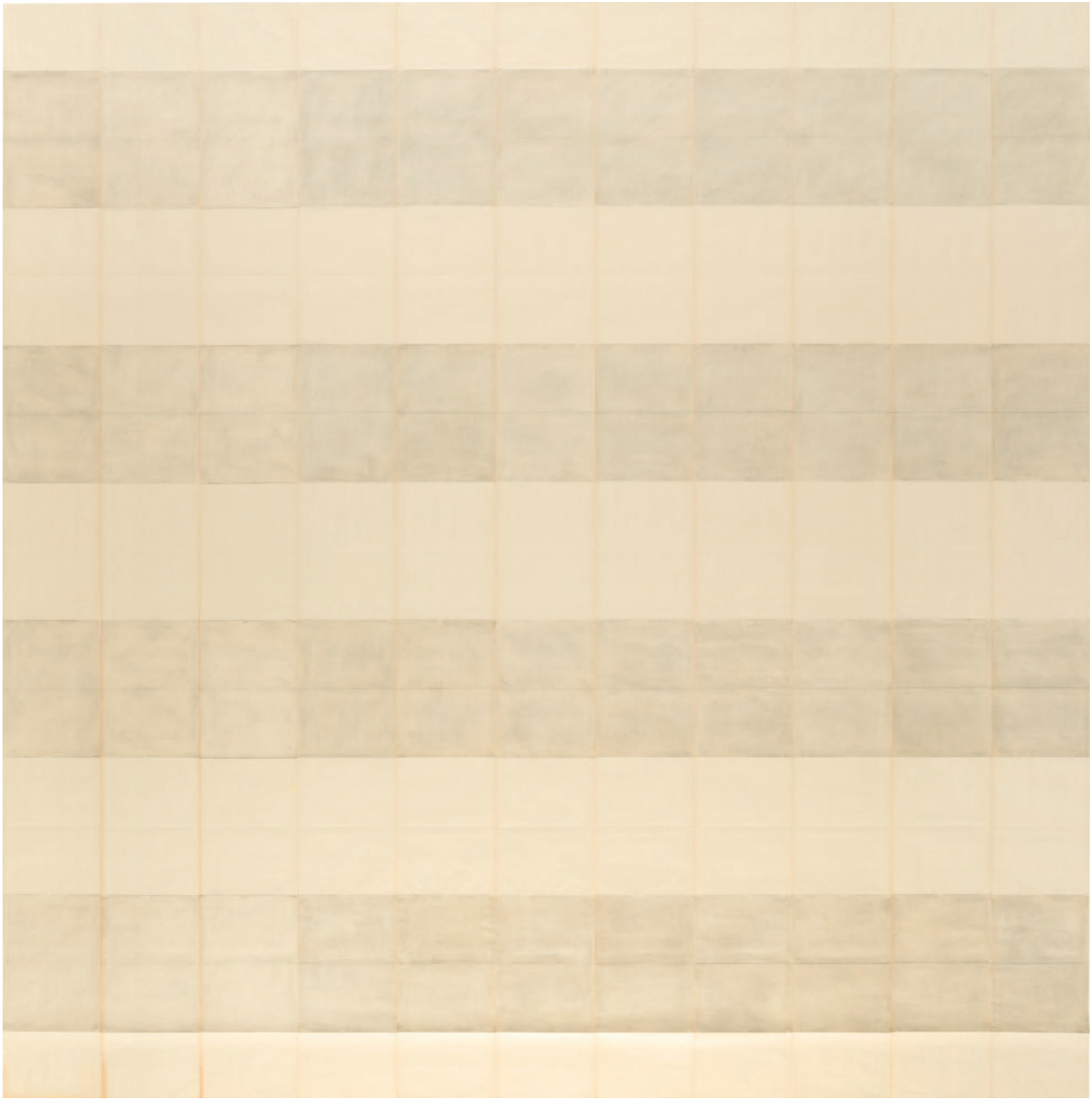
5 See Louis-René des Forêts, *The Children's Room*, trans. Jean Stewart (London: Calder, 1966). Translator's note.]







17 juillet 1989 (July 17, 1989)



5 août 1989 (August 5, 1989)

1965

1966

1967

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

[tracing paper] October 12, 1989 – June 14, 1991

After the works on paper, in which the *degree zero of painting* (of the gesture of painting) proved prolific and, to say the least, was problematized by Parmentier, the artist opts for tracing paper, a translucent and semi-transparent support.

Tracing paper leaves the work's support visible[1] and its transparency makes this an active part of the conditions of showing and perceiving. Its degree of opacity veils the wall but does not conceal it.

The first works on tracing paper with rubbed charcoal[2] are *9 décembre 1989* (December 9, 1989) and *14 décembre 1989* (December 14, 1989). In both, the charcoal is applied with the same circular movement, but the density is different in each work.[3] Parmentier even saturates, exhausts the transparency of the tracing paper. The rubbing makes evident on the surface the relief of the folds situated inside the apparatus (*24 décembre 1989* (December 24, 1989) (see p. 176). In many of the tracing paper works, the relief and grain of the support (panel, wall) on which the work is produced appear on the surface, the support being literally *traced* [*calqué*] by the rubbing of the medium (graphite, charcoal, pastel, oil-bar) and the pressure exerted on the strips.

In the first works in white pastel, the traces are "penciled and rubbed" (*13 décembre 1989* (December 13, 1989)), "with plats not rubbed" (*18 décembre 1989* (December 18, 1989)), "neutral with plats not rubbed" (*5 janvier 1990* (January 5, 1990, see p. 177), and "with plats scribbled and erased" (*20 février 1990* (February 20, 1990)).

The term *plats* ("flats') is applied to the pastel sticks and oil bars that Parmentier cuts into regular cylinders, between 1.5 and 5 centimeters long, depending on the medium used, and split lengthways in order to obtain two half-cylinders each with one flat side. Painting "with flats" means applying the flat side to the support, thus obtaining a regular trace of equal width. Starting with *6 mars 1991* (March 6, 1991) (see pp. 178), a work that Parmentier describes as "lines with almost joined and vertical *plats*," the latter reintroduces the notion of "*traits*" (strokes, marks) in white pastel applied *à plats* with the cut side of the pastel. Each stroke is applied/traced beside and after another stroke, "almost joined and vertical," from top to bottom, and of equal length, and from left to right, so as to cover the whole surface: *5 avril 1991* (April 5, 1991) (see p. 179).

Subsequently, the same principle is applied using sticks of oil bar in *6 mars 1991* (March 6, 1991) (see p. 178); *5 mai 1991 II* (May 5, 1991 II) (see p. 182); *5 mai 1991 IV* (May 5, 1991 IV) (see p. 183); and gray pastel: *19 avril 1991* (April 19, 1991) (see p. 180); *25 avril 1991* (April 25, 1991) (see p. 181); and *4 juin 1991 II* (June 4, 1991 II) (see p. 184).

Despite the seeming seriality of the work, each new piece is seen not as part of an ensemble but as a singular value, and several works may be dated to the same day. For example, *5 mai 1991* (May 5, 1991), from *I* to *V*, is a series of variations on the same gesture ("8 sequences, white oil-bar/tracing paper 90/95, almost joined and vertical strokes, 304 × 300, Brussels"), with the same paper, the same formats, and the same place[4] in a set of five; with the indication "idem" written in the notebook as many times as the work is executed.

The works on tracing paper end with *6 juin 1991* (June 6, 1991), a "tracing paper folded and left blank, then unfolded." This work shows the tracing paper "blank," with only the folds and the marking from the date stamp.

1 The works on tracing paper and calque polyester are conceived to be exhibited only on white walls.

2 These details are written by Parmentier in the notebook, in which he records details of his works.

3 *24 décembre 1989* (December 24, 1989) **(see p. 176)** and *14 février 1990* (February 14, 1990) **(see fig. 117, p. 171)**. The latter is the largest work that Parmentier left us. It comprises an ensemble of 36 strips in a progressive sequence going from 1 to 8.

Apart from the first strip, which situates the hanging of the ensemble, each sub-ensemble comprises between 2 to 8 strips, and when hung these sub-ensembles are separated by the width of one strip (37.5 cm). When hung and exhibited, the work is 16.875 meters long. It was made for the exhibition "Buren Parmentier" at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

4 Starting in April 1991, Parmentier traveled regularly to Brussels to prepare the exhibition "Buren Parmentier." He completed a number of his works in the studio of Guy Massaux at 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels (Belgium)).

106

106 **The two covers of the exhibition catalogue "Um 1968 konkrete utopien in kunst und gesellschaft," Marie Luise Syring (ed.), Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf (Germany), May 27 – July 8, 1990, Cologne, DuMont, 1990 (soft and hard cover), 25.1 × 20 cm each.**

107 **Text by Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren, "Il faut sérieusement douter…" (It is highly doubtful…) in exhibition catalogue "Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France," Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (Canada), January 25 – April 7, 1991, pp. 166-167 (English), pp. 167-169 (French), and cover, 25.4 × 18.7 cm.**
Written in April 1990, this text was reprinted in French and English in *Galeries Magazine*, no. 41 (February – March 1991): p. 5, in the "L'éditorial par interim" section, followed by: "The text below, which was published in the exhibition catalogue 'Individualités, 14 Contemporary Artists from France,' at the Art Gallery of Ontario, provoked emotion and anger from the guest artists. Gérard Garouste replies to Buren and Parmentier."

Garouste, like Parmentier, was represented by Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Paris (France).

On this occasion, Parmentier exhibited *13 décembre 1989* (December 13, 1989).

Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France

Michel Parmentier

Born | Né : 1938, Paris
Lives and works | Vit et travaille : Paris
Stopped painting | Cesse de peindre : 1968–1983

It is highly doubtful that any artist, whoever she or he may be, can represent a country; a group based only on nationality can simply, at best, confront individualities and display them in a showcase. The very idea of a group show is stupid when selection is based on the criterion of nationality (lest we be misunderstood: in our opinion, other criteria could be very stupid or extremely stupid, this one is just plain stupid). At the risk of seeming idiotic, we simply do not understand why other criteria (such as age, sex, skin or hair colour) should be deemed less interesting.

We have nothing in common with the people who are invited here, nor with those who were not invited and stayed home; simply to be French, in this domain, means nothing to us.

Nevertheless, this exhibition will at least have the merit of clearly reflecting the general situation of the art world today, a situation which not only includes the French art scene but, we shall be so bold to say, is perfectly exemplified by the French scene. We are showing alongside artists totally devoid of a critical approach to painting and who are, moreover, bursting with talent. They reproduce, somewhat poorly, what is being done here and elsewhere, and, what is worse, they are several years behind the times. Talent, lack of reflection (supposedly replaced by a rather lame humour): this is the situation in France, furthered by a totally inadequate specialized press, by critics of the trivial (who are nonetheless charming, touching and pitiable. Perhaps venal. Certain have even been called incompetent). We don't have anything against them: how can one expect rigorous criticism when there is no serious work to be found, or it is so rare? From this point of view, one might say that the mistake was not the presence of the other invited artists, but our presence.

It may seem wrong or inconsistent on our part to have accepted the

invitation. We did so deliberately, though it puts us in an awkward position. We will never be able to compete with talent or cleverness, we have never tried to do so; we will not compete with our so-called colleagues because any work whose goal is to question certain tenets is condemned by the facile answers of others; the attitudes of those who are showing here alongside us, easy to grasp (too easy) and thoroughly mediocre, speak of ground that has already been broken, purely and simply, even cynically rehashing "tradition." Vis-à-vis these artists, we are, in essence, vulnerable and lack credibility.

This uninteresting exhibition is really quite interesting: it exposes worthless works for what they are and gives an accurate picture of the total abdication of artistic responsibility in the international, and more especially, the French art scene, this France, where people pretend to paint and just spread paint around, where they pretend to protest and merely produce inoffensive gags, and where, more rarely, they pretend to reflect deeply and only exhaust secondhand ideas. All these practices are complementary. Here, we are alongside people who are taking advantage of a crisis in which they are not doing so badly and who consider it chic to denounce in private what they accept in public.

We are present here to distance ourselves from the whole situation as far as that is possible, and, if no one understands us, we will not hold it against them. We leave ourselves open to your sarcastic remarks, to your smirks and perhaps even to your admiration. Not with serenity. We are not and shall never be serene.

Michel Parmentier
Daniel Buren
Paris, April 1990

Il faut sérieusement douter qu'un artiste, quel qu'il soit, puisse représenter son pays ; un groupe fondé sur la seule nationalité ne peut, au mieux, qu'accumuler des individualités et faire catalogue. L'idée d'une exposition de groupe est stupide quand le critère de sélection est la nationalité (entendons-nous bien : d'autres critères pourraient être très stupides ou extrêmement stupides, celui-ci est simplement stupide). Nous ne cherchons pas à nous

aveugler d'évidences mais nous n'arrivons pas à comprendre en quoi d'autres critères seraient moins intéressants (tels l'âge, le sexe, la couleur de la peau ou des cheveux).

Nous n'avons rien de commun avec les gens qui sont invités ici, ni avec ceux qui, non invités, sont restés au pays ; être français, dans ce domaine, n'implique aucune communauté.

Toutefois, cette exposition-ci devrait avoir le mérite de refléter absolument la situation générale du monde artistique aujourd'hui, situation à laquelle la scène française ne saurait échapper, nous osons même dire qu'elle en est exemplaire.

Nous côtoyons ici des artistes totalement démunis d'approche critique sur la peinture et, de surcroît, gavés de talent.

Ils répètent tous, en un peu plus mal, ce qui se fait sur place ou ailleurs et, pire, le répètent avec quelques années de retard. Talent, absence de réflexion (qu'un humour poussif serait censé remplacer) : c'est ce qu'on a en France largement relayé par une presse spécialisée totalement déficiente, par des critiques de l'insignifiance (au demeurant charmants, attendrissants et pitoyables. Vénaux peut-être. On dit même que certains sont nuls). Nous ne leur en voulons pas : comment attendre, quand il n'y a pas de travail sérieux, ou si rare, une critique exigeante ?

On peut dans cette perspective, dire que l'erreur n'est pas d'inviter les autres artistes présents mais de nous inviter *nous*. L'erreur ou l'inconséquence, pourrait-on alors être tenté de penser, serait dans le fait que nous ayons accepté cette invitation. Nous le faisons délibérément quoique dans une situation très inconfortable. Nous ne pourrons jamais rivaliser avec le talent ni l'astuce, nous n'avons jamais essayé de le faire : nous ne rivaliserons pas avec nos prétendus confrères parce que tout travail qui se risque dans le lieu du questionnement est condamné par les démarches faciles ; les attitudes de ceux qui exposent ici à côté de nous, simples à appréhender (trop simples) et intimement médiocres parlent, elles, d'un lieu déjà défriché de l'art, voire même rabâchent purement et simplement, et cyniquement, la « tradition ». Nous sommes, en face d'eux, par essence, fragiles et non crédibles.

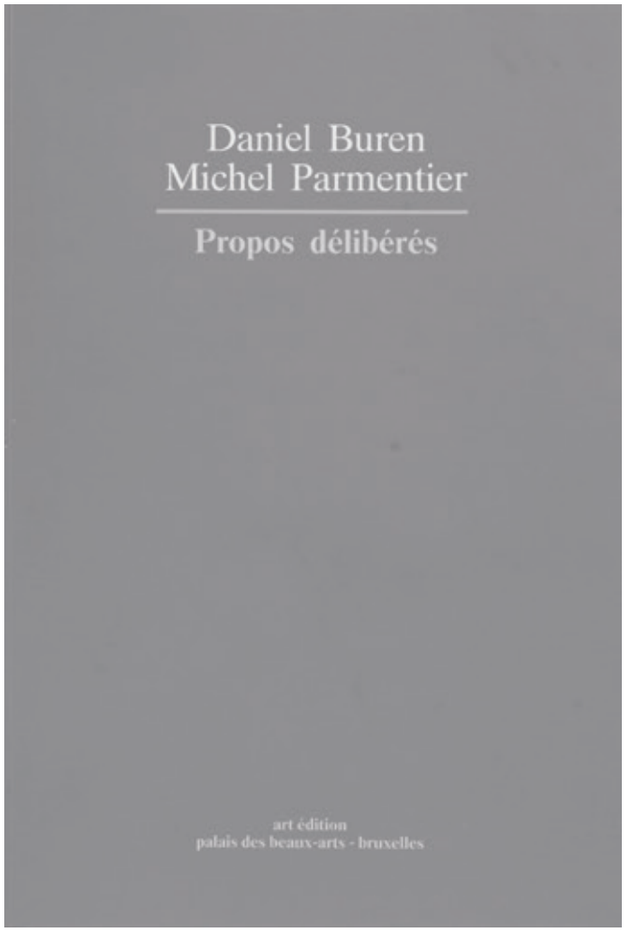
Cette exposition inintéressante est tout à fait intéressante : elle montre ce qui est nul et donne un bon reflet de cette démission internationale et particulièrement française, cette France qui prétend peindre et ne fait qu'étaler de la peinture, qui prétend contester et ne produit que d'inoffensifs

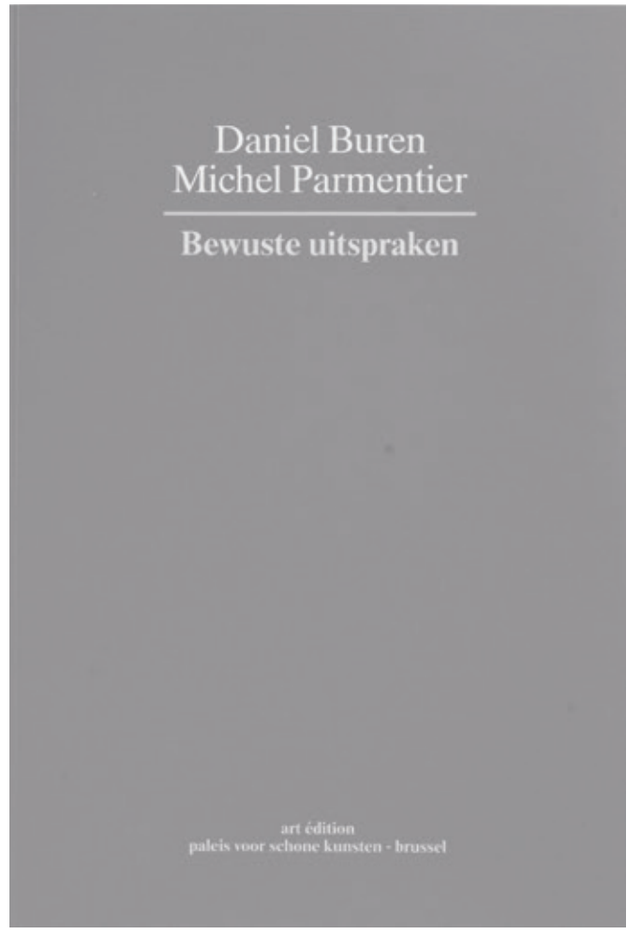
gags, qui, plus rarement, prétend réfléchir et n'épuise que des idées d'occasion. Commerces complémentaires. Nous côtoyons ici un monde qui profite d'une crise où il ne se trouve pas si mal et qui trouve chic de dénoncer en privé ce qu'il accepte publiquement.

Nous sommes ici présents pour nous abstraire de cette histoire, autant que faire se peut, et si nous ne sommes pas compris nous n'en voudrons à personne.

Nous nous exposons à vos sarcasmes, à vos sourires et même, peut-être, à votre admiration. Ce n'est pas sereinement. Nous ne serons jamais sereins.

Michel Parmentier
Daniel Buren
Fait à Paris, avril 1990.





108

108 **Photo-souvenir:** ***Propos délibérés: Daniel Buren – Michel Parmentier, Entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990*** **(Villeurbanne: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), cover.**
Photo-souvenir: ***Bewuste uitspraken: gesprek tussen Daniel Buren, Michel Parmentier, Anne Baldassari, op 11, 23 en 28 januari 1990*** **(Villeurbanne: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), cover.**
Book published for the exhibition "Buren Parmentier," in French and Dutch (translation: Menno Meeuwis).
Anne Baldassari was a curator at the Musée national d'art moderne Georges Pompidou (1986-1992).

109


DE TENTOONSTELLINGEN VAN HET PALEIS VOOR SCHONE KUNSTEN / LES EXPOSITIONS DU PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS

BUREN PARMENTIER

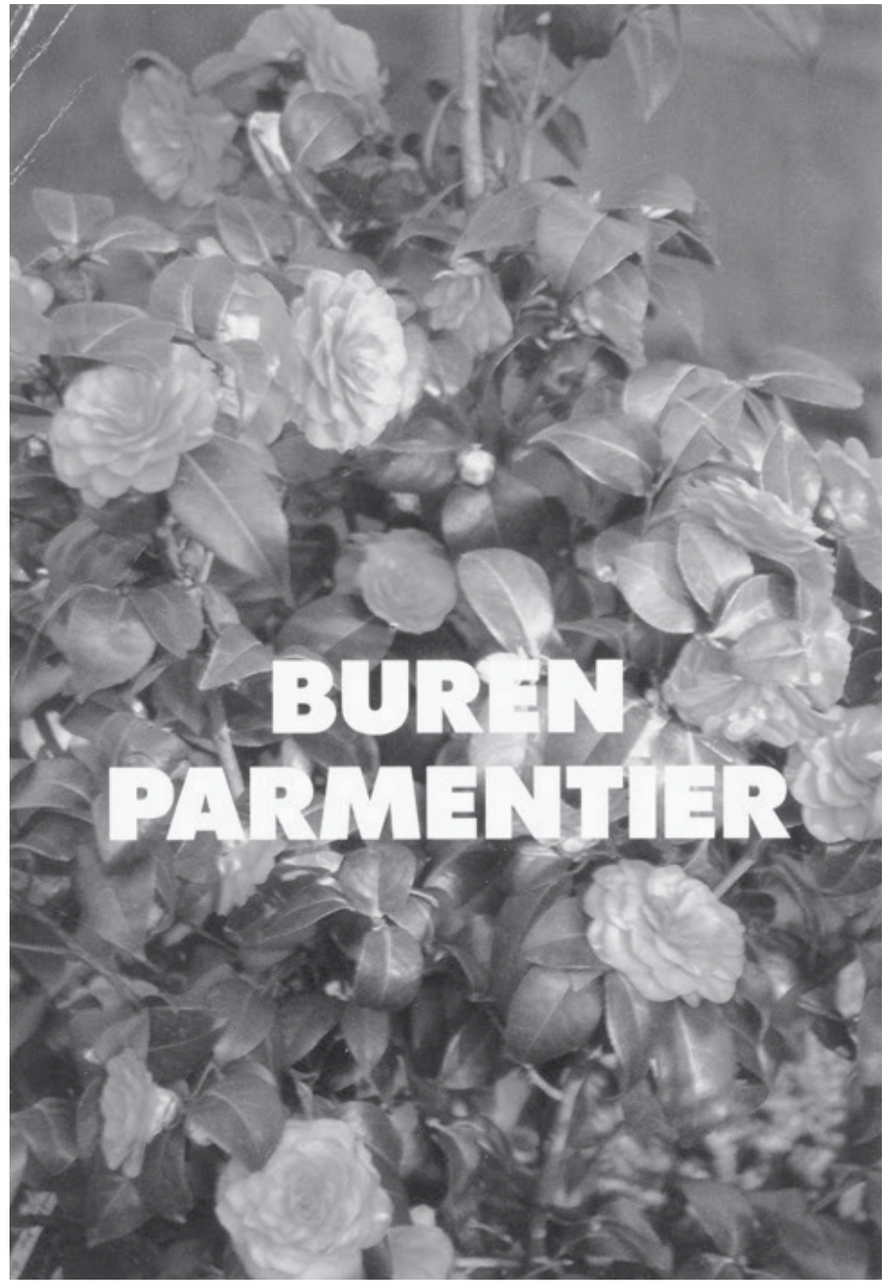
Vernissage le jeudi 6 juin 1991 de 18h à 20h
Palais des Beaux-Arts
23 Rue Ravenstein, 1000 Bruxelles
Exposition ouverte du 7 juin au 20 juillet 1991,
du mardi au dimanche inclus, de 10h à 16h45
Fermé le lundi
Info : 32-2-507.84.66
Avec la collaboration de l'Association Française d'Action Artistique
et le Service Culturel de l'Ambassade de France en Belgique.

Opening op donderdag 6 juni 1991 van 18u tot 20u
Paleis voor Schone Kunsten
Ravensteinstraat 23, 1000 Brussel
Tentoonstelling van 7 juni t/m 20 juli 1991,
van dinsdag t/m zondag, van 10u tot 16u45
Gesloten op maandag
Info : 32-2-507.84.66
In samenwerking met de Association Française d'Action Artistique
en de Culturele Dienst van de Franse Ambassade in België.

La Société des Expositions reçoit l'appui de Le VIJ/Express, Sabena, La Loterie Nationale, Hopri, IBM et Hôtel Métropole.

De Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen wordt gesteund door Kwack, Sabena, De Nationale Loterij, Hopri, IBM en Hotel Metropole.

110

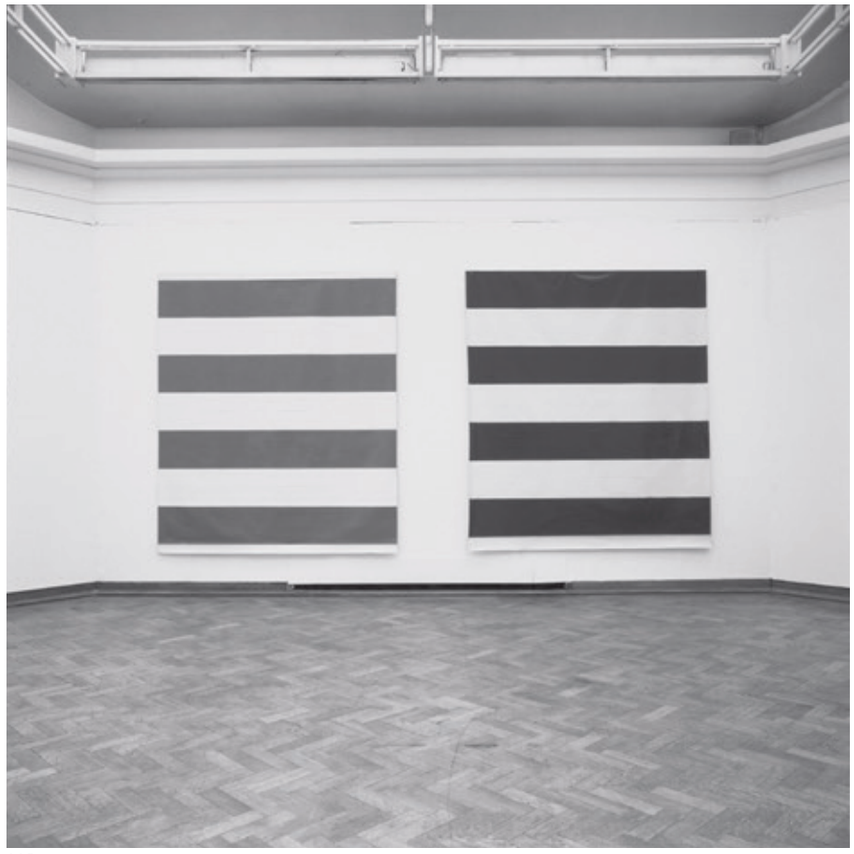


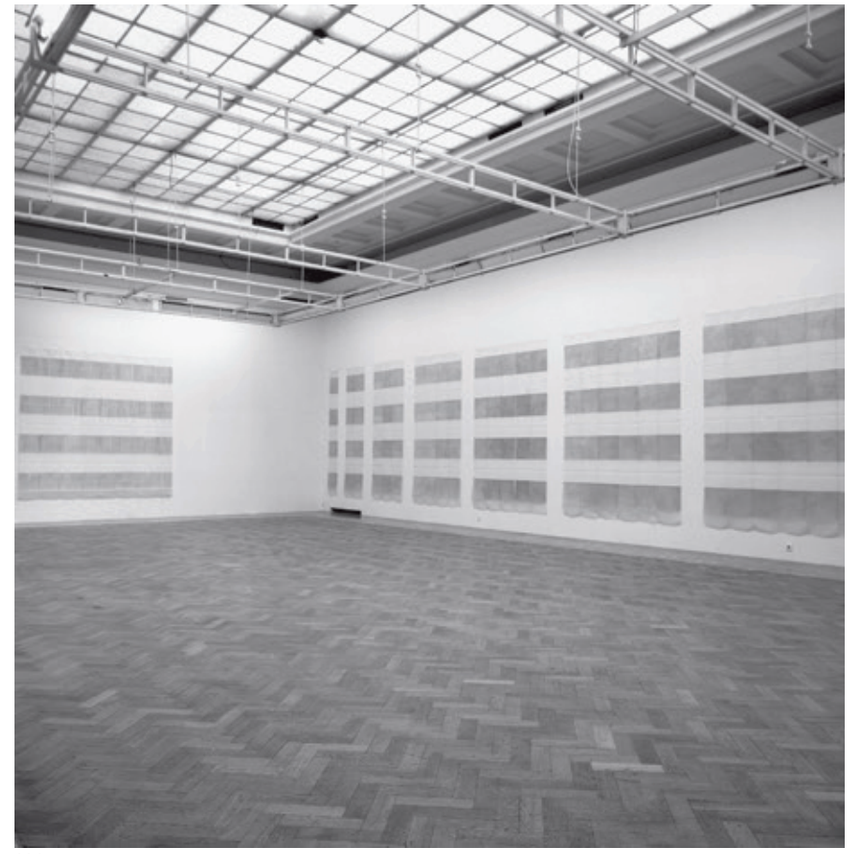
109 **Poster "Buren Parmentier," June 7 – July 20, 1991, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium), 60 × 40 cm.**
French version. A Dutch version was also made.

110 **Invitation to the exhibition "Buren Parmentier," Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium), June 7 – July 20, 1991, recto and verso, 19 × 13 cm.**
It was at the suggestion of Herman J. Daled, collector and chairman (1988-1998) of the board of the Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and under the coordination of Dirk Snauwaert, head of contemporary art programming (1989-1995), that the exhibition "Buren Parmentier" was held in Brussels. Buren and Parmentier were their own curators.

When asked why their exhibition was not held in France, Parmentier replied: "...in France, our project would have more than likely have become an *event*; that, cultural prejudices aside, our work would have been read only in relation to our shared past, our quarrel, etc. In other words, not at all" (*Propos délibérés*, p. 11).

111 **Photo-souvenir: Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium), June 1991, black-and-white photograph from negative, 24 × 36 mm.**





112
113

114
115

116
117

112-117 **Photos-souvenirs: exhibition "Buren Parmentier," Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium), black-and-white and color photographs, black-and-white reproduction from negatives and transparencies, 6 × 6 cm each.**

112 Left and right: work by Daniel Buren, *Planches de contrecollé colorées* (Boards of colored plywood), "situated works," 1991.

113 Left: *20 mars 1967* (March 20, 1967); right: *30 avril 1966* (April 30, 1966).

114 Left: partial view of *5 avril 1991* (April 5, 1991); right: *19 avril 1991* (April 19, 1991).

115 Left: *8 avril 1991* (April 8, 1991); right: partial view of *14 février 1990* (February 14, 1990).

116 On the left-hand wall, from left to right: partial view of *5 mai 1991 II* (May 5, 1991 II), *5 mai 1991 III* (May 5, 1991 III), *5 mai 1991 IV* (May 5, 1991 IV), *5 mai 1991 V* (May 5, 1991 V), *31 mai 1991 I* (May 31, 1991 I), and *31 mai 1991 II* (May 31, 1991 II). On the right-hand wall: Daniel Buren, *Quand la peinture fait le mur* (When painting creates the wall), "situated work," 1991.

117 Partial view of *14 février 1990* (February 14 , 1990).

LETTRE OUVERTE

QUAND DES QUESTIONS QUE NOUS VOULONS SERIEUSES SONT ELUDEES ENTRE POIRE ET CIGARE DANS LES DINERS EN VILLE

En écrivant deux textes : *Propos délibérés* (1) et le texte de Toronto (2),nous savions, Daniel Buren et moi, que nous n'allions pas nous faire ici que des amis, ce n'en était d'ailleurs pas le but : nous voulions seulement faire bouger un milieu artistique (artistes, critiques, galeries, institution, commissaires, voire collectionneurs) qui est, en majorité, de plus en plus en proie à une torpeur post-prandiale (c'est sans doute vrai aussi ailleurs mais, comme il a déjà été dit : balayons d'abord devant notre porte).

Nous cherchions à susciter un débat qui nous semble urgent. Nous n'eûmes droit qu'à des invectives et des menaces directes ou rapportées et aux manifestations d'un affolement convulsif.

Toutefois il y eut deux toutes petites prises de position publiques d'artistes, malheureusement ineptes, car n'abordant en aucun cas le problème de la peinture, qui est pourtant bien le coeur du débat. La critique, si nous la portons, nous la supportons aussi : **c'est cela la pensée vivante.** Il y eut aussi un article malencontreux (dans *le Figaro*) où *Propos délibérés* est qualifié "d'un peu stalinien" (l'auteur nous a avoué depuis avoir peut-être lu notre livre un peu vite ; au moins, lui, l'a-t-il lu) je connais son honnêteté et lui pardonne sans arrière-pensées sa légèreté accidentelle.

Pour le reste, les ragots circulent, au mieux sur la foi de morceaux choisis diffusés par voie de photocopies, au pire sans que les textes aient été lus du tout.

Tout cela relève précisément d'un parisianisme que nous stigmatisons (que ces Parisiens soient de Paris ou d'ailleurs), d'un corporatisme frileux, jamais du courage de débattre et d'argumenter sérieusement.

Nous ne sommes que moyennement surpris.

Mais, quand mon propre marchand, Michel Durand-Dessert, décide de censurer purement et simplement *Propos délibérés* en refusant de le mettre en vente dans la librairie de son nouvel espace, je trouve cela extrêmement grave. Toute censure avoue une faiblesse. Certes quelques artistes de sa galerie sont malmenés dans nos textes mais, apparemment, Michel ne les juge pas capables de se défendre eux-mêmes sur le terrain des idées, sur le terrain de la peinture. Il censure.

Cet acte m'amène à quitter une galerie où je ne me sens plus à ma place. Je le fais à regret car j'ai entretenu, depuis plus de dix ans, des rapports de confiance et d'amitié avec M. D-D, mais je le fais sans remords.

J'espère qu'il a plus agi sous l'effet de quelques pressions (peu difficiles à situer) que par conviction profonde et qu'il ne deviendra jamais un Templon. Je lui sais d'ailleurs encore gré d'exposer, pour ne parler que des Français, des artistes comme Morellet ou Verjux, que je respecte ; mais qu'il ne sache pas que la censure (outre qu'elle est un acte vulgaire) se révèle inefficace à moyen terme m'étonne de lui.

Je te garde, Michel, malgré cet accroc de taille, mon amitié intacte. Presque intacte.

Paris, le 1er novembre 1991.

Michel Parmentier

(1) Livre d'entretiens réalisés avec Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990 - Art édition, Lyon et Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles, publié à l'occasion d'une exposition Buren - Parmentier en juin 1991.
(2) *In* catalogue de l'exposition "Individualités : 14 Contemporary artists from France", Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, janvier 1991.

118

118 **Open letter from Michel Parmentier, "Quand des questions que nous voulons sérieuses sont éludées entre poire et cigare dans les dîners en ville" (When the questions we want taken seriously are eluded between brandy and cigars at fancy dinners in town), November 1, 1991, photocopy, recto and verso, 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[WHEN THE QUESTIONS WE WANT TAKEN SERIOUSLY ARE ELUDED BETWEEN BRANDY AND CIGARS AT FANCY DINNERS IN TOWN

In writing two texts — *Propos delibérés*[1] and the text from Toronto[2] — Daniel Buren and I knew that we were not going to make many friends here, which besides wasn't our aim. We only wanted to give the artistic milieu a prod (artists, critics, galleries, institutions, curators, collectors) which, for the most part, is increasingly prone to post-prandial drowsiness. (No doubt this is true elsewhere, but as others have said: get your own house in order).

We were looking to stir up a debate that seems to us urgent. In response, we received only insults and direct or indirect threats and signs of convulsive panic.

However, there were two small public stances, held by unfortunately inept artists — inept because in neither case do they address the problem of painting — which get to the heart of the debate. If we pass the criticism, we can also stand it: *that's the life of thought.* There was also an unfortunate article (in *Le Figaro*) where *Propos delibérés* is qualified as "a little Stalin-like" (the author has since admitted to us that he might have read our book a little quickly; at least he had read it). I appreciate his honesty and pardon him without reservations for his unintended glibness.

As for the rest, gossip circulates, at least based on select passages distributed through photocopies, in the worst cases without the texts ever having been read.

All of this stems precisely from a Parisianism that stigmatizes us (these Parisians might be from Paris or elsewhere), from a faint-hearted corporatism, never from the courage to debate and argue seriously.

We are not really surprised.

But when my own dealer, Michel Durand-Dessert, decides quite simply to censor *Propos delibérés* by refusing to sell it in the bookshop in his new space, I find that extremely serious. All censorship acknowledges a weakness. No doubt certain artists in his gallery were badly treated in our texts, but apparently Michel doesn't think they are capable of defending themselves at the level of ideas, at the level of painting. He censors.

This act prompts me to leave a gallery where I feel I no longer belong. I do this with much regret, because for more than ten years, I have maintained a relation of confidence and friendship with M. D-D, but I do so without remorse.

I hope he acted more out of a certain pressure (which isn't difficult to locate) than from deep conviction, and that he'll never become a Templon.[3] Besides, I know he willingly exhibits artists (to speak only of the French) like [François] Morellet or [Michel] Verjux, who I respect. But that he doesn't know that censorship (beyond being a vulgar act) turns out to be ineffective in the medium-term surprises me from him.

Michel, notwithstanding this considerable snag, I keep our friendship intact. Almost intact.

Paris, November 1, 1991

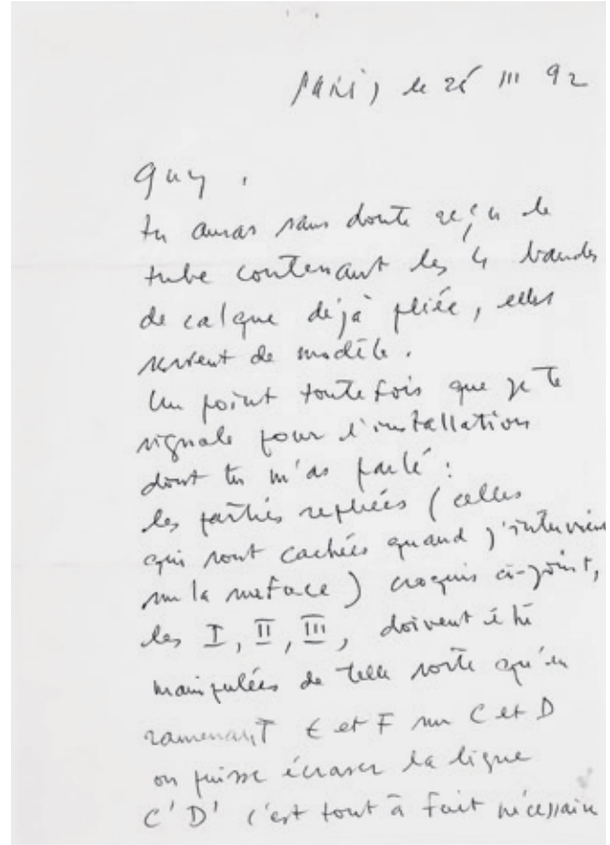
Michel Parmentier

1 Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés: Entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991).

2 "Michel Parmentier," published in the exhibition catalogue *Individualities: 14 Contemporary Artists from France,* Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (Canada), January 1991 **(see pp. 164-165)**.

3 Daniel Templon is a gallery owner in Paris. Translator's note.]

119



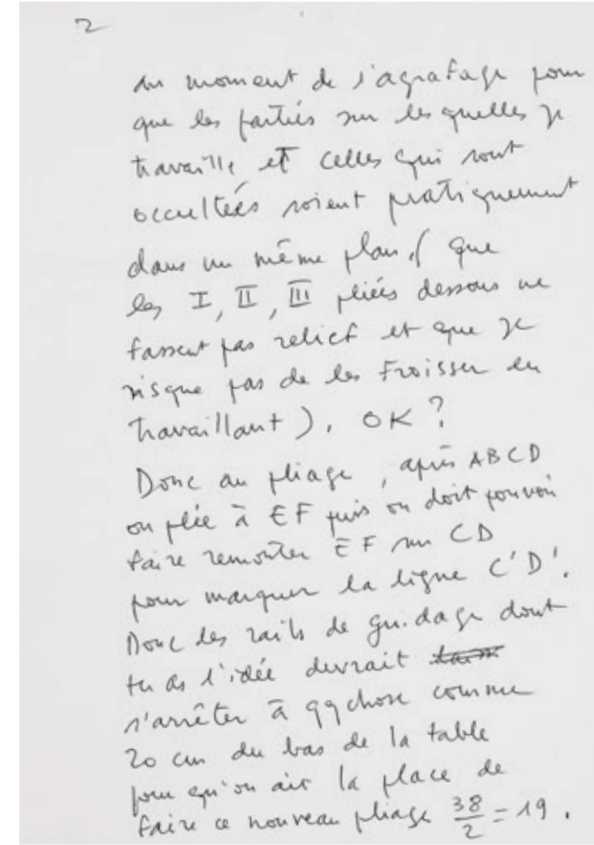
Paris, le 26 III 92

Guy,

Tu auras sans doute reçu le tube contenant les 4 bandes de calque déjà pliée, elles servent de modèle.

Un point toutefois que je te signale pour l'installation dont tu m'as parlé :

les parties repliées (celles qui sont cachées quand j'intervient sur la surface) croquis ci-joint, les I, II, III, doivent être manipulées de telle sorte qu'en ramenant E et F sur C et D on puisse écraser la ligne C'D' (c'est tout à fait nécessaire

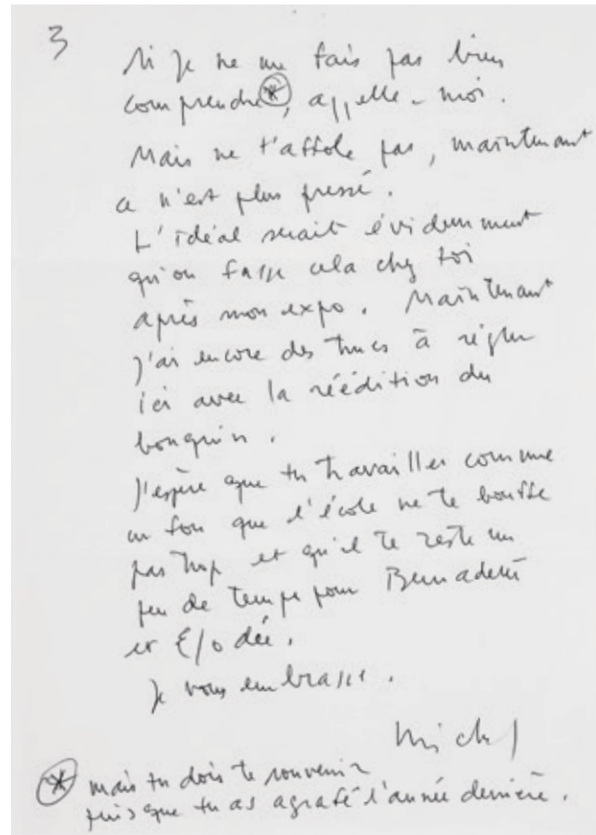


2

au moment de l'agrafage pour que les parties sur lesquelles je travaille et celles qui sont occultées soient pratiquement dans un même plan (que les I, II, III pliées dessous ne fassent pas relief et que je risque pas de les froisser en travaillant), OK ?

Donc au pliage, après ABCD on plie à EF puis on doit pouvoir faire remonter EF sur CD pour marquer la ligne C'D'.

Donc les rails de guidage dont tu as l'idée devrait ~~tom~~ s'arrêter à qq chose comme 20 cm du bas de la table pour qu'on ait la place de faire ce nouveau pliage $\frac{38}{2} = 19$.



3

Si je ne me fais pas bien comprendre (*), appelle-moi.

Mais ne t'affole pas, maintenant ce n'est plus pressé.

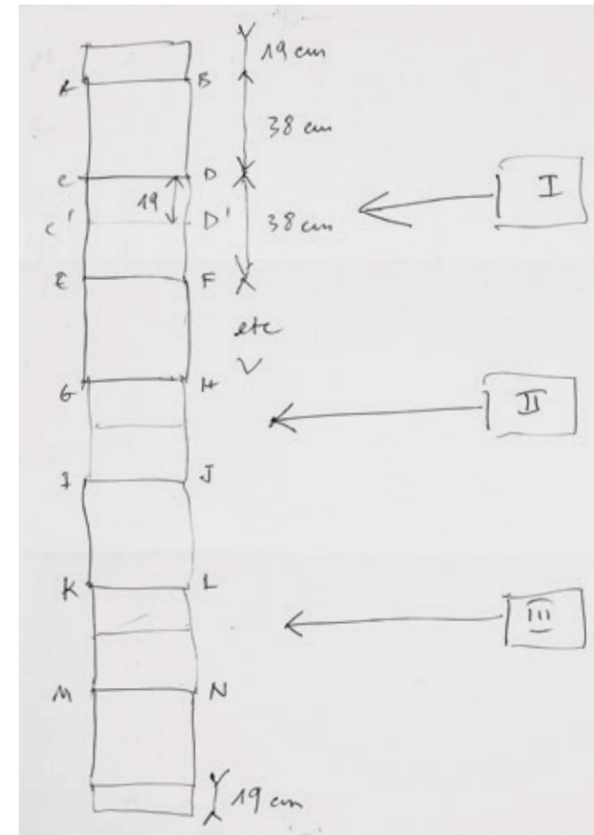
L'idéal serait évidemment qu'on fasse cela chez toi après mon expo. Maintenant j'ai encore des trucs à régler ici avec la réédition du bouquin.

J'espère que tu travailles comme un fou que l'école ne te bouffe pas trop et qu'il te reste un peu de temps pour Bernadette et E/o dée.

Je vous embrasse.

Mich

(*) mais tu dois te souvenir puisque tu as agrafé l'année dernière.



120

119 **Table for cutting and pre-folding the strips in Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels, Belgium), black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 6 × 6 cm.**

120 **Handwritten letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, March 25, 1992, letter paper with "Jeand'heurf Extra Strong" watermark and sketch-diagram of a strip, 4 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**

[Guy,

No doubt you received the tube containing the 4 sections of pre-folded tracing paper. They serve as a trial model.

Nevertheless, I wanted to alert you about something for the installation you spoke about:

The folded sections (those which are hidden when I operate on the surface)—I, II, III on the enclosed sketch—must be handled in such a way that, placing E and F on C and D, one can flatten down the line C'D'; this is very necessary at the moment of stapling so that the parts on which I work and those which are concealed are practically on the same plane. (That I, II, III folded underneath are not in relief and that I don't risk creasing them when working on them). OK?

So, for the folding, after ABCD, fold to EF, then one ought to be able to move EF back onto CD to mark the line C'D'.

So, the guidance rods you suggested should stop at something like 20 cm from the bottom of the table so that we have the place to make the new fold 38 ÷ 2 = 19.

If I haven't been clear[1], call me.

But don't panic—it's no longer urgent.

Obviously, the ideal thing would be to do this at your house after my exhibition. In the meantime, I've still things to get sorted out with the re-edition of the book.[2]

I hope that you're working like a madman, that school isn't eating up your time too much, and you've got a little time left for B. and E.

Love

Michel

1 But you should remember since you did the stapling last year.

2 Reference to Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés: Entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991). Translator's note.]

Pierrette Bloch *Dessins de crin* *1992*

Sans doute

Sans doute (ce qui, pour qui veut l'entendre, signifie le contraire et implique ces certitudes dont vous n'êtes ni si avares ni si sûrs). Sans doute, donc, pourrez-vous encore parler de peinture, dites ce que vous voulez. Vous ne parlerez de rien. Nous y sommes habitués. Essayons donc plutôt du côté du doute. Samuel Beckett l'avait déjà senti et dit, je n'invente évidemment rien, à propos de Bram van Velde il avait choisi en fin de compte de se taire. Quand nous sommes là pour vous dé-plaire nous restons où nous serons. Mortellement seuls. Bon.

La peinture hoquète, nous assène des somptuosités ressassées ou des astuces dont devrait rougir le pire oncle drôle aux repas de mariage, ou encore roule les épaules, affichant une violence de façade qui, soumise d'avance, quand bien même vêtue de cuir, ne cherche qu'à séduire.

Le temps, la durée seuls peuvent mesurer nos actions et leur pertinence (ce ne sont ni Mozart ni Rimbaud qui viendraient, j'en suis sûr, infirmer cette assertion, leur génie fulgurant n'est pas en cause - que voulez-vous me faire dire ?) mais, ce génie, la longue et ahurante quête l'a remplacé.

Dieu est mort et le communisme aussi, la religion, le libéralisme et les nationalismes se sont assis sur leurs tabourets laissés vacants, nous nous en mordrons les doigts ; mais l'art qui se survit c'est quoi ? Simon un substitut honteux, un godemiché qu'on range dans un tiroir secret ou un emblème qu'on affiche comme le ferait n'importe quelle Verdurin ?

Combien, en France, échappent à cette loi ? En comptant large une demi-douzaine. Ils font un pont avec la vingtaine, qui, à l'étranger, sont sérieux eux aussi. Une demi-douzaine c'est peu et beaucoup. Heureusement la crise du marché est sévère et découragera, avec un peu de chance, de nouveaux bataillons de suiveurs malins ou idiots (ou les deux à la fois) ; c'est ce qu'on peut espérer.

Rêvons de voir se fermer les écoles d'art. Rêvons de voir Beaubourg transformé en crèche, en collège technique ou, que sais-je ?, en annexe du Ministère des Finances.

Bon, mais en attendant ces jours heureux, essayons de résister. Comme Buren à sa façon, comme Hantaï, comme quelques autres. Comme Pierrette Bloch.

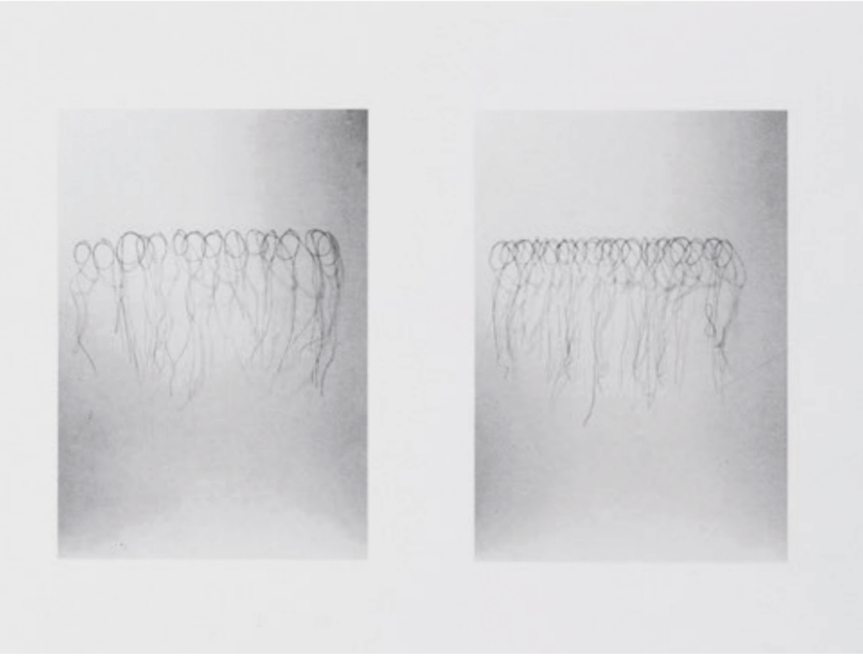
Pierrette Bloch n'a jamais cédé à la mode, aucune réminiscence n'a déposé de scories sur son travail. Elle est je crois dans la quête acharnée et aveugle. Lucide et bête comme pouvait l'être l'œuvre de Beckett. Têtue, fragile et se méfiant des effets rapides. Travail silencieux et pudique fait de trois fois rien. Elle fait assurément partie de cette demi-douzaine d'artistes.

A l'étranger On Kawara ou Ryman ou Wiener ou Louise Lawler continuent par d'autres moyens les refus, questionnements, râles, colères et rires, de Rodchenko, Pollock ou Manzoni. Merci à eux.

Et merci à Pierrette Bloch, pour un peu ils me sauveraient de mon désespoir, de ma haine de la peinture. Merci d'être, j'en serais fier, de ma famille.

Michel Parmentier
Paris, le 15 juin 1992

121



121 **Invitation to the exhibition by Pierrette Bloch "Dessins de crin" (Hair drawings), Galerie de France, Paris (France), 1992, text by Michel Parmentier, "Sans doute" (No doubt), June 15, 1992, 15 × 30 cm (folded).**

[No Doubt

No doubt (which, for those who want to understand it, signifies the opposite and implies those certitudes of which one is not so certain and not so sure). And so, no doubt you are still able to talk about painting, say what you want. You will speak of nothing. We are used to it. Rather, let's try things from the perspective of doubt. Samuel Beckett had already sensed it and said à propos of Bram van Velde — I'm obviously not inventing this — that in the end he had chosen to keep quiet. When we are here to displease you, we'll stay where we are. Mortally alone. Okay.

Painting hiccups, striking us with endlessly repeated lavishness or tricks that would make the worst uncle trying to be funny blush at a wedding dinner, or also a shrug of the shoulders, displaying a violent side that, agreed upon in advance and even dressed up in leathers, only seeks to seduce.

Time and duration alone can measure our actions and their pertinence (I'm sure it's neither Mozart nor Rimbaud who will contradict this claim, their dazzling genius is not in question — what else do you want me to say?) but the long and breathless search replaces this genius.

God is dead, and so is communism; religion, liberalism, and nationalisms are occupying the vacated seats, and we're kicking ourselves. But art that survives is what? Nothing but a shameful substitute, a dildo that one keeps in a secret drawer, or an emblem that you display like any old sycophant [*Verdurin*][1] would do.

In France, how many people escape this law? Being generous, half a dozen. They join up with the twenty or so from abroad who are also serious. Half a dozen — it's few and many.

Fortunately, the crisis in the art market is severe and hopefully will discourage the new battalions of shrewd or idiotic followers (or both at once); at least this is what we can hope for.

Let's dream of seeing the art schools close down. Dream of seeing Beaubourg become a nursery, a technical college, or — what do I know? — annexed to the Treasury Department. Right, but while waiting for this happy day to arrive, try to resist. Like Buren in his own way, like Hantaï, like a few others. Like Pierrette Bloch.[2]

Pierrette Bloch has never given way to fashion. No reminiscence has left a bad mark on her work. I believe she is devoted to a relentless and blind search. Lucid and idiotic in the same way as the work of Beckett. Obstinate, fragile, and distrustful of surefire effects. Silent and discreet work made with next to nothing. Doubtless she would be one of these half-dozen artists.

Abroad, On Kawara or [Robert] Ryman or [Lawrence] Weiner or Louise Lawler continue the refusals, questionings, rants, anger, and laughter of [Alexander] Rodchenko, [Jackson] Pollock, or [Piero] Manzoni by other means. Thank you to them.

And thank you Pierrette Bloch. They would very nearly save me from my despair, from my hatred of painting. I'm proud to say: thank you for being part of my family.

Michel Parmentier

Paris, June 15, 1992.

1 Verdurin is a Marcel Proust character, known for his unoriginal, obsequious ideas and sycophantic support of others. Translator's note.

2 Pierrette Bloch (1928-2017) was a Swiss artist who lived in Paris, whom Parmentier knew at the time. Parmentier's text was written for the exhibition and printed on the invitation. Translator's note.]

24 décembre 1989 (December 24, 1989)

5 janvier 1990 (January 5, 1990)

6 mars 1991 (March 6, 1991)

5 avril 1991 (April 5, 1991)

19 avril 1991 (April 19, 1991)

25 avril 1991 (April 25, 1991)

5 mai 1991 II (May 5, 1991 II)

5 mai 1991 IV (May 5, 1991 IV)

4 juin 1991 II (June 4, 1991 II)

1965

1966

1967

1968

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

[polyester calques] March 31, 1993 – November 20, 1999

The main characteristics of polyester calque are the same as those of tracing paper, even though it is made up of two polyester films that, when put together, form a sheet with two matt sides, or one matt side and one glossy one.

Polyester calque comes in rolls, from which the strips are cut. The position of the folds is indicated in pencil on the edges of these markings. This pre-folding is done on a table designed specially for that purpose (fig. 119, p. 173).

At each mark, two kinds of fold alternate: one forming a summit (raised fold) and the other a value (recessed fold) (fig. 120, p. 173).

One by one, the prepared strips are fixed to the wall by successive stapling: at the center, on their sides, and along the length of the folds.

Eight folds are made per strip, from the top downwards, in alternation: three raised folds and three recessed folds. The bits of calque left over the first fold and under the last are folded behind each strip. By repeating the operation on the four strips constituting the work, the total surface to be covered is reduced by half.

In a first series of works,[1] from *31 mars 1993* (March 31, 1993) (see p. 210) to *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), Parmentier repeated the gesture of aligning vertical strokes of oil bar 4 to 5 centimeters wide and 38 centimeters high over the whole surface to be covered.

From *30 juin 1995* (June 30, 1995) to *26 mai 1996* (May 26, 1996), in a last series of works,[2] repeatedly applied random gestures cover the set of strips with oil bar. In his lined notebook, Parmentier specifies that the percentage of white "monochrome" and the density of the oil bar on the polyester calque differs from one work to another, by "between 50% and 90%."

1 In preparation for the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Carré des Arts, Paris (France), March 17 – May 15, 1994, all the works are the same size (304 × 308 cm), each comprising four strips 76 cm wide.

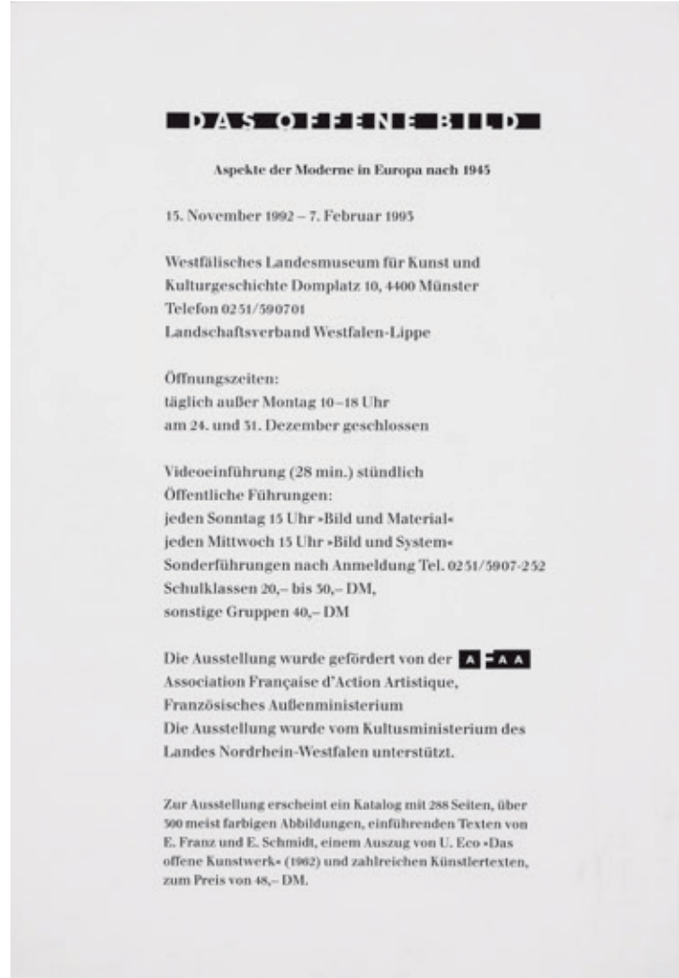
2 The works can be presented in the form of two, three, or four strips, except for *23 mai/5 juillet 1996* (May 23, 1996/July 5, 1996) comprised of a single strip, which, unusually, is date-stamped with two different dates **(see pp. 204, 206)**.

122 **View of the exhibition "Das offene Bild, Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945," Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster (Germany), November 15, 1992 – February 7, 1993, color photograph, black-and-white reproduction from color slide.**
Left: Simon Hantaï, *Sans titre* (Untitled) from the "Tabula, 1974" series, acrylic on canvas, 245 × 395 cm, private collection; right: Michel Parmentier, *20 mars 1967* (March 20, 1967)

ARMLEDER
BARRÉ
BAUER
BERTRAND
BEUYS
BOURGET
BURAGLIO
BUREN
CANE
CANIARIS
CHARLTON
CLAUS
DARBOVEN
GOSTOMSKI
GRAEVENITZ
GRAUBNER
HAINS
HAMAK
HANTAÏ
HOEHME
KESERÜ
KLEIN
KNOEBEL
KOLÍBAL
KOUNELLIS
KRASINSKI
PIENE
POLKE
RICHTER
ROCKENSCHAUB
ROEHR
ROTELLA
ROTH
RUTAULT
SAYTOUR
SCHIESS
SCHOONHOVEN
SCHUMACHER
SPOERRI

DAS OFFENE BILD

DENDA
DESCHAMPS
DEZEUZE
DORNER
DUBUFFET
DUNST
ERDÉLY
FAUTRIER
FILLIOU
FÖRG
FONTANA
FREYER
FRIZE
GAPPMAYR
GERZ
LAVIER
LOCHER
LO SAVIO
LUTHER
MANZONI
MEYER
MON
MORELLET
MOSSET
NITSCH
OPALKA
PALERMO
PAOLINI
PARMENTIER
PERRODIN
STANGRET
TÀPIES
TORONI
TROCKEL
UECKER
UMBERG
VAUTIER
VIALLAT
VILLEGLÉ
VOSTELL
WINIARSKI
ZANGS
ZAUGG



DAS OFFENE BILD

Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945

15. November 1992 – 7. Februar 1993

Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und
Kulturgeschichte Domplatz 10, 4400 Münster
Telefon 0251/590701
Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe

Öffnungszeiten:
täglich außer Montag 10–18 Uhr
am 24. und 31. Dezember geschlossen

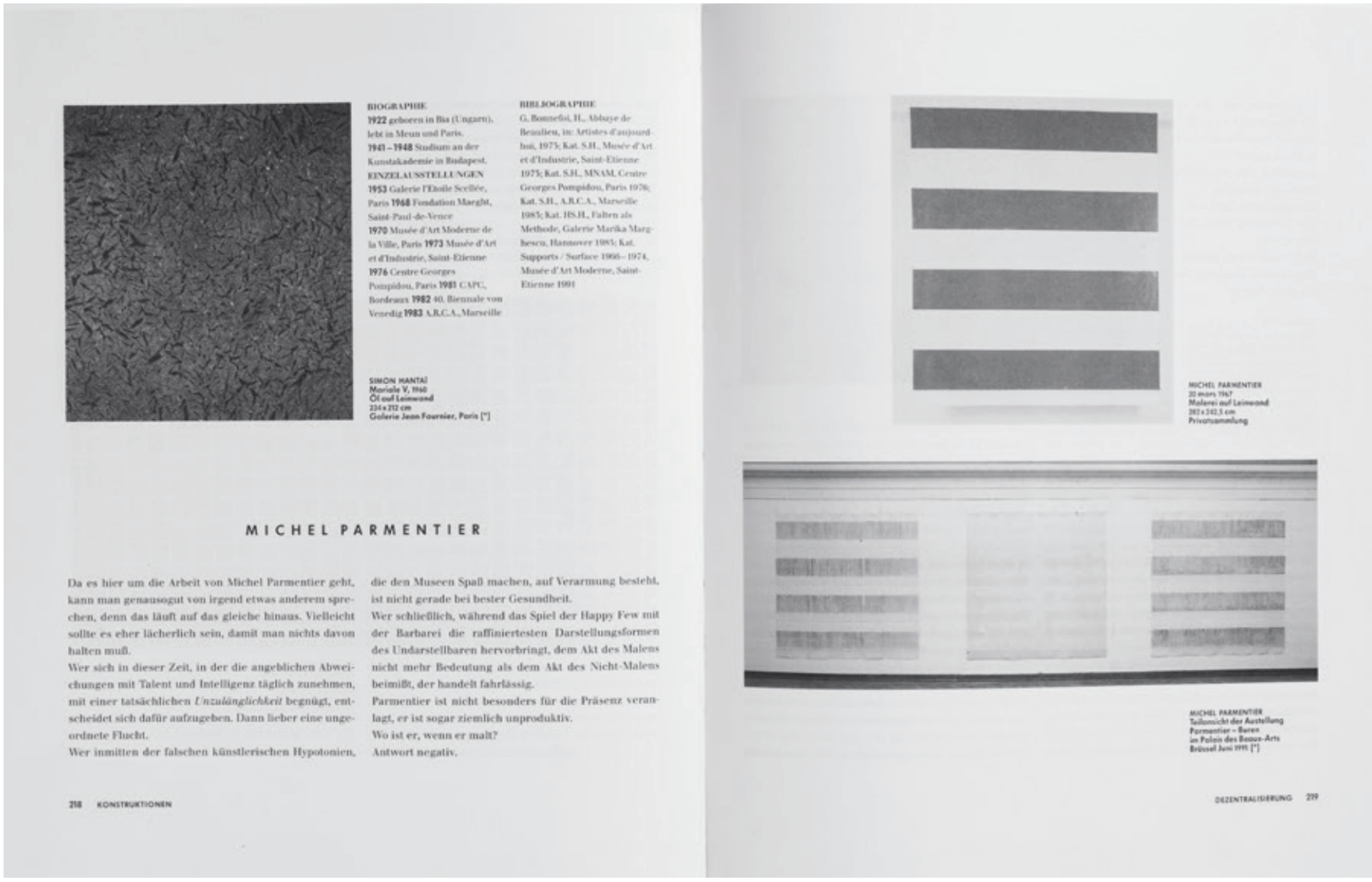
Videoeinführung (28 min.) stündlich
Öffentliche Führungen:
jeden Sonntag 15 Uhr »Bild und Material«
jeden Mittwoch 15 Uhr »Bild und System«
Sonderführungen nach Anmeldung Tel. 0251/5907-252
Schulklassen 20,– bis 50,– DM,
sonstige Gruppen 40,– DM

Die Ausstellung wurde gefördert von der AFAA
Association Française d'Action Artistique,
Französisches Außenministerium
Die Ausstellung wurde vom Kultusministerium des
Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen unterstützt.

Zur Ausstellung erscheint ein Katalog mit 288 Seiten, über 500 meist farbigen Abbildungen, einführenden Texten von E. Franz und E. Schmidt, einem Auszug von U. Eco »Das offene Kunstwerk« (1962) und zahlreichen Künstlertexten, zum Preis von 48,– DM.

123

123 Invitation to the exhibition "Das Offene Bild: Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945," Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster (Germany), November 15, 1992 – February 7, 1993, recto and verso, 21 × 14.9 cm (folded).



BIOGRAPHIE
1922 geboren in Bia (Ungarn), lebt in Meun und Paris.
1941 – 1948 Studium an der Kunstakademie in Budapest.
EINZELAUSSTELLUNGEN
1953 Galerie l'Etoile Scellée, Paris **1968** Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence
1970 Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris **1973** Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Etienne
1976 Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris **1981** CAPC, Bordeaux **1982** 40. Biennale von Venedig **1983** A.R.C.A., Marseille

BIBLIOGRAPHIE
G. Bonnefoi, H., Abbaye de Beaulieu, in: Artistes d'aujourd-hui, 1975; Kat. S.H., Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Etienne 1975; Kat. S.H., MNAM, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1976; Kat. S.H., A.R.C.A., Marseille 1985; Kat. HS.H., Falten als Methode, Galerie Marika Marghescu, Hannover 1985; Kat. Supports / Surface 1966–1974, Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne 1991

SIMON HANTAÏ
Mariale V, 1960
Öl auf Leinwand
234 x 212 cm
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris [*]

MICHEL PARMENTIER

Da es hier um die Arbeit von Michel Parmentier geht, kann man genausogut von irgend etwas anderem sprechen, denn das läuft auf das gleiche hinaus. Vielleicht sollte es eher lächerlich sein, damit man nichts davon halten muß.
Wer sich in dieser Zeit, in der die angeblichen Abweichungen mit Talent und Intelligenz täglich zunehmen, mit einer tatsächlichen *Unzulänglichkeit* begnügt, entscheidet sich dafür aufzugeben. Dann lieber eine ungeordnete Flucht.
Wer inmitten der falschen künstlerischen Hypotonien, die den Museen Spaß machen, auf Verarmung besteht, ist nicht gerade bei bester Gesundheit.
Wer schließlich, während das Spiel der Happy Few mit der Barbarei die raffiniertesten Darstellungsformen des Undarstellbaren hervorbringt, dem Akt des Malens nicht mehr Bedeutung als dem Akt des Nicht-Malens beimißt, der handelt fahrlässig.
Parmentier ist nicht besonders für die Präsenz veranlagt, er ist sogar ziemlich unproduktiv.
Wo ist er, wenn er malt?
Antwort negativ.

218 KONSTRUKTIONEN

MICHEL PARMENTIER
20 mars 1967
Malerei auf Leinwand
202 x 242,5 cm
Privatsammlung

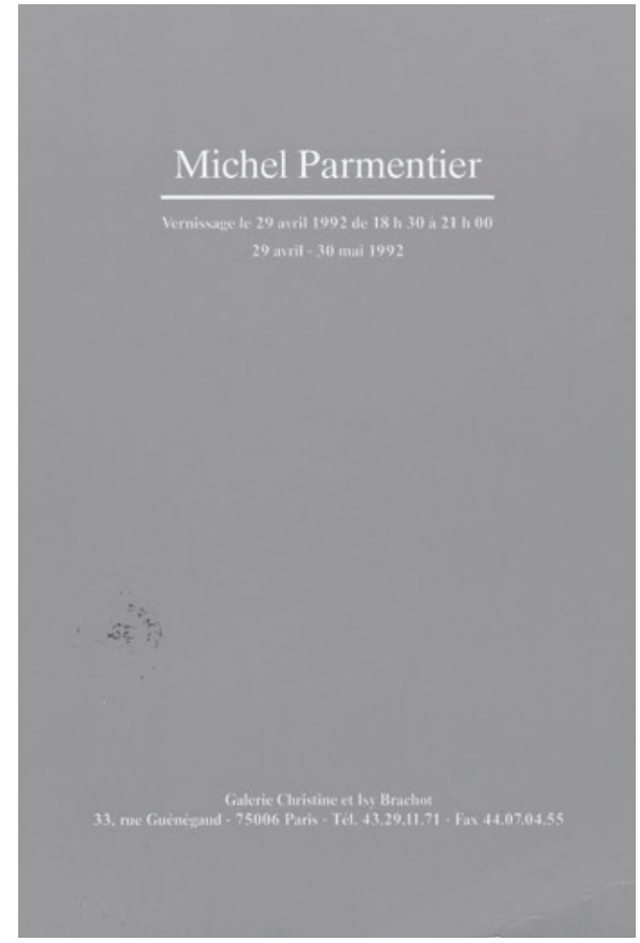
MICHEL PARMENTIER
Teilansicht der Ausstellung Parmentier – Buren im Palais des Beaux-Arts Brüssel Juni 1991 [*]

DEZENTRALISIERUNG 219

124

124 **Catalogue *Das Offene Bild: Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945*, Stuttgart (Germany), Cantz Verlag, 1992, cover and pp. 218-219, 26 × 21 cm.**
Top of page 219: contrary to the caption, the work reproduced is *15 mars 1967* (March 15, 1967); bottom, from left to right: *8 avril 1991* (April 8, 1991), *6 mars 1991* (March 6, 1991), and *22 avril 1991* (April 22, 1991).

125



126

125 **View of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Galerie Christine et Isy Brachot, Paris (France), April 29 – May 30, 1992, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from black-and-white negative, 6 × 6 cm.**
Having left Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, Parmentier exhibits a series of four tracing-paper works at Isy Brachot's Parisian gallery.
From left to right: *31 mai 1991 I* (May 31, 1991 I), *31 mai 1991 II* (May 31, 1991 II), *31 mai 1991 III* (May 31, 1991 III), *and 31 mai 1991 IV* (May 31, 1991 IV).

126 **Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Galerie Christine et Isy Brachot, Paris (France), April 29 – May 30, 1992, 24 × 16 cm.**
The form of the invitation echoes the cover of Parmentier's book, *Propos délibérés.*

127

ENGAGAMENT

Le soussigné, **Monsieur Isy Brachot**

acquéreur (ci-après dénommé l'ACQUEREUR) de l'oeuvre suivante (ci-après dénommé l'OEUVRE) de Monsieur Michel PARMENTIER (ci-après dénommé l'ARTISTE) :

~~Sans~~ titre : 31.05.91
papier calque libre en 8 séquences
rehaussé de peinture blanche
dimensions totales : 304 x 300 cm
daté 31.05.91

déclare prendre les engagements suivants envers l'ARTISTE :

1. L'ACQUEREUR n'exposera ni ne laissera exposer l'OEUVRE en public sans autorisation préalable, écrite ~~ou~~ expresse de l'ARTISTE.

   Le soussigné lui reconnaît le droit de refuser son autorisation sans avoir à justifier d'un motif, ou de fixer à sa convenance toutes conditions matérielles d'exposition autres que financières.

   Cet engagement lie l'ACQUEREUR et tous les ayants-droit entre vifs ou à cause de mort, pour une durée de 21 ans à compter du décès de l'ARTISTE.

2. L'ACQUEREUR s'engage à ne pas altérer ni modifier l'OEUVRE et s'interdit notamment de faire tendre la toile sur chassis.

   Cet engagement étant lié au droit moral de l'ARTISTE, est souscrit pour une durée illimitée.

3. L'ACQUEREUR s'engage à subordonner la cession de l'OEUVRE à la souscription par le cessionnaire d'un engagement identique en faveur de l'ARTISTE et se chargera de lui en transmettre l'original.

Fait à Bruxelles
le 21 avril 1993
en deux exemplaires originaux dont
l'un est conservé par l'acquéreur

l'ACQUEREUR

127 **Contract with Isy Brachot, dated April 21, 1993, concerning the work *31 mai 1991 I* (May 31, 1991 I), 29.6 × 20.9 cm.**
[CONTRACT
The undersigned, Mr. Isy Brachot
buyer (hereafter named the BUYER) of the following work (hereafter named the WORK) of Mr. Michel Parmentier (hereafter named the ARTIST):
~~Without~~ title: 31.05.91
unstretched tracing paper in 8 sections
enhanced with white paint
total dimensions: 304 × 300 cm
dated 31.05.91
declares to undertake the following contractual arrangement with the ARTIST:
1. The BUYER will never exhibit, nor allow to be exhibited, the WORK in public without prior and express and/or written authorization of the ARTIST.
The undersigned recognizes the right to refuse his authorization without need of justification, or to arrange all the material conditions of the exhibition at his convenience, other than financial.
This contract binds the BUYER and all inheritors *inter vivos* or *mortis causa* for a length of 21 years from the date at which the artist is deceased.
2. The BUYER agrees not to alter or modify the WORK and is prohibited in particular from mounting the work on a stretcher frame.
Bound to the moral rights of the ARTIST, this last agreement is valid indefinitely.
3. The BUYER agrees to make the WORK's cession conditional upon the transferee's identical contractual agreement with the ARTIST and takes responsibility for sending the transferee the original contract.
Signed in Brussels, April 21, 1993, in two original copies, of which one is conserved by the BUYER, Michel Parmentier]

An agreement is signed between the two parties which forms the basis of the 1978 contract **(fig. 73, p. 106)**. It states that "the buyer will refrain from having the canvas hung… on a stretcher…"
As we know, the pieces in question are on tracing paper, and this mistake implies that the work cannot be framed or placed under glass or Plexiglas.
In 1992, after the acquisition of *17 septembre 1988* (September 17, 1988) by the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP) (inv. FNAC 89337), there are frequent exchanges between the administration and Parmentier, who refuses to sign the "certificate of authenticity" for the work if the CNAP does not sign the "contract." In this, the CNAP, through François Barré (the Délégué aux Arts Plastiques), undertakes to meet a number of conditions: that for any decision regarding loans, it will communicate in writing this possibility and will provide all useful information concerning the exhibitions for which such loans are requested, and that it will comply with Parmentier's position on this point. That if such loans are agreed, with Parmentier's consent, they will communicate to the organizer of the exhibition all the elements needed for the proper presentation of the work. That the curators of the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC) will, in the exercise of their general curatorial responsibilities, take the measures necessary to ensure that the works are not damaged or altered.
In 1994, another reduced version called "engagement" also stood as a "certificate of authenticity." After a basic description of the work, it stated:
"1. The buyer will never exhibit or allow the work to be exhibited in public without prior and express and/or written permission from the artist. The undersigned recognizes the right to refuse his authorization without need of justification, or to arrange all the material conditions of the exhibition at his convenience, other than financial. This contract binds the buyer and all inheritors *inter vivos* or *mortis causa* for a length of 21 years from the date of the artist's death.
2. The buyer undertakes not to alter or modify the work and is prohibited from mounting the work (canvas or paper) on a stretcher frame. Bound to the moral rights of the artist, this last agreement is valid for an unlimited duration.
3. The buyer agrees to make the work's cession conditional upon the transferee's identical contractual agreement with the artist and takes responsibility for sending the transferee the original contract."

(*) Il conviendrait sans doute de dire non pas *de leur* désastre mais *du* désastre, ce désastre dont parle Blanchot (*L'écriture du désastre*) : "le désastre inexpérimenté, ce qui se soustrait à toute possibilité d'expérience - limite de l'écriture. (...)", "Nous parlons sur une perte de parole - un désastre imminent et immémorial (...)".
Dire aussi, en nuançant, que, de ce désastre, André, Hantaï, Weiner ou Opalka n'ont évidemment pas la même perception (le désastre n'est pas un tout imaginable, identifiable, localisable).
En revanche, toute écriture *souveraine* ne peut être que tentative (illusoire cela va sans dire) d'annuler ce désastre qui pourtant, et c'est le plus gênant, "incessamment se manque".
La réussite plastique souveraine de Kelly, éblouissante, que j'admire profondément, me rend, par là-même, Kelly étranger.
A l'inverse, chez Daniel Buren, les plus grandes réussites formelles ne sont jamais très éloignées de l'échec, il en est le filigrane. En cela Daniel m'est proche : ni échec ni réussite ne peuvent chez lui être éblouissants.

Peut-être cela se sait-il un peu (mais plus vraisemblablement cela n'intéresse personne) : peindre me coûte beaucoup et exposer me coûte beaucoup plus et de plus en plus. Assister à mes propres vernissages m'est odieux, alors que pour vous, amateurs d'art, cela ne peut être au pire qu'ennuyeux, veinards que vous êtes...

Fausse modestie, direz-vous ? Vous n'y êtes pas : schizophrène et paranoïaque (ce qui est déjà bien), me voici sous le coup d'un diagnostic, sévère lui aussi : je serais un masochiste atypique (de ceux qui ne trouvent pas de plaisir dans la douleur à laquelle ils s'offrent)... Bientôt mon éthylisme sera étalé au grand jour, shame on me !

C'est peu dire que je n'aime pas le milieu de l'art et pourtant j'en fais plus ou moins partie : c'est qu'il s'y trouve encore quelques acteurs que je respecte, très peu, mais ils existent : en France, Daniel Buren (pour, malgré, son talent polymorphe), Pierrette Bloch, Roman Opalka, la très méconnue Bénédicte Pujebet, Michel Verjux. Et Simon Hantaï (pour et malgré le silence auquel il se tient depuis des années en dépit des sollicitations), non acteur au sens strict mais sans doute beaucoup plus que cela.

A l'étranger, bien sûr, il y a davantage de monde : Ryman, Weiner, On Kawara, Carl André, Louise Lawler, Ian Wilson, une dizaine d'autres, connus, moins connus : Hans Haacke ou Guy Massaux, Darboven, Edward Krasinski, Michael Asher ou Paul Tucker...

Je ne décerne pas de médailles, ici, ni ne me fabrique mon Panthéon (si, de surcroît, le sens du ridicule venait à me faire défaut à ce point, je serais bon pour l'internement d'urgence). Ces artistes - je retire immédiatement ce mot démonétisé, je ne voulais pas être insultant - disons donc plutôt *elles, eux, ces gens*, très différents voire opposés formellement me font plus ou moins famille. Ils ne dévient pas beaucoup de leur désastre, pas même Daniel sous ses habits de magicien (*). Leur mention ici dit, mais accessoirement, que je ne campe pas dans un "superbe isolement", ni dans une infamante "ghettoïsation", elle dit surtout que grâce à elles, à eux, rien n'est tout à fait perdu, qu'il n'est pas encore complètement inutile *d'être là* plutôt qu'ailleurs.
(Les positions de Hantaï ou de Wilson, même, ne leur permettent pas d'être ailleurs ; l'effet le plus pervers du lieu dont nous parlons - appelons cela "art" pour faire vite - est que, même sorti, activement sorti, subversivement sorti, l'acteur est toujours là).

Etre là qui me lasse, me coûte, dont je doute de façon récurrente, cet "être là" qui pour tout dire me fait le plus souvent carrément chier.

Produire encore, de loin en loin, ce peu (cet encore trop) sans destinataire, qui existe *en train de se faire* (et ne se justifie pas pour autant), qui se déréalise, se contredit, se défait dans le *cela fait* ; se vide aussi, je l'espère, dans un résultat qui n'en est pas un.

Produire "pour en finir encore".

Michel Parmentier
26 janvier 1994

128

128 **Catalogue *Michel Parmentier*, Carré des Arts, Paris (France), March 17 – May 15, 1994, Paris, Carré des Arts, 1994, unpaginated, cover and double page, 28 × 23 cm.**

False modesty, you say? That's not it: schizophrenic and paranoid (which is already something), here I am subject to a diagnosis, itself also severe. I would be an unusual masochist (those who don't find pleasure in the pain to which they offer themselves)... Soon my alcoholism will be displayed in broad daylight — shame on me!

It's an understatement to say that I don't like the milieu of art and yet I'm more or less part of it. You can still find a few actors whom I respect, very few, but they exist: in France, Daniel Buren (because of, or in spite of, his polymorphous talent), Pierrette Bloch, Roman Opalka, the very under-estimated Bénédicte Pujebet, Michel Verjux. And Simon Hantaï (for — and in spite of — the silence which he has maintained for years, despite requests), a non-actor in the strict sense but no doubt much more than that.

Abroad, of course, there are many more: [Robert] Ryman, [Lawrence] Weiner, On Kawara, Carl Andre, Louise Lawler, Ian Wilson, a dozen others that are more or less known: Hans Haacke or Guy Massaux, [Hanne] Darboven, Edward Krasiński, Michael Asher, or Paul Tucker...

I'm not handing out medals here, nor fabricating my Pantheon (moreover, if the sense of ridicule is lacking on this point, I'll be ready for immediate internment). These artists — I withdraw this discredited word instantaneously; I didn't want to be insulting — so let's just say instead *they, them, these people*, quite different, even formally opposite to one another, are more or less family. They don't deviate much from their disaster, not even Daniel Buren with his magician's frock.[1] Incidentally, mentioning them here suggests that I don't place myself in "splendid isolation" nor in a slanderous "ghettoization"; it suggests above all that, thanks to them, thanks to these people, nothing is completely lost, that it's still not completely useless *being here* rather than elsewhere.

(Even the positions held by Hantaï or Wilson don't allow them to be elsewhere; the most perverse effects of place that we are referring to — in a nutshell, let's call that "art" — is that even outside, actively outside, subversively outside, the actor is always still there.)

Being there — which bores me, costs me, which I doubt in a regular manner — to be honest, this "being there" for the most part totally pisses me off.

To still produce this little (this still too much) from time to time, without addressee, which exists *in the process of being made* (and which doesn't justify itself for all that), which is derealized, which contradicts itself, which undoes itself in *what it does* [*se défait dans le cela fait*], and empties itself as well, I hope, into an outcome that isn't one.
To produce "for to end yet again" [*pour en finir encore*].[2]

Michel Parmentier, January 26, 1994

1 No doubt it's appropriate to say not *their* disaster but *the* disaster, this disaster to which Blanchot refers (in *The Writing of the Disaster*), "The disaster, unexperienced. It is what escapes the very possibility of experience — it is the limit of writing"; "It is upon losing what we have to say that we speak — upon an imminent and immemorial disaster." [See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraksa Press, 1995), p. 7, 21. Translator's note.]

To say as well, in a more nuanced way, Andre, Hantaï, Weiner, or Opalka don't share the same perception of this disaster (the disaster is not an imaginable, identifiable, localizable whole).

On the other hand, all *sovereign* writing can only be tentative (illusory, it goes without saying) in annulling this disaster which, however — and this is the most disturbing — is "incessantly lacking."

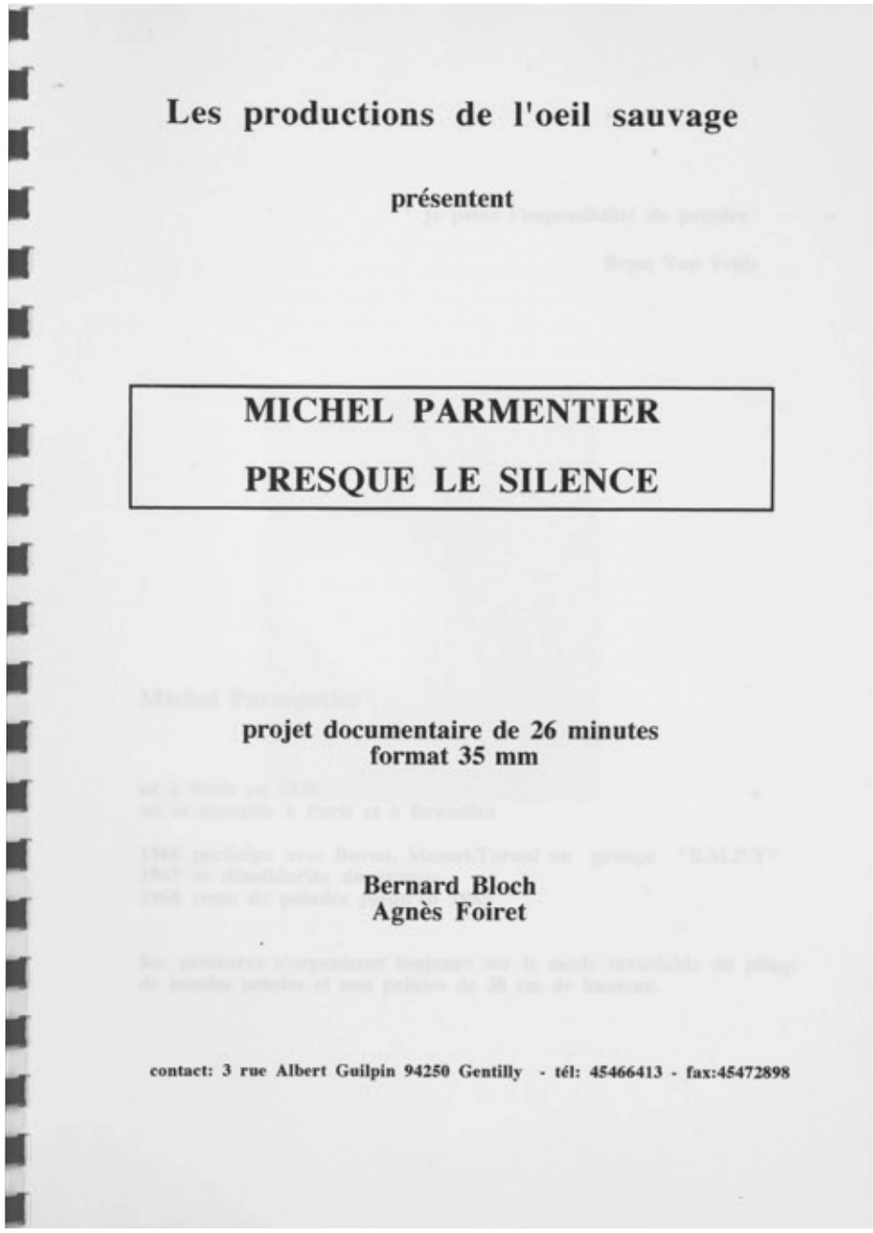
[Ellsworth] Kelly's sovereign, *dazzling* artistic success, that I admire profoundly, is foreign to me for the same reasons.

Conversely, for Daniel Buren, the greatest formal successes are never very far from being failures; it is visible just below the surface. In this, Daniel is close to me — neither failure nor success can be *dazzling* in his work.

2 *Pour en finir encore* is the title Samuel Beckett gave to one of his essays in French. Translator's note.]

Catalogue text dated January 26, 1994. The catalogue also contains a text by Agnès Foiret (unpaginated) and photographs by Philippe Simon, including reproductions of works in the exhibition and the preparation of the folding carried out in Brussels.
(see fig. 1, p. 11; fig. 119, p. 173; and fig. 129, p. 193).

→
129 **Michel Parmentier in Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels, Belgium), black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 6 × 6 cm.**
In 1994, Parmentier was preparing his exhibition at Carré des Arts, traveling frequently between Paris and Brussels. Photograph originally published in the Carré des Arts catalogue (unpaginated).



Les productions de l'oeil sauvage

présentent

MICHEL PARMENTIER

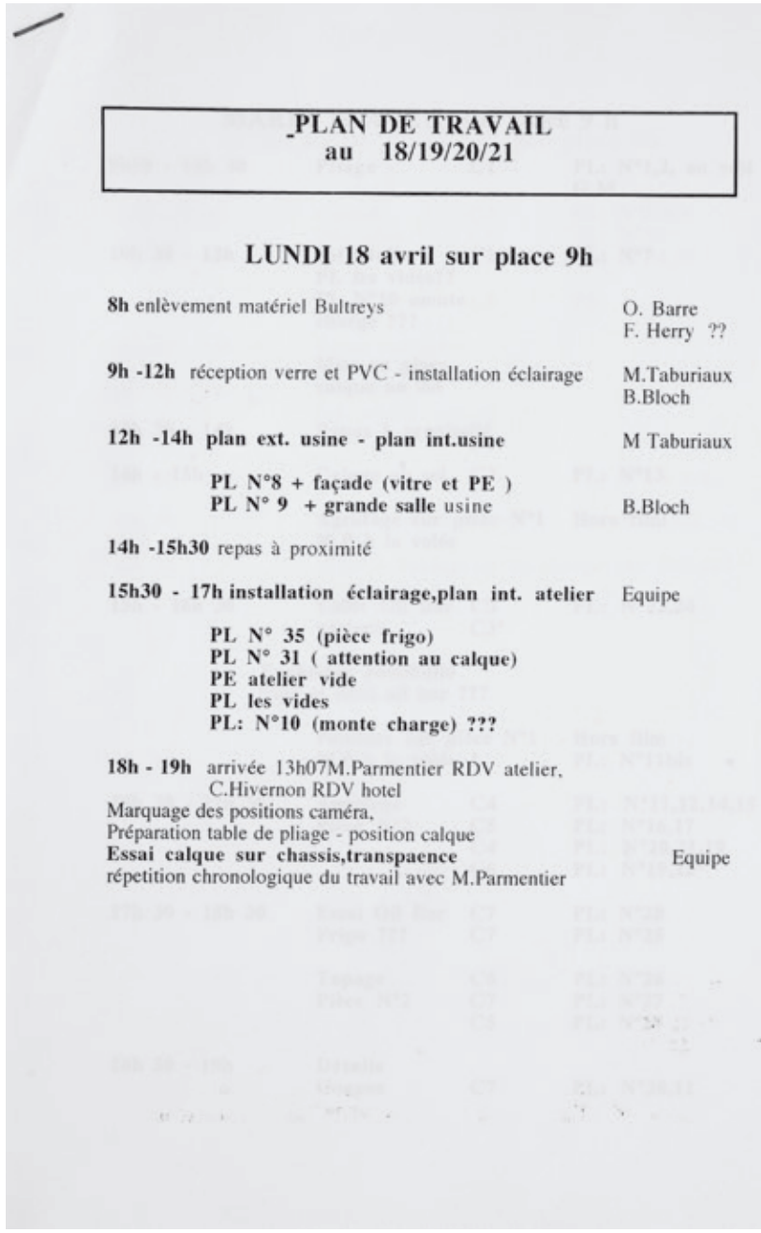
PRESQUE LE SILENCE

projet documentaire de 26 minutes
format 35 mm

Bernard Bloch
Agnès Foiret

contact: 3 rue Albert Guilpin 94250 Gentilly - tél: 45466413 - fax:45472898

130



PLAN DE TRAVAIL
au 18/19/20/21

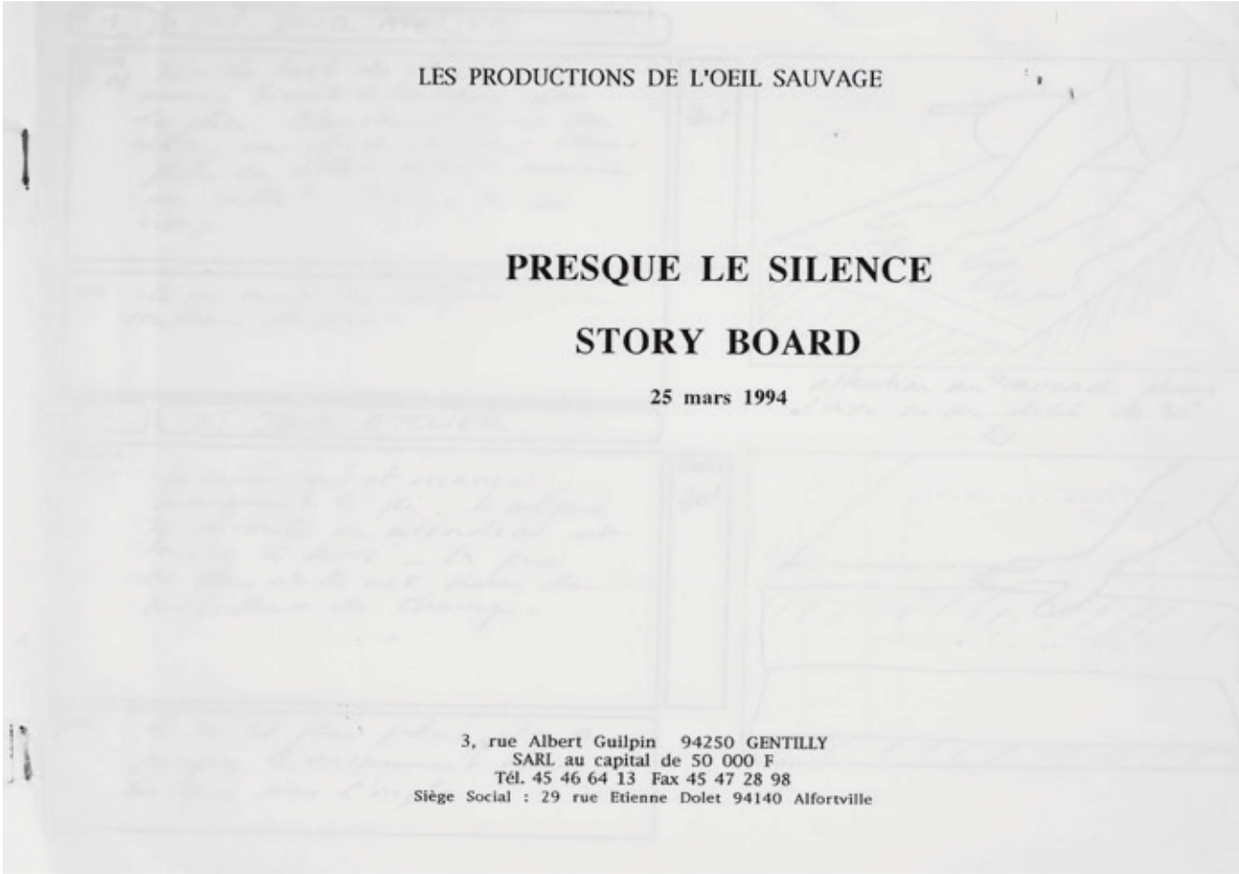
LUNDI 18 avril sur place 9h

8h enlèvement matériel Bultreys	O. Barre F. Herry ??
9h -12h réception verre et PVC - installation éclairage	M.Taburiaux B.Bloch
12h -14h plan ext. usine - plan int.usine	M Taburiaux
PL N°8 + façade (vitre et PE) **PL N° 9 + grande salle** usine	B.Bloch
14h -15h30 repas à proximité	
15h30 - 17h installation éclairage,plan int. atelier	Equipe
PL N° 35 (pièce frigo) **PL N° 31 (attention au calque)** **PE atelier vide** **PL les vides** **PL: N°10 (monte charge) ???**	
18h - 19h arrivée 13h07M.Parmentier RDV atelier, C.Hivernon RDV hotel	
Marquage des positions caméra, Préparation table de pliage - position calque **Essai calque sur chassis,transpaence** répetition chronologique du travail avec M.Parmentier	Equipe

131

130 **Screenplay co-written by Bernard Bloch and Agnès Foiret, *Michel Parmentier: Presque le silence* (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence), documentary project, 26 minutes, format 35 mm, 1995, Gentilly (France), Les Productions de l'Œil Sauvage.**
304 × 308 (Presque le silence) (Almost silence), 24 min, 35 mm, black and white, screenplay: Agnès Foiret and Bernard Bloch; lighting cameraman: Michel Taburiaux; camera operator: Bernard Bloch; camera assistant: Florent Henry; sound engineer: Claude Hivernon; electrician: Olivier Barré; set builder: Olivier Seiler; editing, digital sound, and mixing: Nicolas Joly; timing: Dirk Vandewalle; laboratory: Futurimag; assistant producer: Pierre Mandrin; production manager: Muriel Bertucci. Film produced and directed by Bernard Bloch–Les Productions de l'Œil Sauvage, DAP, Centre Pompidou © 1995.

131 **Production schedule drawn up by Bernard Bloch for *Michel Parmentier. Presque le silence* (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence), 29.7 × 21 cm.**
The film was shot April 18-21, 1994 in the studio at 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels, Belgium)



LES PRODUCTIONS DE L'OEIL SAUVAGE

PRESQUE LE SILENCE

STORY BOARD

25 mars 1994

3, rue Albert Guilpin 94250 GENTILLY
SARL au capital de 50 000 F
Tél. 45 46 64 13 Fax 45 47 28 98
Siège Social : 29 rue Etienne Dolet 94140 Alfortville

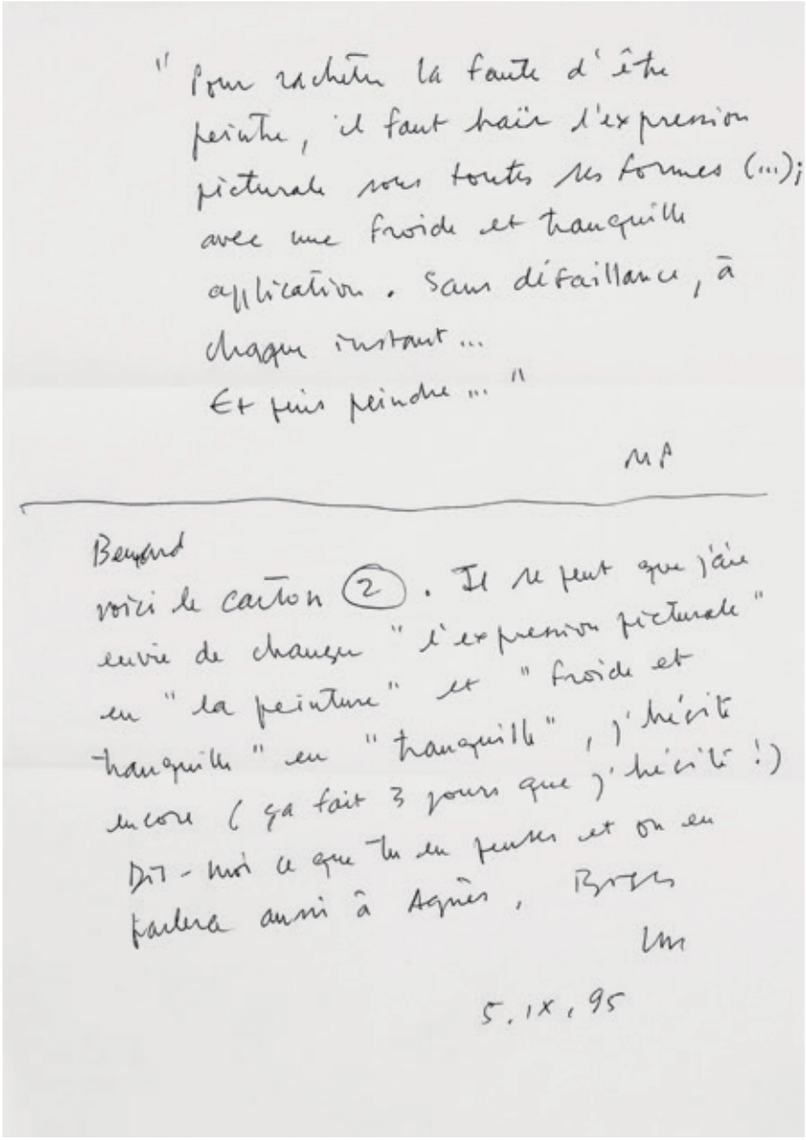
132

132 **Storyboard by Bernard Bloch for *Michel Parmentier. Presque le silence* (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence), Gentilly (France), Les Productions de l'Œil Sauvage, cover, 21 × 29.7 cm (closed).**
Parmentier was very reluctant to go along with Bernard Bloch's screenplay. The director set up a structure comprising four large panes of glass that could contain four folded strips, on which were pasted transparent, supple bands of PVC on which Parmentier was to staple strips while being filmed in reverse shot. He eventually acquiesced, strictly for the needs of the film conceived by Bloch, based on a very precise storyboard **(see following pages)**.

Bloch did not use any voice-over or music. Title cards indicate the procedure without leading the spectator into the trap of an artificial confidentiality.

In the synopsis co-written by Agnès Foiret and Bernard Bloch, they state: "The monomaniac work of Michel Parmentier is close to the repetition of the same. The active principle of this work is based on the idea of series. The fold is its main structural element. It is at once what makes it possible to throw a veil over the non-painted and what enables a surface existence, which Michel Parmentier calls the said and the unsaid. This surface cannot exist without the silent "mise-en-scène" of the act of painting. Without what resembles, precisely, an appearance of *bricolage*, with minimal tools for carrying out the folding of the surfaces of tracing paper, the stapling of the strips, the 'striking' [*tapage*] with the oil bar, the unfolding, and the signing."

133 **Shooting the film *304 × 308* (*Presque le silence*) (Almost silence) in Guy Massaux's studio at 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels, Belgium), four photographs, black-and-white reproductions from color negatives, 24 × 36 mm each.**
(Below) Michel Parmentier date-stamping the four strips of *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994).

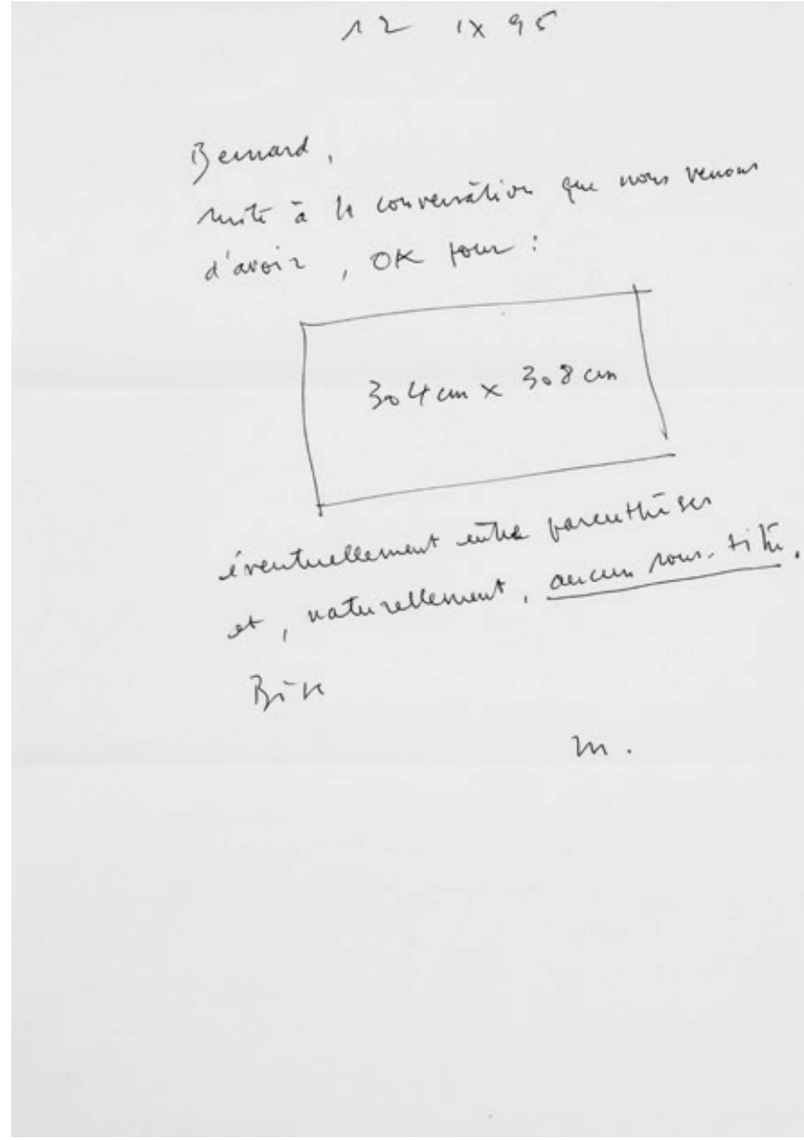


" Pour racheter la faute d'être peintre, il faut haïr l'expression picturale sous toutes ses formes (...); avec une froide et tranquille application. Sans défaillance, à chaque instant...
Et puis peindre..."

MP

Bernard
voici le carton (2). Il se peut que j'aie envie de changer "l'expression picturale" en "la peinture" et "froide et tranquille" en "tranquille", j'hésite encore (ça fait 3 jours que j'hésite !)
Dis-moi ce que tu en penses et on en parlera aussi à Agnès, Bisous
Hs

5.IX.95



12 IX 95

Bernard,
suite à la conversation que nous venons d'avoir, OK pour :

304 cm x 308 cm

éventuellement entre parenthèses
et, naturellement, aucun sous-titre.

Bisous

M.

134

134 **Handwritten letters by Michel Parmentier to Bernard Bloch, September 5 and September 12, 1995, 29.7 × 21 cm each.**
["In order to make amends for the mistake of being a painter, you have to hate pictorial expression in all its forms...; with a cold and calm implementation, without failure, at each moment... and then paint..." MP]

[Bernard
Here is the text panel (2). It is possible that I would want to change "pictorial expression" into "painting" and "cold and calm" into "calm," I'm still hesitating (I've been hesitating for three days!). Tell me what you think and we can also speak with Agnès [Foiret].
Hugs M., 5.IX.95]

[12.IX.95, Bernard,
Following the conversation we just had, OK for:
304 cm × 308 cm
Possibly without parentheses and of course no sub-title. Hugs M.]

There were frequent exchanges between Bloch and Parmentier before the title was finally determined. In the film it is presented as *(304 cm × 308 cm)*, whereas today it is designated *304 × 308 cm (Presque le silence)* (Almost silence). *Presque le silence* is the first name given to the film project, as it appears in the storyboard of 25 March, 1994.

The text *304 cm × 308 cm* appears in the first board of the film, which is then reduced to *304 × 308*.

135

E N G A G E M E N T

Le soussigné Herman J. DALED 60 Rue A. RENARD 1050 Bruxelles

dépositaire (ci-après dénommé LE DEPOSITAIRE) de l'oeuvre suivante
(ci-après dénommée l'OEUVRE) de Monsieur Michel PARMENTIER
(ci-après dénommé l'ARTISTE) :
Titre 15 mars 1994 (à la fois date d'exécution et signature : tampon en bas et à droite de chaque lé).
Descriptif : traits verticaux de oil bar blanc titane sur calque Herculène (4 séquences de 77 X 304 cm, disposées jointivement)
Dimension totale 308 l X 304 L

déclare prendre les engagements suivants envers l'ARTISTE :

1. LE DEPOSITAIRE n'exposera ni ne laissera exposer l'OEUVRE en public sans autorisation préalable, écrite et expresse de l'ARTISTE.

   Le soussigné lui reconnaît le droit de refuser son autorisation sans avoir à justifier d'un motif, ou de fixer à sa convenance toutes conditions matérielles d'exposition autres que financières.

   Cet engagement lie LE DEPOSITAIRE et tous ses ayants-droit entre vifs ou à cause de mort, pour une durée de 21 ans à compter du décès de l'ARTISTE.

2. LE DEPOSITAIRE s'engage à ne pas altérer ni modifier l'OEUVRE et s'interdit notamment de faire tendre la toile sur chassis.

   Cet engagement étant lié au droit moral de l'ARTISTE, est souscrit pour une durée illimitée.

3. LE DEPOSITAIRE s'engage à subordonner la cession de l'OEUVRE à la souscription par le cessionnaire d'un engagement identique en faveur de l'ARTISTE et se chargera de lui en transmettre l'original.

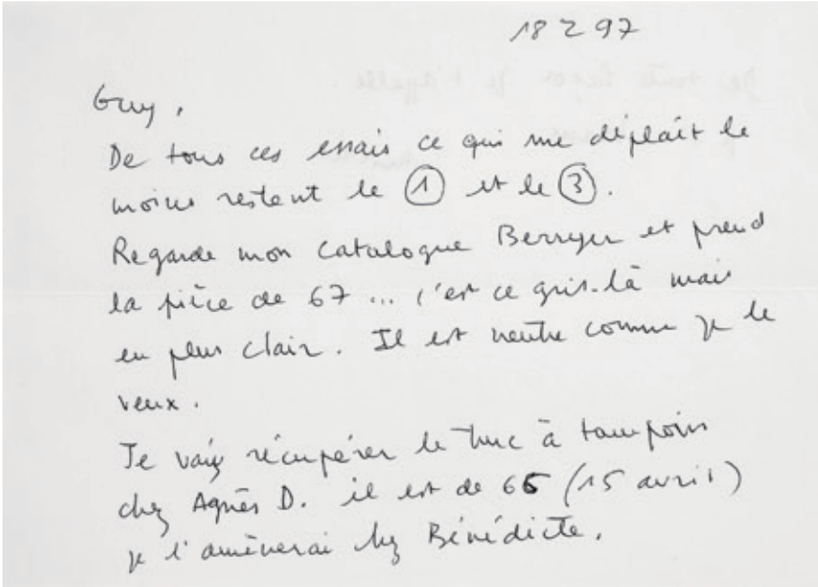
4. La cession de l'OEUVRE ne pourra en aucun cas faire l'objet d'une contre partie financière et devra obligatoirement se faire au bénéfice d'une institution culturelle.
   Cette cession se fera avec l'assentiment de l'ARTISTE de son vivant; le choix de l'institution culturelle sera sinon laissé à la discrétion du DEPOSITAIRE.

fait à Bruxelles
le 25.05.96
en deux exemplaires originaux dont l'un est conservé par LE DEPOSITAIRE

LE DEPOSITAIRE

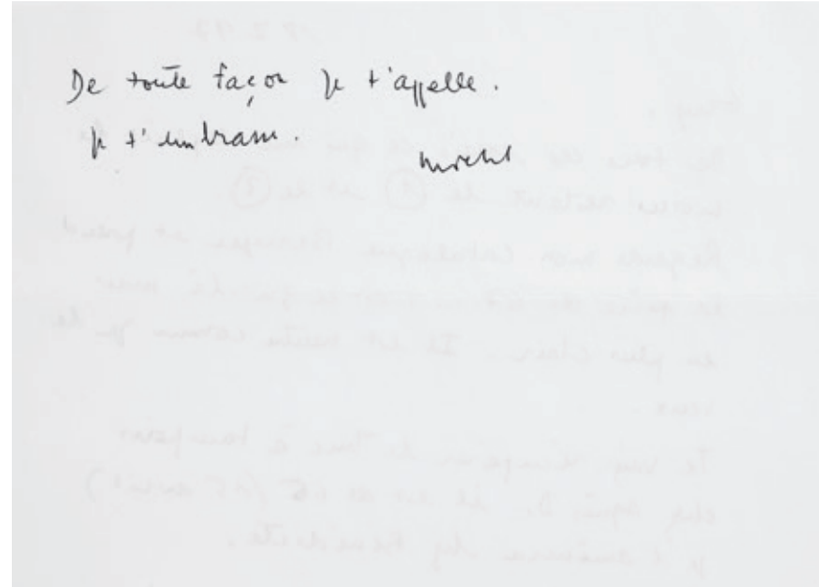
135 **Contract between Michel Parmentier and Herman J. Daled, May 25, 1996, concerning *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), 29.7 × 21 cm.**
[CONTRACT
The undersigned, Herman J. DALED, 60, rue A. Renard, 1050 Brussels recipient (hereafter named THE RECIPIENT) of the following work (hereafter named the WORK) by Mr. Michel PARMENTIER (hereafter named the ARTIST):
Title *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), both the date of execution and signature: stamped lower right side of each panel.
Description: vertical marks with titanium white oil bar on Herculène tracing paper (4 series of 77 × 304 cm, arranged adjacently)
Total dimension 308 l × 304 L
declares to undertake the following contractual agreements with the ARTIST:
1. THE RECIPIENT will never exhibit, nor allow to be exhibited, the WORK in public without prior and express written authorization of the ARTIST.
The undersigned recognizes the right to refuse his authorization without need of justification, or to arrange all the material conditions of the exhibition at his convenience, other than financial.
This contract binds the RECIPIENT and all inheritors *inter vivos* or *mortis causa* for a length of 21 years from the date at which the artist is deceased.
2. THE RECIPIENT agrees not to alter or modify the WORK and is prohibited in particular from mounting the work on a stretcher frame.
Bound to the moral rights of the ARTIST, this last agreement is valid indefinitely.
3. THE RECIPIENT agrees to make the WORK's cession conditional upon the transferee's identical contractual agreement with the ARTIST and takes responsibility for sending the transferee the original contract.
4. In no case can cession of the WORK be the object of financial compensation and must be made exclusively for the benefit of a cultural institution.
While the ARTIST is living, cession will be made with the ARTIST's consent, other than the choice of cultural institution, which is left to the RECIPIENT's discretion.
signed in Brussels, 05/25/96, in two original copies, of which one is conserved by the recipient, Michel Parmentier, Herman J. Daled, THE RECIPIENT]

This "Contract" followed reception of the work *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994).
In 2012, Herman J. Daled donated the work to the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York (inv.: 1185.2012.a-d).
Note: *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994) appears in Bernard Bloch's film *304 × 308 (Presque le silence)* (Almost silence). This film follows the progression and realization of this work, from the cutting of the strips to the final date-stamping by Parmentier both on the work and in his notebook **(see fig. 14, p. 28 and pp. 196-197)**.

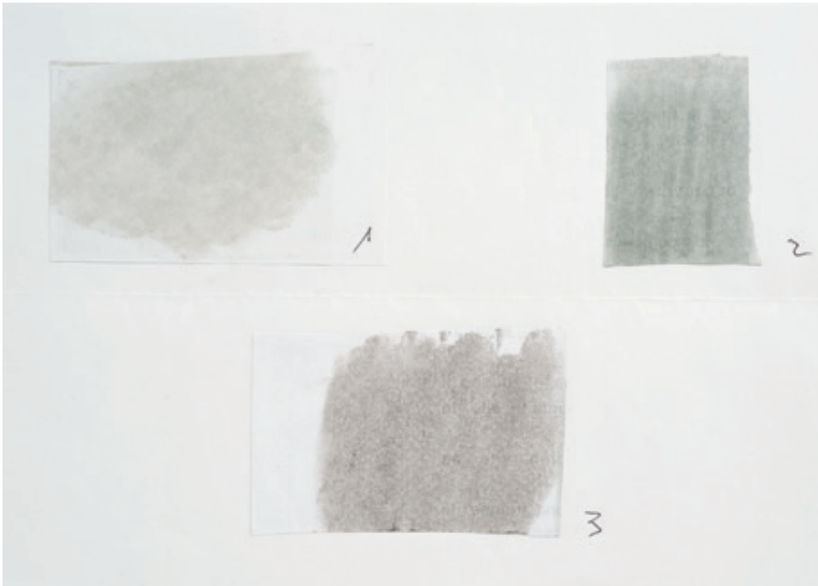


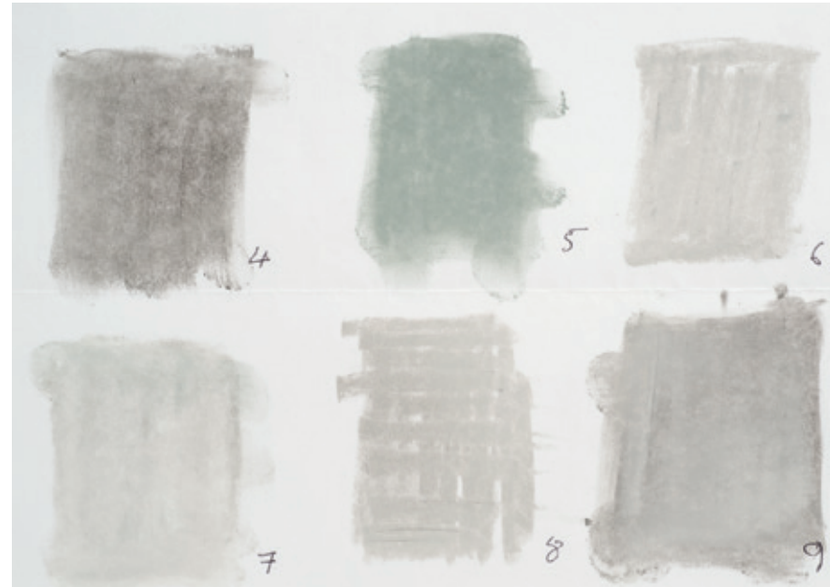
18 2 97

Guy,
De tous ces essais ce qui me déplaît le moins restent le (1) et le (3).
Regarde mon catalogue Berryer et prend la pièce de 67 ... c'est ce gris-là mais en plus clair. Il est neutre comme je le veux.
Je vais récupérer le truc à tampon chez Agnès D. il est de 66 (15 avril) je l'amènerai chez Bénédicte.

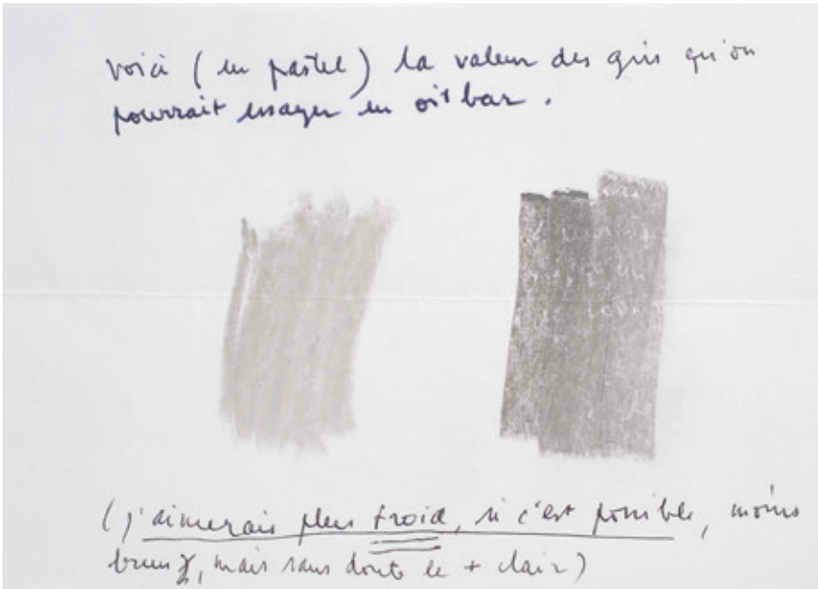


De toute façon je t'appelle.
Je t'embrasse.
Michel





136



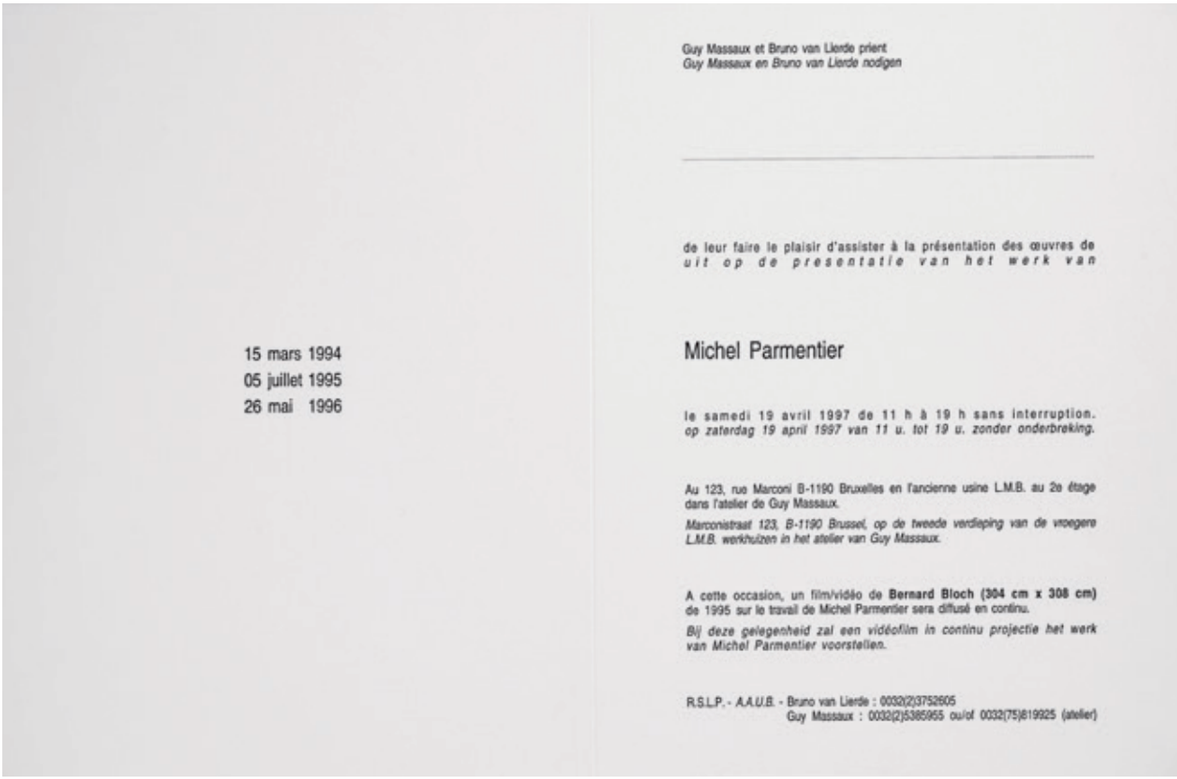
voici (en pastel) la valeur des gris qu'on pourrait essayer en oil bar.

(j'aimerais plus froid, si c'est possible, moins brun, mais sans doute le + clair)

136 **Letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, February 18, 1997, recto and verso, 3 pages, 14.8 × 21 cm each.**
[Guy,
Of all the tests that displease me the least, there remains the 1 and 3. Look back at my Berryer catalogue **(see p. 146)** and take the piece from '67... it's that same gray but a little lighter. It's neutral, just as I was looking for.
I'm going to get the date stamp thing back from Agnès [Drouin]; it is from '66 (April 15) and I'll bring it to Bénédict's.
Either way, I'll call you. With my love
Michel
Here's (in pastel) the gray value that we can try with the oil bar. *If possible, I would like it cooler,* less brown, but no doubt also lighter]

Attached to the letter, tests on paper of different gray pastels. Parmentier uses the words "le truc à tampon" (the stamp thing) to refer to *15 avril 1966* (April 15, 1966). This work was originally meant to feature in the exhibition "Michel Parmentier (15 mars 1994, 5 juillet 1995, 26 mai 1996)" on April 19, 1997, at 123, rue Marconi, Forest, Brussels (Belgium).

137



137 **Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, (304 × 308 cm) (076 × 308 cm) (304 × 308 cm) (15 mars 1994, 5 juillet 1995, 26 mai 1996)" at Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest, Brussels (Belgium), April 19 1997, recto and verso and insert, edition of 100, 21 × 16 cm (folded) and 20.1 × 14.9 cm.**
The exhibition "Michel Parmentier (15 mars 1994, 5 juillet 1995, 26 mai 1996)" was organized and realized at the initiative of collector Bruno van Lierde and Guy Massaux, assisted by Jean-François Fontaine. Three works by Parmentier were exhibited on April 19, 1997, for seven hours: *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), *5 juillet 1995* (July 5, 1995), and *26 mai 1996* (May 26, 1996) in its three-strip version (228 × 308 cm and not 304 × 308 cm as indicated on the invitation).

At the same time, a VHS video of the film *304 × 308 (Presque le silence)* (Almost silence), made by Bernard Bloch in the same space two years earlier, was screened continuously. The exhibition was discreet, with invitations being sent to a carefully chosen public.

139 →
140 →
141 →
142 →
143 →

Michel Parmentier : une voix de fin de silence

En 1967, quelques jeunes artistes affirmèrent que la peinture "commençait avec eux". Ils se manifestaient ensemble. Ils s'appelaient Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni. Leur position, comme leur manière de l'affirmer au travers d'une pratique réduite à l'essentiel fit événement. Les oeuvres de Buren, Mosset et Toroni ont évolué ou ont perduré. Parmentier, lui, a cessé de peindre pendant quinze ans, puis a recommencé il y a quelques années. Le principe structurel de son travail n'a pas changé et il reste campé, solitaire, presque silencieux. Les oeuvres plus récentes ont fait disparaître les bandes de laque monochrome, au profit de crayonnage, bilfures à peine visibles. Rétrospectivement, on peut considérer cette cessation comme la revendication d'une position critique active.

Que signifie la peinture pour celui qui s'efface pratiquement dans l'acte de peindre ?

Quel est le sens de ce presque rien face aux débordements picturaux ambiants ?

Que veut dire cette démarche qui doute au jour le jour et qui s'applique à disparaître toujours un peu plus ?

(extraits)

Agnès Foiret

Michel Parmentier: een stem waar de stilte ophoudt

In 1967, beweerden een paar jonge kunstenaars dat de schilderkunst "met hen begon". Ze traden samen op; ze heetten Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni. Hun stellingname en de manier waarop deze zich via een minimale praktijk uitte ging niet ongemerkt voorbij. De werken van Buren, Mosset en Toroni hebben geëvolueerd of getuigen van continuïteit. Parmentier heeft het schilderen vijftien jaar lang stilgelegd en is er dan enkele jaren geleden opnieuw mee begonnen. Het structureel principe van zijn werk is niet veranderd en de kunstenaar houdt stand in eenzaamheid en bijna-stilte. Uit de meest recente werken zijn de monochrome lakstroken verdwenen ten gunste van ternauwernood zichtbare potloodstrepen en krabbels. Achteraf bekeken lijkt dit verzaken op het voor zich opeisen van een actieve kritische positie.

Wat betekent schilderen voor wie praktisch verdwijnt in de schildergeste ?

Wat betekent dit bijna-niets vergeleken bij de overdrijvingen van andere schilders?

Wat schuilt er in deze werkwijze die zichzelf voortdurend in twijfel trekt en erop uit is telkens iets meer te vervluchtigen?

(uitreksels)

Agnes Foiret

138 [Michel Parmentier: A Voice of Fine Silence.[1]
In 1967, several young artists claimed that painting "began with them." They exhibited together. They were called Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni. Their position—like their way of creating an affirmation through a practice reduced to what is essential—was controversial. The works of Buren, Mosset, and Toroni either evolved or endured over time. Parmentier stopped painting for fifteen years, starting again a few years ago. The structural principal of his work hasn't changed and the work remains firmly in place, solitary, almost silent. The more recent works no longer include the bands of lacquered monochrome, replaced by scribbles and erasures that are barely visible. In retrospect, one might consider this cessation as claiming an active critical position.

What does painting signify for the person who is practically effaced in the act of painting?

What is the meaning of this almost nothing when confronted with an ambient pictorial excess?

What does this approach mean which continually doubts and which each day seeks to disappear a little more?

Agnès Foiret

[1] The title misquotes the phrase that Nuridsany uses (taken from Roger Laporte) for the title of his interview with Parmentier in *art press* from 1988 **(see p. 150)**. Translator's note.]

Insert included with the invitation to the exhibition, an excerpt from *Michel Parmentier: une voix de fin silence* (Michel Parmentier: A voice of fine silence), the title of Parmentier's interview with Michel Nuridsany (not mentioned here) **(see pp. 150-151)**, and quotations by Agnès Foiret (recto: French version, verso: Dutch version, translated by Marijse Hovens).

139-141 **Views of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, (304 × 308 cm) (076 × 308 cm) (304 × 308 cm) 15 March 1994, 5 July 1995, 26 mai 1996," Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels, Belgium), color photographs, black-and-white reproduction from transparencies, 6 × 6 cm each.**
In order of appearance: *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), *5 juillet 1995* (July 5, 1995), *26 mai 1996* (May 26, 1996)

142 *26 mai 1996* (May 26, 1996) comprises 4 strips but is presented here in its 3-strip version.

143 Left: *5 juillet 1995* (July 5, 1995); right: video monitor continuously showing 304 × 308 *(Presque le silence)* (Almost silence) by Bernard Bloch.

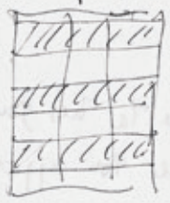
142

143

144

2

Mon projet est à 3 lés seulement
et seulement 3 bandes
travaillées



↕ 228 ⟷ 231

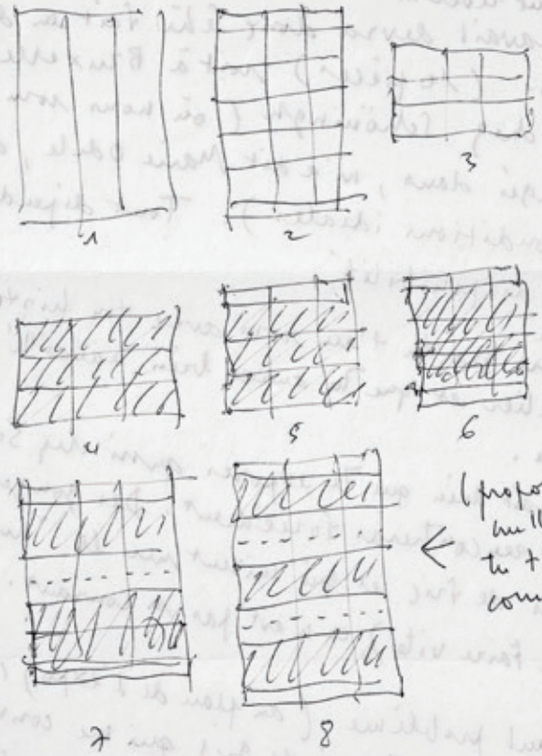
Bruno m'a signalé, en effet, que la taille des pièces ~~[illegible]~~ faisait ~~[illegible]~~ problème pour certains, alors je réduis (sans enthousiasme, avec réalisme).

Projet : 1 → 3 lés non pliés
2 → 3 lés aux plis préparés
3 → pièce pliée et agrafée
4 → " " " et peinte
5 → deux bande du haut dépliées
6 → les deux deux bandes dépliées
7 → même chose + une bande 38 dépliée
8 → tout déplié (donc stade final).

1, 2 et 3 seront faits sur place, ce n'est pas urgent donc ; je n'ai de principe qu'à faire 4, 5, 6, 7 et 8.
Mais ... (voir + loin).

3

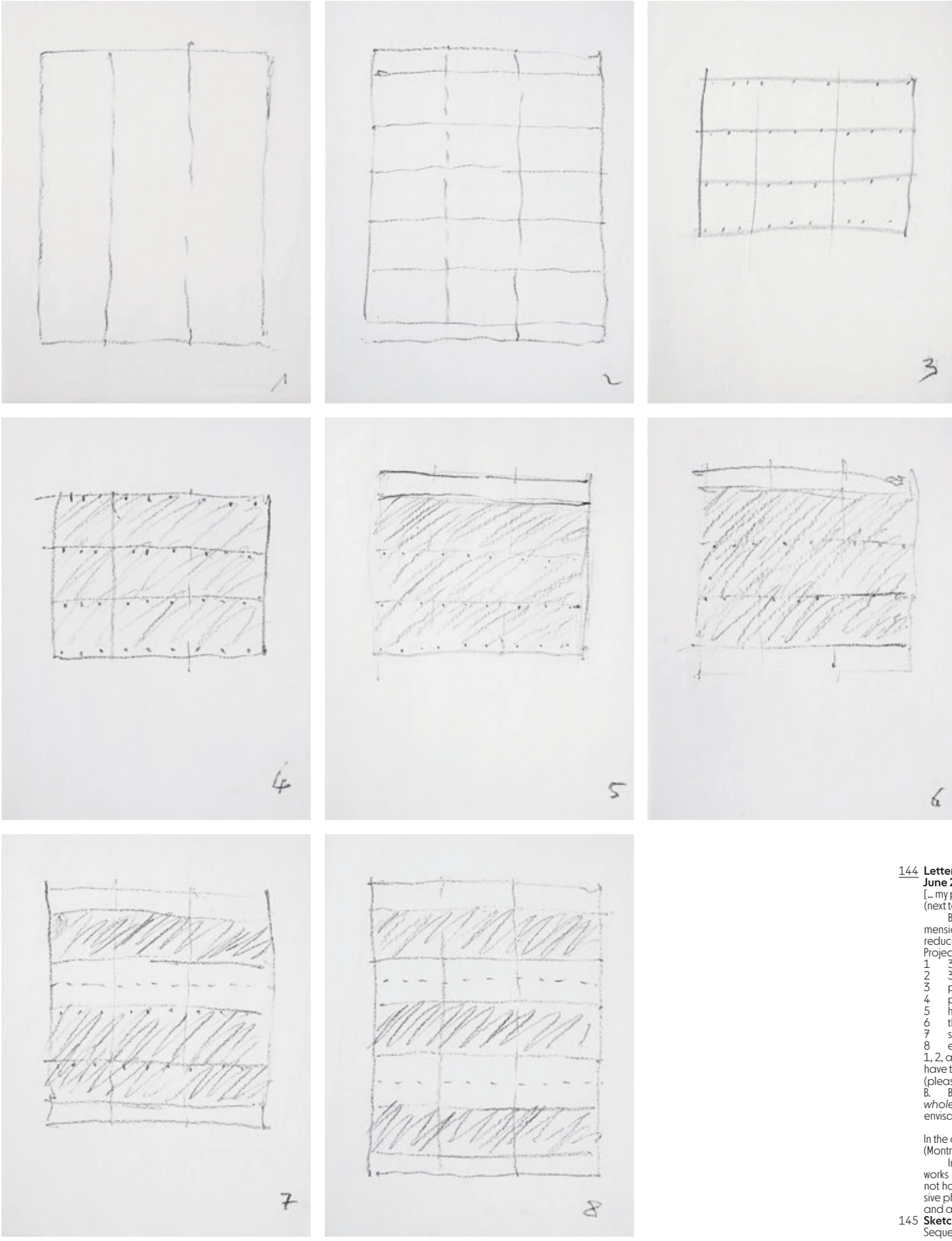
Pour me résumer :



(proportions inutiles, tu t'en rends compte)

(B') Mais on peut imaginer que l'exposition (très didactique) intéresse dans son ensemble un public. Dans ce cas il me faut prévoir, en plus, quelques stades 8 pour vente à

145



144 **Letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, June 22, 1997, pp. 2-3, 27.9 × 21.5 cm.**
[... my project is 3 panels only and only 3 bands worked on.
(next to top left sketch) 228 × 231

Bruno (van Lierde) has indicated to me that, in effect, the dimensions of the pieces pose a problem for some people, so I'm reducing it (without enthusiasm, practically).

Project:
1 3 panels not folded
2 3 panels with prepared folds
3 piece folded and stapled
4 piece folded and stapled and painted
5 half-band folded from the top
6 the two half-bands unfolded
7 same thing + a 38 cm band unfolded
8 everything unfolded (thus, final stage)

1, 2, and 3 will be made on site, so it's not urgent: normally, I only have to make 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. But...(see over), To summarize:
(please take into account, incorrect proportions)
B. But one can imagine that the (quite didactic) exhibition *as a whole* might be interesting for a museum. In that case, we should envisage several more stage 8s for sale at...]

In the course of 1997, Parmentier made several trips to Canada (Montreal).

In this letter, Parmentier considers reducing the size of his works and, for a projected exhibition in Switzerland (which does not happen), envisages exhibiting his working process in successive phases, in "stages" from 1 to 8, with one work for each stage, and all of them in the same exhibition space.

145 **Sketches numbered 1 to 8, 27.9 × 21.5 cm each.**
Sequencing of a work in eight "stages" for an unrealized project.

" (...) je parle d'un art qui s'en détourne avec dégoût, las de ses maigres exploits, las de prétendu pouvoir, las de pouvoir (...), las de faire quelques petits pas de plus sur une route morne."

Samuel Beckett

In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni.

Guy Debord

Il y a des mots (parmi les plus importants a priori, les plus graves), des idées ou des démarches dont on se trouve dépossédé par ceux-là même qui ne les comprennent pas ou mal, qui leur sont étrangers. Ces mots, ces attitudes jetés comme des bouteilles à la mer reviennent à cent exemplaires, somptueusement étiquetés, banalisés, et feront vivre les critiques ou les journalistes quelques années pour peu que ceux-ci prennent soin de les mettre à toutes les sauces. Ainsi *éthique*, un mot qui, dans le domaine de la peinture, ne peut de façon pertinente n'être utilisé que fort rarement et non à tort et à travers ; de même une référence à tel écrivain ou philosophe sera vidée de sens quand elle est récupérée et usée par une médiatisation abusive. *L'Ecriture du désastre* de Blanchot ne peut se retrouver n'importe où sans perdre de sa substance, et l'éthique, sauf à éclater de rire, venir sous la plume de telle journaliste * à propos de l'usage de nouveaux matériaux, de nouvelles technologies. Nam June Paik est-il sous tendu par une éthique ? alors même un hamburger l'est davantage.

Ceci est dit à titre de précaution. Autre précaution : s'il y a une dimension morale - ou même simplement une approche morale - dans tel ou tel travail d'ordre plastique, elle ne peut que se faire jour dans la praxis, n'être mise au jour que par elle. Peut-être pensera-t-on que j'énonce ici une évidence (c'en est une, mais que je ne partage pas avec grand monde - il y a Daniel Buren et Simon Hantaï en France, différemment bien sûr). Il me semble que c'est là une approche dialectique, voire marxiste ** , de simple bon sens. Cette indissociabilité éthique/praxis (le réfléchi / le fait) s'oppose aussi bien à l'idéalisme qu'au mécanicisme, à l'art pour l'art, elle devrait même, avec un peu de chance, préserver du spectaculaire et, avec plus de chance encore, du *beau*. La notion de beau étant évidemment subjective, il convient de ne pas rêver.

Le désespoir ne s'exprime jamais mieux que dans l'humour (pourquoi ai-je tant aimé le *Traité du désespoir* de Kierkegaard ? pourquoi suis-je si ému - aux larmes - par une histoire juive ?), le rire est une thérapie de choc.
Sans doute le mot " désespoir " est excessif ici, dans notre domaine, il devrait être laissé à d'autres et ailleurs, hier, aujourd'hui et vraisemblablement demain, aux victimes des génocides, des massacres, des séismes ou du sida. Je le retire immédiatement : plus humblement disons "doute - ou effroi continuel " cela suffira.

* Dans le Figaro Magazine, hebdomadaire français stupide et de droite (si vous me permettez le pléonasme).

** Ceux qui confondent encore marxisme et Goulag sont généralement les mêmes qui prennent le travail de Warhol pour la manifestation d'une morale.

Le doute, qui se résoud partiellement - mais heureusement jamais complètement - dans la praxis, a pour particularité de renaître toujours. C'est une maladie mortelle. Seuls les artistes prétendument engagés y échappent, laissons-les à leur torpeur, à leurs illusions, à leur opportunisme gourmand.

Il serait temps d'en finir avec cette trop longue histoire qu'est la servilité déhiscente, en finir aussi avec les concepts devenus totalement obsolètes de modernité ou d'avant-garde ; certains ont déjà énoncé qu'il n'y a pas de progrès en art mais qu'existent toujours, de manière récurrente, les pauses de stagnation voire de régression. On peut voir maintenant que, de façon symptomatique, les avant-gardes sont aussi réactionnaires, la plupart du temps, que les académismes : les artistes qui par dizaines travaillent sur des "installations" s'alimentent aujourd'hui d'une nouvelle (mais "nouvelle" pour combien de temps ?) logique de déhiscence régressive, passant à côté du vrai problème de la viduité comme l'ont déjà fait et le font encore les partisans du retour à l'image, à la représentation ou au *métier* ; les "installationnistes" empruntent prudemment aux nouvelles technologies (qui sont par essence profondément exogènes à l'éthique) ou répètent une attitude duchampienne. Picasso lui-même, avec tout son talent, n'a pas fait autre chose finalement en se réappropriant et en actualisant les *Menines* ; c'est là un jeu brillant mais un peu niais dans la mesure ou, précisément, il repose exclusivement sur l'idée de talent et ignore tout doute.
La problématique nouvelle s'ouvrait déjà avec le dripping de Pollock avant que le champ ancien ne se ferme glorieusement avec Matisse, le désordre, l'excès - qu'on pourrait dire sadien - de Pollock renvoit à Bataille, à Blanchot dans le domaine de l'écrit; Matisse nous donna somptueusement ses *Nus bleus* ... mais somptueusement comme Racine écrivait, c'est là que le bât blesse.
Tout est à perdre encore.
Il n'est pas iconoclaste de prétendre qu'il faut tout, absolument tout oublier dans le geste de peindre, nous amputer. Ce qui n'implique pas, bien au contraire, que les autodidactes aient de meilleures dispositions que ceux qui ont appris et usés leurs semelles dans les musées : un seul coup de foudre, une seule révélation peuvent les amener à se programmer paresseusement une carrière, les exemples ne manquent pas. La non-culture n'équivaut jamais au rejet de celle-ci.
Le *I would prefer not to* que Melville prête à son Bartleby pourrait aussi nous donner à réfléchir utilement.

Peut-être que le doute qui se fait jour par et à travers certains gestes (et, surtout, ne s'y dissout pas) fonde le questionnement alors que d'autres gestes peints (parfois sublimes) offrent des *réponses*. C'est dans cette opposition - à tout le moins cette altérité - que se montre la fracture entre éthique et esthétique, entre effroi et plaisir ; esthétique et plaisir, dans le meilleur des cas, ne sont en rien rupture mais continuité dans la légitimité historique, dans la logique de la déhiscence.
" (...) Je me réfugie dans mon rêve d'un art qui n'éprouverait aucun ressentiment à l'égard de sa propre indigence insurmontable et qui serait trop fier pour s'adonner à cette farce du donnant-donnant. "
Beckett écrivait cela dès 1949, il reprenait en s'en affligeant le terme de Vinci, dans ses Cahiers, de *disfazione*. Qu'ajouter ? Peut-être du *moins* encore. Mais encore.

146 **"Vous avez dit 'éthique'?," typewritten with notes by Michel Parmentier, 1999, English version, "Did You Say 'Ethics'?," in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen W. Melville, As *Painting: Division and Displacement*, exh. cat. Columbus (USA), Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, May 12 – August 12, 2001, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, translated by Anthony Allen, May 2001, pp. 231-232, 29.7 × 21 cm.**

[Did You Say "Ethics"?

"I speak of an art turning from it in disgust, weary of its puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, weary of being able... of going a little further along a dreary road" — Samuel Beckett[1]

"In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni" — Guy Debord[2]

One may be dispossessed of words, ideas, or approaches (including the most unconditionally important, the most serious) by people who least understand them, who are least familiar with them. These words and attitudes are tossed at sea like so many messages in a bottle and come back in a hundred different guises, lavishly labeled, trivialized, only to keep critics and journalists afloat for several years, so long as they take care to make these things fit every possible occasion. So it is with "ethics," a word that, in the realm of painting, can be used only rarely with any pertinence, and not without rhyme or reason; likewise, a reference to a writer or a philosopher is emptied of any meaning when it is taken over and worn out by media exposure. Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* cannot pop up just anywhere without losing some of its substance, and "ethics" cannot emerge from the pen of a journalist[3] addressing the use of new materials and new technologies without provoking outbursts of laughter. Is Nam June Paik supported by an ethical position? Then so is a hamburger.[4]

This is offered by way of precaution. Another caution: if there is a moral dimension — or even merely a moral approach — in this or that work in the plastic arts, it can only be revealed in praxis, can only be brought to light by praxis. One may think that I am stating the obvious here (and it is a commonplace, but not one I share with many people except for Daniel Buren and Simon Hantaï in France, in different ways of course). This seems to me to be a dialectical, or perhaps Marxist, thought[5] — simple good sense. This inseparability of ethics and praxis (reflected/made) is opposed equally to idealism, determinism, and art for art's sake; with a little luck, it should even preserve us from the spectacular and, with more luck still, from the beautiful. The notion of beautiful being evidently subjective, it is better not to dream.

Despair is never better expressed than as humor (Why did I like Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* so much? Why am I so moved — to tears — by a Jewish joke?): laughter is shock therapy.

The word "despair" is no doubt excessive here. In this context, it should be left to others, elsewhere, yesterday, today, and likely enough tomorrow, to the victims of genocide, of massacres, of earthquakes, or of AIDS. I withdraw it immediately: more humbly, let's say "doubt" or "continual dread" — this should suffice.

Doubt, which is partially — but fortunately never entirely — resolved in praxis, has the particularity of always being reborn. It is a fatal disease. Only the supposedly politically committed artists escape it — let us leave them to their torpor, their illusions, their parasitical opportunism.

It is time to do away with that overlong history of servile breakthroughs (*déhiscente*), as well as with the now entirely obsolete concepts of modernity and the avant-garde; some have already claimed that there is no progress in art, but rather, in a recurring fashion, always pauses of stagnation, even of regression. Today, one can see that, symptomatically, the avant-gardes are for the most part as reactionary as the academicisms: the dozens of artists who work on "installations" today feed on a new (for how long?) logic of regressive "dehiscence,"[6] sidestepping the real problem of the void, just as the supporters of the return to the image, representation, or *craft* have done and continue to do; the "installationists" either prudently borrow from the new technologies (which are essentially exogenous to ethics), or they repeat a Duchampian posture. Picasso himself, for all his talent, did nothing else in the end when he reappropriated and updated *Las Meninas*; the move is brilliant, but a little daft too, because it relies exclusively on talent and ignores all doubt.

The new problematic was already opening up in Pollock's drip painting, even before the previous vista was gloriously closed with Matisse. Pollock's disorder and excess (which one might call Sadian) returns us to Bataille, and to Blanchot in the realm of writing. Matisse gives us his sumptuous Blue Nudes ... but sumptuous in the way Racine's writing is, and that's where the shoe pinches.

Still, everything remains to be lost, again.

Page 2

* J'utilise ce mot dans le sens très particulier que lui prête Beckett: ouvert à recevoir pour redonner (le "donnant-donnant").

** La première est un état (misérable), le second un geste (imprudent peut-être, impudent sans doute, mais qui permet d'entrevoir une hypothétique nouvelle donne).

Page 1

** Je ne parle que pour le moment présent et ne préjuge pas du futur des technologies, dans quelques années, qui sait?, elles apporteront peut-être des clés propres à quitter l'ancien territoire à la condition que leurs utilisateurs transforment le gadget qui les fascine actuellement en outil de réflexion, qu'ils cessent enfin de jouer, qu'ils se lassent de l'esbrouffe.

It is not iconoclastic to claim that we must absolutely forget everything in the act of painting; we must amputate ourselves. This claim does not imply that self-taught artists are better disposed than those who have learned and who have worn out their shoes in the museums; quite to the contrary — a single lightning bolt, a single epiphany can lead them to lazily engineer a whole career, and examples abound.

Nonculture is never equal to the rejection of culture.[7]

The "I would prefer not to" of Melville's Bartleby, and its more radical variant "I prefer not," should give us much food for thought.

Perhaps doubt, brought forth as it is by and through certain gestures (and above all, never dissolved in them) provides a basis for questioning, whereas other painted gestures (sometimes sublime ones) offer answers. It is within this opposition — or, at the very least, this alterity — that the fracture between ethics and aesthetics, between fear and pleasure, is revealed; in the best of cases, aesthetics and pleasure are not a rupture in, but a continuation of, historical legitimacy and the logic of the breakthrough (*déhiscence*).

"I relapse... into my dream of an art unresentful of its insuperable indigence and too proud for the farce of giving and receiving."[8]

Beckett wrote this as early as 1949, echoing, while lamenting it, da Vinci's *disfazione* from the *Notebooks*. What is there to add? Perhaps something still less, again. But still.

October 1999

Translated from the French by Anthony Allen.

1 "Three Dialogues," *in Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), p. 139. Translator's note.

2 "We go round and round in the night and are consumed by fire." This palindrome is the title of Debord's 1978 film. The script has been published in translation in Guy Debord, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (London: Pelagian Press, 1991). Translator's note.

3 In the French weekly *Figaro Magazine*, a stupid right-wing publication (pardon the pleonasm).

4 I only speak for the present moment and do not prejudge the future of technologies. In a few years, who knows? These technologies will perhaps be our keys out of the old territory, as long as their users are able to transform the gadgets that currently fascinate them into tools of reflection, as long as they stop playing around and get tired of bluffing.

5 Those who still confuse Marxism and the Gulag are generally the same people who consider Warhol's work as the manifestation of a moral sense.

6 I use this word in the very particular meaning that Beckett gives it: open to receive in order to give back (the "giving and receiving").

7 The former is a (miserable) predicament, the latter is an action (imprudent maybe, impudent no doubt, but which may allow us to catch a glimpse of a hypothetical new point of departure).

8 "Three Dialogues," p. 141. Translator's note].

This essay was commissioned by Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen W. Melville, the curators of the exhibition, who invited Parmentier to take part **(see fig. 150, p. 232)**.

31 mars 1993 (March 31, 1993)

1 avril 1993 (April 1, 1993)

20 novembre 1999 (November 20, 1999): The Designated and the Illegible

Jean-Marc Poinsot

20 novembre 1999 (November 20, 1999) (see p. 25) is the work that closes but, we could also say, opens the first major retrospective of the work of Michel Parmentier since his death. *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) was made for "JARS IV, 'Tegenvleug/à rebrousse-poil,'" an exhibition at the Sittard Kunstcentrum in Limburg (The Netherlands) at the request of Guy Massaux (see pp. 26-27). Massaux chose to have it dialogue visually across a partition with a painting by Simon Hantaï[1] (see p. 26) that Parmentier had helped secure for the exhibition.

The work is described as follows: "White oil bar, randomly spread over tracing paper/film polyester, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, two incomplete blank bands 19 cm wide." It was acquired by the Centre Pompidou – Musée national d'art moderne, Paris shortly after the artist's death.

Does the technical description say everything about what there is to see, or does it merely open up indicative modes of access?

The work is in fact made up of four panels whose edges do not visually impinge on one another during the work of covering the surface. They are partially revealed by slight variations in the folding or, rather, in the flattening of the fold. The application of the colored material comes from filling the surface. It is produced by the repetition of irregular gestures made in a circling movement.

The alternation of blank bands and those covered using an oil bar belongs to a series bordered at top and bottom by two blank half-bands *(incomplete blank bands 19 cm wide)*, which, to put it another way, center the succession of bands and inscribe them in a potentially vertical extension.

The support is punctuated by dry folds that very visibly recall the actions of the folding and unfolding. They are not smoothed by the tension from its weight. Indeed, Parmentier recommends that such works are preserved by being hung from the unfolded support.[2] The interior fold at the center of the blank zones is the most marked surface event, whereas the marks on the zones covered with colored material are highly attenuated. The cold white of the support differs subtly from the milkier white of the covered zones, but this very weak contrast seems reversed in other similar works that were made using the same materials but kept in different conditions. Linseed oil — and this is something that painters had long known, and that Parmentier cannot have failed to know — yellows when removed from light, whereas white recovers all its brightness and purity when exposed to light. This reverses the contrasts within the works. In the pieces exhibited in full daylight, the tracing paper seems grayer than the bright white applied in alternating bands. Works kept in storerooms or hung in accordance with the strictest museological norms — in this instance, at the MNAM, Paris — appear duller than those that have just left collectors' walls exposed to the direct light from windows.

Writing to Guy Massaux on October 7, 1999, Parmentier briefly alluded to this work which he was about to execute: "I would like you to specify the dates because I have to go and do a piece on-site and we have to allow for a drying time of about ten days." The detail is secondary, but another letter mentions that he does not plan to make any other pieces at the end of the year: "I have a superb studio with four windows giving onto the Seine and the Île St-Louis but, as you know, I have ruled out even the simple possibility of working there: making another piece in '99 puts back recharging my batteries to December 2000 (unless the Sittard thing miraculously gets sold and the exhibition moves, in which case I'll have to get back to it again)."[3] *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) was thus his last work.

To go back to the technical description above, our attention to the work is guided by reading what the artist gives us directly or indirectly (the systematic descriptions explicitly provided with the work, at least since January 1967 and adjusted since). We note the characteristic traits or the variants inscribed in the production, depending on the supports, the covering materials, and the formats. And finally, we take into account the circumstances of the work's production and its destination and we ask if all this is of help in relating to what we see before us, and if we can hope to perceive what the artist "discovered in and *through the pictorial gesture*."

In what we have learned, some elements are alien to the simple visual reality, as they are to the artist's explicit intention to communicate them to us. This is true of the circumstances of production. In the selection of Parmentier's letters and texts published in 2000 by Massaux, the latter does not share his own correspondence with Parmentier, and notably the indications he provided the artist along with the invitation to feature in the Sittard exhibition. We may however note that on this occasion, as on others too, Parmentier's attitude consisted in producing only sparingly for exhibitions,[4] or possibly for the market. As we shall see below, we also know that the sale contract he imposed on his collectors was hardly going to create a run on the market (see p. 199). The link between the circumstances in which the work was produced and those of its exhibition is therefore more important than the one between the work and the real or potential market.

Is one of the features of this relation manifest in the format? This itself was not a particularly original element in 1999, when a work measuring 304 by 300 cm was in keeping with the sizes found in a public exhibition. However, if we look back over the dimensions chosen by Parmentier, it is fairly clear that they soon moved away from formats designed for private collectors, and probably did so faster than was the case for the painter friends of his early career.[5] It is also fairly clear that, when he could, Parmentier was always ready to widen what he offered to the gaze. In other words, the extension of the pictorial surface is a significant factor that beholders must take into account insofar as it demands a gaze that moves freely from being close-up to more distant in order to grasp both particularities and overall effects of the work. Parmentier seemed to find this extension of the format more easily practical when he started working on supports made up of multiple strips, themselves brought together in sometimes fragmented presentations over several walls. He began work on his first piece like this in April 1986, on rolls of ordinary printer's paper obtained by his partner Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet. The piece was exploratory and was presented as such in the version he gave to Hantaï, who later donated it to the MNAM (*Étude 1987-1990* (Study 1987-1990), graphite on printing paper). It was only shortly after this that Parmentier became fully aware of the possibilities afforded by using strips of material.[6] One detail that one is likely to miss, except at the moment when the work is being hung, is the date/signature that Parmentier marked at the bottom of each panel of material. These were numbered to ensure correct positioning on the wall: a discrepancy in the sequence might break the effect of horizontal surface continuity, in contrast with the vertical breaks implied by the folding of the support. It is interesting to note that *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) presents a fairly strong contrast between the effects of horizontal continuity and vertical discontinuity. Unlike the space of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, in which the continuity extends in every direction of the painting's two dimensions, the extension favored by Parmentier is "realistic" in that it allows for the different experiences of the two dimensions of the support that viewers or the artist himself might have when working on the wall and not on the floor. The non-differentiated, floating space introduced by the Russian avant-garde (Kazimir Malevich or El Lissitzky) and implicitly taken up by Pollock did not interest Parmentier. Not that he was happy to stick with easel painting. This gravitational apprehension of dimensions is more evident in 1999 than in December 1965 and it comes across clearly in the film by Bernard Bloch (see pp. 194-198) where we see the folds open when the stapled parts fall. The two dimensions are therefore not equivalent and the absence of major variations in the height of the pieces suggests, in the experience of looking, that the height

of the walls and the invitation to do something monumental were of no great importance. As we all know, monumentality changes our experience of forms, whereas it is easy to experience a homogenous horizontal development simply by moving. Indexing the work to a dimension external to painting can occur only when it does not structurally change the viewer's experience. Yes to long walls, no to high walls. In large-format works there is nothing but the relation between the viewer and the surface of the painting. And the former is nearly always at an equal distance from the top and bottom of the painting. There is no obstacle or constraint that might lead to a different perception of this or that part of the surface offered to the gaze. That is why, in *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), Parmentier privileges a square or almost-square format, as in many other works.

The use of white oil bar on the tracing paper,[7] itself suffused with the white of the exhibition wall by virtue of its transparency, produces a surface on which it is difficult to perceive even its most structural events. If the light is strong, blurring or, more exactly, attenuating the alternation of bands, the viewer approaching the work sees only a covered surface without any accidents allowing them to grasp a form, even a minimal one, but without the uniformity of a colorfully rendered flat patch. As the viewer continues to examine the surface, they peruse it but recognize nothing more than the procedures given in the statements on the label beside it, explaining the way the work was made but not explicitly saying what should be grasped, without bringing forth any form or event other than the programmed experience that is irreducible to the nonpictorial. In terms of what it shows, the surface of the painting affirms itself and disappears in the same gaze, and whatever we look at in *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), it is impossible to take it in while at the same time grasping all the acts of which this part or the whole are the outcome. This transparency at work in the work that does not assume its result deters any kind of projection or sublimation, although this certainly does not mean there is no seduction or pleasure involved.

No verbal formulation concerning an artwork is neutral or objective, but it may be useful to get away from the anachronism of the literary and theoretical references invoked by Parmentier well after they were relevant in his work or thought, as is indirectly conveyed by the letter quoted earlier:

> "I am working at the moment on a text for Columbus and am in a good position to know that words are always too much or too little when it comes to conveying what we have discovered in and through the pictorial gesture. It's an exhausting exercise even when you have clear ideas and strong convictions (if no certitudes)."[8]

In this case, it would seem that the inadequacy of words has to do with the actual events surrounding *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), which is so far both from Hantaï and from Maurice Blanchot in the particular way it acts on the beholder. The fold (*pli*) of this work is not an event in the sense that it is for Hantaï, detaching the form from whatever intention the painter may have, except perhaps in a sense so generic and general that it is overlooked as a distinctive or defining element. Nor is it a process whereby the painter's work can be reduced to a single plane, removing any interest in an archaeology of successive acts of laying down materials and surfaces that marks the very brutal rupture made at the end of 1965 and 1966. Parmentier had erased the painter's presence and impoverished his painting long before. *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) is at once full and impossible to grasp, it is topical in relation to what was being painted in that penultimate year of the twentieth century and it goes beyond the variations on the monochrome that triumphed at the time. It is not an end in itself, nor a key phase in the final developments of painting. In short, it is present and available to history without being its indicator, mark, or objective. An event, but not a sign.

In this sense, by hanging *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) and *Décembre 1965* (December 1965)(see p. 24) facing each other, Massaux was underscoring both the features shared and the great distance between the two works. If, in late 1965, Parmentier had chosen to make the application of color and the partitioning of the surface depend on the practice of folding, the questions that arose then were very different from the ones he would have to face in 1999.

In December 1965, the canvas bearing that date as its title had been through many different phases before acquiring the appearance with which we are familiar. The canvas prepared in white was, it seems, originally covered in pink paint with a folding that was still approximate and mounted on a stretcher. It was then repainted white and blue and trimmed so as to remove the marks from fastening it to the stretcher, this having been detached upon completion of the work. The use of folding, of presenting the work without a stretcher to make the process of folding and the application of the paint intelligible, and the question of the "arbitrary" choice of color, but also the relative practice of Hard-edge painting — of clean edges which do not develop a narrative of coverings as voluble as was sometimes the case in earlier paintings — all mark a major break and constitute the problematics that informed his work up to 1968. The features shared with *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) are folding and the almost square format, but apart from that the two works raise a host of different questions.

Regarding the format, it should not be considered in terms of dimensions, but of their ratio. The height tends towards large format for a collector's interior. As for the color, it is clear that the modernist theories developed since the nineteenth century strike no chord with Parmentier. After a number of inconclusive experiments, he chose blue, the commonest color, with none of the symbolism assigned to it by Yves Klein. To choose gray (Krylon dark dove gray and Lefranc cellulose white)[9] in 1967 (see p. 63) — which, thanks to the exhibitions as a foursome with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, was also the year of his work's greatest visibility — was to explicitly place himself within a register that did not totally evacuate the work on values, and that was mindful of the fact that many classical painters began work with a gray, rather than a white, ground. In a way, to choose gray on canvas prepared with an application of white paint was to bring together two registers of painting: the gray used in classical painting, and the white of modernity. In this sense, the choice of gray on a white ground was a kind of nonevent, but at the same time a sign of attachment to the history of painting. In 1981, Jacques Vallet credited Parmentier with saying the he would give "All Delacroix for Philippe de Champaigne,"[10] thereby clearly indicating his readiness to dismiss the practice of simultaneous contrasts initiated by Eugène Delacroix, and later taken up by Georges Seurat and Paul Signac. His admiration for artists such as Pollock, Nicolas Poussin, Paolo Uccello, Nicolas de Staël, Pierre Bonnard, Bram van Velde, and one or two others manifested the very particular interest in painting that would lead to this notion of non-choice of which, in late 1967, he considered himself the only exponent: "without prior awareness, each of us had... with simple painting, arrived at a trace that we had recognized as acceptable, devoid of messages or images, empty of that communication which usually renders artists and viewers accomplices; a trace that only speaks of itself, without digressions."[11]

Having confirmed the point of agreement reached by the four painters, he continues with what he considers an impassable limit: "From the moment that this painted trace is recognized, one no longer seeks something else, one repeats. I make bands that represent bands and then other bands that signify: bands and then again bands that are only bands, etc. I no longer choose."[12]

In this regard, he considers that the other three have abandoned strict repetition and "have taken a regressive stance with regard to this moral position."[13]

The choice of painting expressed in *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) whose title, we may note in passing, does not mention the precise day of its execution, as would subsequently be the case,[14] thus translates December 6, 1967, the date Parmentier wrote the tract mentioned above, into a moral position. This moral position ordained that he stop painting and marked the end of his accomplishment of a radical pictorial program.

Décembre 1965 (December 1965) is probably, as Massaux has shown, the painting that initiated the model he would repeat subsequently, but it is not involved in the "strategic" work (to use Parmentier's term) that was begun in January 1967 with three other artists. It initiates, no doubt, because it covers the past work, but it was too freighted with its own history to be part of the history of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni.

The interest of comparing these two works, one foundational and the other final, can be highlighted by the words Parmentier wrote in March 1986, barely two years after he had taken up painting again:

> "What happened not elsewhere but inside me, over these fifteen years, has made two or three things clear to me: 1) my work from 1965 to 68 was satisfactory — better, unsurpassable; 2) maybe it no longer signified, for me, what it seemed to signify; 3) I absolutely had to continue since, in the new situation in which I find myself, it silences something 'new.' Hence the current work, which is somewhat poor and imperiously null, but also a-historical." 15

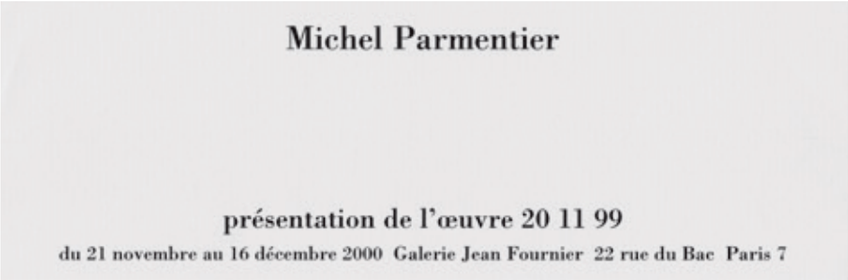
In between this self-denigration and assertion of the novelty of his work as a painter, Parmentier measured the rupture that he had instigated from late 1965 to some time in 1968, and co-instigated in the exhibition as a foursome in 1967. But, beyond that, he was also affirming that there was still something to be said with painting, and that it would not be of the same order. This something was not simply given and, after the transitional works that were the paintings with black bands, he would, starting in 1988, need to construct the "somewhat poor and imperiously null, but also a-historical" practice with the works on paper. When he refers to this interview in his text for the catalogue of his exhibition at the Centre national des arts plastiques in that same year of 1988 **(see p. 146 and pp. 152-155)**, he implies that the poverty of his pencilings is probably more marked than what he was asserting two years earlier.

While it is fairly clear that the general mode of production of his works through folding remains a constant from late 1965 to late 1999, history shows that many artists have worked with repetition and produced an oeuvre. But where some programmed the minimal variations in repetition within a sustained and often serial production, the intermittent basis of Parmentier at work gave him access to more displacements and more new questions than his confreres.

In the series of works on paper, *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999) marks the end of a gesture that is explicitly legible in its very banality. There is, in a sense, a synthesis between the covering of the surface and the undefined or banally repetitive act of inscription, of the designated and the illegible within the same gaze. Finally, the support itself, in its diaphanous transparency, adds to the uncertainty of its position in space, which only the marked folds reposition at regular intervals.

Translated by Charles Penwarden

1 A view of the exhibition presented in a vitrine at Villa Tamaris shows "his last painted work, *Tabula 1982-1986*."
2 In contrast, the painted canvases must be folded up before being exhibited in order to make the folds visible again. Despite these precautions, the respective folding of the support of the paintings on canvas and of the works on paper produce very different impressions of the sequencing of the surface.
3 Parmentier's relation to the place of the work was complex. When he needed to produce for exhibitions, he benefited from studios that were made available to him and used those of his friends, but he seems to have found it too difficult to work in them on a daily basis or to use them to store past work, especially after the hiatus in 1968. See "Post-scriptum à une lettre du 16 janvier 2000," *M. P. à G. M., Lettres et textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000,* edited by Guy Massaux, Brussels (Belgium): Éditions Small Noise, 2001, vol. 8, n. p.
4 Parmentier does not mention the exhibition of recent works eventually programmed by Jean Fournier in late 2000 in any of the published documents. The gallerist's acquisition of Parmentier's corpus had probably not been envisioned in February 2000, and may not have been until after the artist's death.
5 Even if Parmentier's more or less square formats are not monumental, they are bigger than those used by his colleagues at the time, including by a little those of Buren, who at the time was more interested in varying his formats in order to test the capacity of his chosen stripes to be unaffected by variations in the dimensions of his canvases.
6 Among the possibilities envisaged by the artist, the fragmentation of a set of panels produced by a single action was tried in the hanging of an exhibition at Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, where the division into subsets was determined by the dimensions of the walls available for the hanging. In the conditions of sale the artist did however stipulate that the purchased work should comprise at least three panels.
7 Here I forget to mention the way the white and its medium adhere to the accidents of the flat surface of the wall supporting the work (minimal, insignificant accidents that are forgotten in the exhibition space) or are deposited in keeping with the uneven wear of the oil bar. All these comprehensible and imperceptible micro-events of what is grasped by the senses, points of sensorial and significant attraction for the gaze.
8 See "Letter to Guy Massaux, [The "text for Columbus" mentioned here is "Did You Say 'Ethics'?" **(see pp. 208-209)**]
9 As mentioned in the leaflet "Manifestation 3" for the exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris **(see p. 61)**.
10 In "Michel Parmentier: Profession Non-Painter" **(see pp. 110-111, translated p. 120)**.
11 Michel Parmentier, "The Group Buren Mosset Parmentier Toroni No Longer Exists" **(see pp. 76-77)**.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 This detail corroborates Massaux's hypothesis that *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) is a palimpsest, that is to say, a painting made over another that was erased beforehand, an operation that implies a certain duration. This extension over time would later be meaningless insofar as the making of a painting was now no more than a technical action, and not a long operation of gestation, with its hesitations and iterations.
15 See "Interview with Bernard Blistène" **(see pp. 132-134)**.



147

148

147 **Invitation to the exhibition "présentation de l'œuvre 20 11 99," Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris (France), November 21 – December 16, 2000, 3.5 × 21 cm (folded).** Parmentier and Jean Fournier had agreed to program an exhibition in the latter's gallery for 2001. After Parmentier's death, in June 2000, Fournier, who had acquired the artist's last work, *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), made for the exhibition "JARS IV. 'tegenvleug / à rebrousse-poil," (Sittard, Netherlands), decided to display it in his gallery from November 21 to December 16, 2000.

20 novembre 1999 (November 20, 1999) was hung in the exact spot where, thirty-five years earlier, *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) was hung. We still do not know for sure which canvas was hung beside *Décembre 1965* (December 1965) in the exhibition "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," from July to September 1966 **(see fig. 27, pp. 42-43)**.

148 ***20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), exhibition "présentation de l'œuvre 20 11 99," Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris (France), color photograph, black and white reproduction from transparency, 6 × 6 cm.**

Michel Parmentier

Laura Lisbon

First published in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen Melville, *As Painting: Division and Displacement* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press; Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), pp. 137-141 (see pp. 208-209 and fig. 150, p. 232)

"The genesis, asceticism, and foundations of his work reveal both a comprehensive knowledge of the artists he admires, such as Bram van Velde and Hantaï, and a desire to explore in depth what Blanchot called 'the literary space,' the space to be painted and that of painting. Parmentier's genuine familiarity with the writings of Louis-René des Forêts, Blanchot, and Levinas has also greatly influenced his approach. Nevertheless, Parmentier is by no means a 'literary painter'; I know of few other works less likely to fit such a category. Nonetheless, his 'way of being' in the world has always been shaped by the philosophical and intellectual debates that arose during that time." (pp. 132-134)
Bernard Blistène

In this comment from 1992, Blistène emphasizes a crucial aspect for any understanding of Parmentier's work: his "approach" or "way of being" an artist.[1] Informed by this philosophical background, Parmentier's deep interest in Blanchot's concept of "literary space" encompasses the complexity of a space that includes its own absence, reserve, and necessary silence. Such a space sets itself apart from the author in order to produce an experience that requires a turning away in order to see or apprehend it.[2] If Parmentier is not a "literary" painter, it is precisely because the challenge of his work is to approach this "literary space," not to represent it. His approach to making work, which includes decisive moments of inactivity or refusal to work, is indissociable from a reflection on the experience of "literary space," but also from the notions of reserve, restraint, and silence that suggests an ethics of painting as an approach to painting.

Looking at the trajectory of Parmentier's career, we see that he exhibited in 1966, 1967, and 1968, then not again until fifteen years later. In a letter in 1972, he explained why he ceased working: "The trace-limit should cease being produced; ceasing, it denounces and avows its limit situation (it denounces and avows its limits where it is situated), preserving (as much as possible) its subversive quality [3] (pp. 99 and 120).

This comment reflects the provocative position Parmentier has maintained since 1967 when he worked with Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Niele Toroni. The group staged four "Manifestations," each meant to demonstrate their collective position against both lyrical and gestural painting in France at the time, as well as against the art establishment. Later in 1967, rejecting the proposal that the group members make each other's paintings, Parmentier defected, claiming that a distinction should be made between the strategy of depersonalizing painting and making a depersonalized painting. This suggests his commitment to painting as a "praxis," in which the concept does not preceed language but is formed through its practice. In his essay for the *As Painting* catalogue, "Did You Say 'Ethics'?" (see pp. 208-209 and fig. 150, p.. 232) he argues for the "inseparability of ethics and praxis," which includes both an essential doubt and incessant reflection on painting's limits.

The works Parmentier began making in 1966 reflect his earlier interest in hiding and revealing the surface of the painting through the use of masking adhesives and stencils. He folded the canvases in such a way as to enfold alternating horizontal bands (38 cm in width) that remain shielded from the paint that he later applies to the exposed surfaces. He created an apparent monochrome by spraying lacquer in a mechanical and impersonal manner, thereby effacing any sense of gesture. The folded, monochromatic canvas was then unfolded to reveal 38 cm of unpainted stripes of white canvas alternating with the lacquered stripes. Residual traces of the staples that were used to hold the folds in place are evident along the edges of the painted bands; also visible is the faint crease of the supplementary 19 cm fold, a structural necessity for making the original 38 cm folds.

This method of folding in order to produce a reserve in the surface is consistent throughout Parmentier's work. One might argue that he begins painting by folding, that his work is constructed in relation to a surface that he understands as containing a depth, a reserve, and a temporality that is invisible during much of the process of making the work. For Parmentier, to continue painting was to continue to address this reserve, a void that must be acknowledged as a part of all substantial philosophical and visual experience. His approach to painting was driven fundamentally by an interest in the limit-experience of the invisible.

After ceasing in 1968, Parmentier returned to painting in 1983 by making black stripes. Earlier, each successive year was signified by a different color — blue in 1966, gray in 1967, red in 1968 — as well as by the date Parmentier stamped on the back of each piece to mark the date of the work's completion and serve as its title. In conversation, he claimed that 1988 was the "beginning of the disappearance." That "disappearance" is most dramatically apparent in the change of materials and overall effect, which might be summarized as much more recessive than the earlier work. He began working with semitransparent paper and crayon, which allowed the folds to be more visible as crisp edges and made the marking or filling of the exposed faces less pronounced than the lacquered surfaces. The hatching of the black crayon and, later, white oil pastel appears diffused and recedes on the surfaces of the folds as opposed to the visual demand of the colored stripes in the earlier work.

The stripes covered with hatching are filled in a completely banal manner, with the type of marks one makes while talking on the phone or simply passing time. They achieve a kind of temporal duration not evident in the stilled sense of the earlier sprayed works. What appears as an additional supplement on this thinner support is the interruption that the crease from the folded edges underneath the surface makes in the marking system. In this way, evidence of a surface within a surface and a set of internal divisions appear. As in the earlier work, the final mark made was the stamping of the date of the work's termination.

Parmentier's critical approach to painting maintains an interest in limits, including an interest in the "bête" — what in English might be translated as both a dumbness and muteness — the "impoverished" mark, and the necessary doubt (despair) that is essential to making any work at all. Likewise, the works themselves, their broken pattern over time as "limit-traces," face us with the desperate question that so absorbs and interests Parmentier in Blanchot's *Space of Literature:* "What would be at stake in the fact that something like art or literature exists?" As Parmentier's late work proceeded toward literal invisibility, that question pressed even harder.

1 Interview with Bernard Blistène" **(see pp. 132-134)** Although they participated in this exhibition, Parmentier and Daniel Buren wrote an artist's statement that attacked its premise and thus renewed the often militant stance that characterized much of their earlier work. For a thorough selection of historical and critical texts on Parmentier, see Alfred Pacquement, *Michel Parmentier* (Paris: Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris, 1988).
2 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).
3 The open letter was written to François Mathey **(pp. 98-99, translated p. 120)**.

Michel Parmentier: Painting for Nothing

Molly Warnock

First published in French as "Michel Parmentier: Peindre pour rien," trans. Catherine Vasseur, in *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 132 (Summer 2015): pp. 18-39. Subsequently published in English in *Journal of Contemporary Painting 2:2* (November 2016): pp. 237-60. All references are to the Works Cited at the end of the essay. Where relevant, references to texts included in the catalogue have also been included.

Early in the morning of September 22, 1992 ("Tuesday 3.43 am"), the French artist Michel Parmentier added a lengthy note to a previously completed letter to his longtime friend and fellow painter, Simon Hantaï. "To work without producing is undoubtedly one of the finest ideas there is," the younger man begins, "not to work at all is another." He continues:

> "Detachment from everything is a third. Being interested in everything without actively drawing any conclusions — simply doing, rather — seems to me very good. To love for nothing is an attitude, an essential stance (others would say: 'love without expectation of return' — this is not quite Levinas who, for his part, would undoubtedly say: 'love one's opposite for our community to be discovered' (or something like that). But working in loss is (at least for me) primordial — this is not quite what Bataille has in mind, but it's not far off, I don't think" (Parmentier 2015: 43, emphasis in the original).[1]

At first glance, this talk of love and community appears hard to reconcile with the public persona of an artist generally seen as a "man of ruptures," a reputation that goes back at least as early as 1967 (Vallet 1981: 60 (see pp. 110-111 and 120-121)). Over the course of that pivotal year, Parmentier participated in four collaborative "Manifestations" with his generational peers Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, and Niele Toroni, at some of the French capital's most venerable institutions and exhibitions of contemporary creation. Their attacks on painterly subjectivity and traditional modes of authorship have come to be seen as among the most radical in postwar practice; and Parmentier, for his part, has appeared the most intransigent of the four participants. Indeed, it was he who broke with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, in December 1967, on the grounds that the group had taken a reactionary turn. A little less than one year later, in October or November 1968, Parmentier ceased to paint altogether.

Following the painter's lead, critics have tended to frame that cessation as the logical, if not inevitable, extension of Parmentier's best-known work: the impassive-seeming, horizontally striped canvases that he began making in an earlier moment of his friendship with Hantaï, in late 1965 (Parmentier [1972] 2014: 51-52 (see p. 98-99 and 120)). Produced first on a stretcher and then through a process of folding that derived from the *pliage* method Hantaï had been developing since 1960 — essentially, the crumpling or knotting of a canvas that was then brushed with paint — these paintings refused what Parmentier saw as the visually seductive nature of the older man's famously variable results, thereby rendering the practice wholly routine, the markings relentlessly standardized. By the time he began showing with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, Parmentier had limited his paintings to a single color per year — blue in 1966, gray in 1967, and red in 1968 — with perfectly even, just-under-15-inch-wide bands of sprayed on paint alternating exactly with equal expanses of white canvas (though partial bands of varying width often appear at the top and bottom). These works remain the central statement of a corpus pledged to what Parmentier described as "the neutral"— iterations, as the painter wrote in 1967, of "a trace [...] empty of messages, of images, empty of that communication that, typically, creates complicity between artists and spectators; a trace that speaks only of itself, without digressions" (Parmentier 1967 2014: 45 (see p. 76)).

Yet Parmentier's letter to Hantaï illuminates a different, less familiar moment in the former's practice. In 1983, Parmentier began working again; and by 1992, he had settled into a distinctly altered practice that saw him substituting paper or polyester film for canvas, and freehand marking in graphite, charcoal, pastel, or oil bar for sprayed lacquer. Despite a clear shift in register, however, the artist presented the newer work as essentially continuous with his earlier striped canvases – implicated, as it were, in one ongoing "palimpsest": "I would practice the palimpsest *to rewrite the same thing*," notes the painter in a 1986 interview with Bernard Blistène, taking care to specify that he is referring not just to his exactly contemporaneous work but, indeed, to his practice as a whole (Parmentier [1986] 2014: 83, emphasis in the original (see pp. 132-134)). Undergirding this characterization is Parmentier's profound commitment to repetition. Where most palimpsests, in the painter's estimation, overwrite earlier texts in order to say something more important, his work would eschew hierarchy and progress alike — perpetually reworking but *one* proposition.

The same might be said of the formulations on community with which we began. For in many respects, Parmentier's work, even and perhaps especially in its refusal of "complicity," had always been about the possibility of some other way of being, and being together. This investigation draws actively upon developments in other areas of thought: the painter's deep and enduring orientation to "the neutral" derives impetus from his decades-long engagement with the work of Maurice Blanchot; while the later, importantly twinned commitments to "loving for nothing" and "working in loss" inevitably conjure — as Parmentier himself acknowledges in his letter to Hantaï — closely related emphases in the writings of Blanchot's friends and interlocutors Georges Bataille and Emmanuel Levinas, among others. Yet the artist's formulations also are bound in a highly specific pictorial practice, responsive to — and ultimately inseparable from — a certain experience of painting. Such, at any rate, is the argument I wish to put forward here.

I

A black-and-white photograph taken at the Cinquième Biennale de Paris in September 1967 shows some aspects of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni's fourth, final, and most complex manifestation (see fig. 46, p. 66). The space is a heavily trafficked passageway near the bar, though this is not immediately apparent, and the staging is divided between two main elements. Four paintings of equal dimensions — each slightly under 79" square — hang on the wall, their formats arranged to form a larger square. Like Parmentier, each of his three collaborators had by this point adopted a highly reduced mark, repeating it from one work to the next; and all refused the notion that those traces were in any way illustrative of interior states. Arranged alphabetically from left to right, top to bottom, there appear Buren's vertically striped fabric, its outermost bands painted white; Mosset's circle; Parmentier's horizontal stripes; and Toroni's regularly spaced impressions of a no. 50 brush. Care has been taken, it seems, to leave slight but significant gaps: negative axes, as it were, separating the four quadrants.

On the near side of the corridor, facing the camera, stands an open parallelepiped, its visible surfaces plastered entirely with repeating posters featuring passport-style photographs of the four participants' faces. The photographs, too, are arranged in a grid, if not quite a square, and each is accompanied by that individual's proper name in capital letters. Another, similarly repeating line, "MANIFESTATION 4," gives the participants a reason to be together; but the faces themselves, like the paintings behind them, remain rigorously frontal and separated throughout by interstices — as if redoubling the canvases' own frontality and discreteness. Strengthening the parallel, the near-allover repetition of posters reads as structurally analogous to the repeating patterns of the paintings, Mosset's singleness and centering apart. What we are presented with, in other words, is a set of complex and mutually entangled relays among paintings and faces, "neutral" traces and proper names. To what extent, one might ask, are these individuals showing paintings, and to what extent are they showing themselves?

Further complicating this question are some aspects of the set-up that do not show in the photograph: a cyclically repeating soundtrack and synchronized lighting (Buren 2012; Gatellier 1967: 81; and Lovin 1967: 27-28). The audio excoriates art as "illusion" (variously: of "displacement," "liberty," "presence," "the dream," "the sacred," "the

marvelous," "escape," or "nature"), as a "distraction," and as "false," and presents the painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni as turning away from such lures (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1967e] 2014: 42 (see p. 66)). (For example: "Art is the illusion of liberty/not the painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni.") The deliberate and repeated shift from art "as such" to painting in particular emphasizes the four men's shared attachment to that specific medium; while the successive listing of names, coupled with what would have been the isolated spotlighting of that painter's canvas, underscores that each takes up that commitment differently. It is by virtue of what each does singly that common action becomes possible: "Painting begins with Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni" is the final, cyclically repeated line — at which point all four paintings are illuminated simultaneously, for the first and last time in the entire sequence.

As this description makes clear, there is an importantly temporal dimension to this display. What is more, this turns out to be true of *all* the collaborative actions, each of which has a specific temporal framing. Consider, to begin with, two events assigned specific durations by the group. "Manifestation 1" took place the day of the opening of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (see pp. 54-58). A letter of invitation dated 23 December 1966 had announced "the first in a series of manifestations aimed, not simply at presenting the trace of our activity, *but above all, at making visible the mechanism from which it proceeds*" (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1966] 2014: 35; emphasis in original (see fig. 33, p. 55)); and for the duration of the event itself — a period of some eight hours, beginning at noon, and carried out continuously before the eyes of the public — the four participants simply painted canvases with their individual traces, hanging completed results on the wall as the day progressed. A looped soundtrack accompanied the demonstration, repeating the single phrase "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni advise you to become intelligent" in French, English, and Spanish (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1967b] 2014 : 37 (see fig. 36, p. 56)).

To this explicit dramatization of the act of painting — the "mechanism" from which the four painters' traces proceed — one might then contrast the much shorter "Manifestation 3," which took place in the Centre Expérimental du Spectacle of the Musée des Art Décoratifs between 9:00 and 10:15 p.m. on 2 June 1967 (see pp. 61-64). In contrast to the inaugural collaboration, Manifestation 3 was entirely static, consisting uniquely of the display of four paintings of equal dimensions — one by each of the four participants — within a larger square nearly 16½ feet a side above the stage. This demonstration, too, addresses a specific act, but now, as will emerge, it is the act of looking — a shift in emphasis that opens immediately onto larger questions concerning the work's conditions of publicness, the very terms of its visibility.

Further strengthening the sense of relationship between these two events, both Manifestations 1 and 3 involved the distribution of tracts whose structures appear importantly analogous to those of the demonstrations as a whole. That for Manifestation 1 was both circulated in advance and distributed continuously throughout the event. Integral to its form is the repetition of the phrase "Since painting...," followed by a definition of or received idea about the medium ("Since painting is a game"; or, "Since painting serves something"), the whole list culminating, famously, in the boldly capitalized declaration "WE ARE NOT PAINTERS" (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1967a] 2014: 36 (see fig. 34, p. 54)). The nondevelopmental enchainment of clauses registers as keyed in part to the repetitive acts performed simultaneously by the painters, the former elaborating upon painting as they refuse to practice it, the latter showing what painting might look like outside those frameworks. An even closer relationship might be said to exist between the acts and the soundtrack, with its continuously repeated but variously translated phrase — as if the multiple languages were on some level analogous to the painters' equally neutral but importantly plural marks.

The tract for Manifestation 3, by contrast, served to bring that event to a close. It begins: "It evidently consisted of nothing other than to look at the canvases of BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI," and proceeds to provide short, strictly literal descriptions of each of the works in question (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1967d] 2014: 41 (see fig. 42, p. 63)). The unembellished language is clearly meant as a verbal equivalent to the nondescript marks "to be seen there": for example, "A canvas 2.5 × 2.5 meters divided among 29 equal, vertical, red and white bands, of which the two outermost stripes are covered in white (BUREN)" (see fig. 42, p. 63). Each description is offset from the others, just as the paintings retain a slight distance, each one from the next. In this instance, the tract appears to have had (and been intended to have) a deflationary effect, essentially pointing up the gap between the audience's expectations and the peculiarly boring spectacle that had in fact greeted them.

Between these two events, indeed immediately subsequent to Manifestation 1, there lies "Manifestation 2." Weaker than Manifestations 1 and 3 in its temporal framing, Manifestation 2 began with the four painters' withdrawal of their freshly completed works from the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and ended only with the closing of that exhibition. Throughout that period, there remained uniquely banners — "BUREN, MOSSET, PARMENTIER, TORONI," a holdover from the first manifestation, and "ARE NOT SHOWING" (see fig. 37, p. 58), a new addition specific to the second — in place of painters and paintings alike. Significantly, the latter banner (notably unlike the timed past of the tract of Manifestation 3) is in the present tense, such that "not showing" appears a continuously willed stance, maintained throughout the entire duration of the exhibition. No tract accompanied this manifestation, though it did find a repetition of sorts in a "Lettre ouverte"/"open letter" (see fig. 38, p. 59) published that evening — a text highlighting, among other points, what the four painters detail as the retrograde nature of all salons, insofar as they "exacerbate the laziness of the public": "Each is a site of pilgrimage where a very specific public comes to reassure itself: on a specific date, one is scandalized and swoons; the culture-gadget serves its purpose at least once a year." (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1967c] 2014: 39 (see fig. 38, p. 59)). That this characterization can sound like a degraded version of tragic catharsis perhaps helps explain the explicitly theatrical set-up of Manifestation 3 six months later.

"Manifestation 4" is likewise keyed to the duration of an exhibition, but its temporal structure is the most complex of all. Indeed, as we are now in a position to grasp, its intricate staging appears substantially as a repetition-with-difference (one might even say: a palimpsest) of the earlier collaborations — and in that sense, it registers this collective enterprise as something that has, or is beginning to have, a kind of history. This is most evident in terms of its relationship to Manifestation 3, from which it takes over the square-within-a-square installation of paintings, as it also inherits the posters with the four painters' faces: an earlier version of that placard had functioned as advance publicity for the June event. But there are additional borrowings. The soundtrack, for example, recalls the similar use of audio in Manifestation 1, while the three-minute-long darkness that follows the terminal phrase "Painting begins with Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni" could be seen as reprising the collective withdrawal of Manifestation 2 — a gesture that is now brought explicitly into a larger temporality. The cyclical repetition of the whole might then be taken as a figure for the four men's repeated coming-together across the various manifestations.

If we return now to my opening question — what are these individuals showing, their painting or themselves — the answer would appear to be: both, inseparably. Support for that view comes from a film produced on site for the French national broadcasting service, showing each of the four painters in turn standing in front of his canvas, in synch with the listing of proper names in the soundtrack (Chaboud 1967). And it comes, as well, from the critic Michel Claura, whose essay on Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni for their official entry in the biennale catalogue attends nearly equally, and at times interchangeably, to the four men's *painting* and to the four men *as painters* — as when he claims that "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni deliberately abandon the sensibility that has always driven — and drawn us to — the artist and the work of art." (Claura 1967a: 175 (see fig. 48, p. 67)).Their seeming neutrality, to use Parmentier's preferred term again, breaks with a long tradition in which artist and artwork alike would be the purveyors of "illusion, distraction, communication" (Claura 1967a: 175 (see fig. 48, p. 67)). These claims are congruent with those we have seen advanced in the soundtrack. What I want particularly to highlight now is the way in which the four painters' stance, in Claura's account, seems to involve a clear consciousness of separation, indeed existential *aloneness*, as when the critic writes:

"Neither comfort nor discomfort is to be sought in their painting. There is no communication. The contact with the 'work of art' has lost its primary 'quality': its emollient property" (Claura 1967a: 175; *emphasis in the original*).

Or again:

"The painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, is not trying to 'disturb' the public. But it is not what art has always been: a distraction. [...] It is no longer a blindfold used to cover the eyes of the spectator, offering him relief from reality — his reality against that of the world and that of the world against his own. The painting of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni simply exists" (Claura 1967a: 175 (see fig. 48, p. 67)).

At stake here is a fundamental transformation of the terms of what we might as well call our mutual facing. Against what Parmentier decries elsewhere as the habitual "complicity" of artist and spectator, this work would throw the beholder back on himself, deny him his "blindfold," and insist instead on the autonomy of paintings and persons alike,[2] their shared refusal to accommodate the usual workings of the "culture-gadget"[3] (see fig. 38, p. 59). The installation does not simply present, but rather actively stages, the unflinching acceptance of discreteness at the heart of that repudiation. Indeed, the parallelepiped in particular registers as a stand-in for the spectator "left alone with himself," its singleness and verticality clearly scaled to the standing human form. As if modeling — making manifest — the existential stance in which one might, at last, "become intelligent."[4]

II

Manifestation 4 offers a surprisingly complex vision of a plurality that precisely does not resolve itself in a fixed group identity but is made, unmade, and remade in time.[5] Integral to that figuration, I have suggested, are individual and specific acts of painting that allow each participant to become neutral on something like his own terms. Yet the very premise of that achievement proved remarkably volatile. In December 1967, on the occasion of an exhibition at the former Galerie J (later denoted "Manifestation 5"), in Paris, Parmentier's three collaborators made a proposition he considered fundamentally regressive: that each painter might also sign the others' works, on the understanding that these notionally inexpressive marks existed apart from any originating subject and were, therefore, equally appropriable by all (Claura [1967b] 1991: 152 (see fig. 55, p. 76)). In his immediately contemporaneous letter of rupture, "Le Groupe Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni N"Existe Plus"/"The Group Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni No Longer Exists," Parmentier objected that the group was valorizing a certain *idea* of impersonality at the expense of the actual *act* of painting; insofar as the latter inevitably is performed by a specific being, the resulting traces may be "equivalent" in their neutrality, but they will not be exchangeable (Parmentier [1967] 2014: 45 (see fig. 55, p. 76)).

At stake here was Parmentier's enduring sense of the self as individual, if also, on some level, opaque and other — including, he would later suggest, in its initial choice of mark, an election he conceived as no less determined by "unconscious and semi-conscious motivations" than by historically situated reflection (Parmentier 2004-05: 68 (see fig. 59, p. 91)). One might even see the material reserves of Parmentier's *pliage*, like Hantaï's before it, as essentially keyed to — the painterly analogue of — that conception of the self: unlike his compatriots' marks, Parmentier's trace derives from the folding and unfolding of an opaque support, one that is not fully available during the painting process yet does not quite enclose an interiority. At once less than fully knowable and insuperable, that self could not simply be set aside but only, as it were, worked through *in time* — "neutralized" through a rigorously repetitive process of painting. (Another work from just before the collaborations with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, this one a sheet of paper covered with repeating stamps of the date of its making — the titular *15 avril 1966* (April 15, 1966) — might be said to register this commitment otherwise.) By contrast, simple substitutions merely smuggled in subjectivism through the back door: where each painter had three traces at his disposition, no clear rationale obtained for opting for one rather than another in any circumstance (Parmentier [1967] 2014: 44-45 (see fig. 55, p. 76)). The choice for Parmentier, therefore, was not between one trace and another, but between strict repetition of the mark and no production whatsoever. As we know, he chose the second option.

I shall not presume here to pin down the "reason" for that withdrawal. Parmentier said various things about this at different times, pointing to, among other issues, the voraciousness of a cultural context that could render any- and everything "consumable," as in his oft-cited 1972 letter to curator François Mathey (Parmentier [1972] 2014: 54 (see pp. 98-99 and 120)); or the perhaps dauntingly self-sufficient nature of his own painting, as in a 1990 conversation with Anne Baldassari and Daniel Buren (Buren and Parmentier [1991] 2014: 201-02). Doubtless his motivations were complex and multiple. Rather, I want to look instead at the terms Parmentier used to frame his practice from within his eventual return — terms that can, I think, help us to make out more fully the fundamental stakes of his late "palimpsest," in its simultaneous continuity with and difference from the earlier striped canvases.

Once again, my source is a previously unpublished letter to Hantaï, this one dated December 2 1986. By this point, the older man had himself withdrawn from public life, having ceased to show his work late in 1982. Parmentier's letter begins with some reflections specific to the two men's shared resistance to the contemporary art world and moves rapidly toward broader considerations. It is necessary to quote at length:

"I understand perfectly, as you might expect, the irritation (or worse) that you feel at the uses to which one puts your former work. You can't do much about it, except fall deaf (and even blind, if necessary). Invent a means? (I don't know which one, only that if there is one, it can't be lukewarm.) Produce anew, I suppose. [...] Neither Fournier [Jean Fournier, Hantaï's gallerist — M.W.] (despite the respect one can have for him) nor the museums are essential, nor what happens there. Solitude, the sentiment of our death (and God, perhaps) are the only essential problems — friendship and love must enter + or – in these categories.

Rest assured that I can't help but smile at the tone I'm taking here: I am hardly wise and so uneasily a 'believer.' We don't give a damn about painting, here's what I want to say. But one has to do this something (too bad if the others, for as little as they see this 'something,' call that 'painting,' too bad). Something silent, gray, transparent, the + ineffable possible. You haven't finished. Me neither. Others have finished: they paint splendidly, too bad for them; they've missed the essential. Being poor, if this word still means anything.

One can, of course, go see the stained glass windows at Chartres. The Pietà at the Louvre. Or one can just go out in the street or to look at the sea. One must nonetheless go back home to inscribe some silence on canvas or paper. The more derisory it is, the more essential it is" (Parmentier 2015: 41; emphasis in original).

One notes a certain repetition-with-difference of an earlier theme: Parmentier's emphasis on solitude recalls Claura's earlier reference to a spectator "left alone with himself." Yet the very quality of that aloneness seems to have changed; "solitude" has duration built into it in a way that simply being "left alone" does not. So, too, does the word Parmentier now prefers to "painting," a category for which he professes to have no use: "to inscribe" (*inscrire*) is in the infinitive form, as if to privilege a notionally open-ended act. And just as Parmentier's solitude appears qualitatively different from the earlier aloneness, so this new inscription seems to be of a fundamentally other sort than the earlier painting: "silent," "gray," and "transparent," indeed, as "ineffable" as possible — as opposed to graphically striking, even peremptory.[6]

This letter coincides with a moment of deep transformation in Parmentier's practice. Over the course of the three preceding years, between 1983 and 1986, Parmentier had produced a suite of new paintings in lacquer on canvas, now with uniformly black bands as opposed to the annual color shifts of the earlier work. The canvases corresponded to his perceived need to resume his painting where he had left it fifteen years earlier, but they also came quickly to strike him as inadequate — or rather, as *all too* adequate, as if that work "*enunciated* silence rather than being silent" (Buren and Parmentier [1991] 2014: 202; emphasis in original). It was not a solution Parmentier could trust.

A handful of studies in graphite on paper from the year 1986[7] show Parmentier rethinking his practice fundamentally, by introducing the painter's hand. In so doing, they foreground the finite self as at once the starting point for, and the continued stake of, the artist's practice as a whole. Yet this is no straightforward return to subjective

expression. Rather, *the Études/Studies* show the artist struggling to "*impoverish*" self and mark alike. He keeps the traits short, as if willfully interrupting their élan; he forces himself to alternate among differently oriented axes, as if checking his manual habits; he turns his implement on its side, as if deliberately dissipating his own impetus. These discontinuous traces also betray a temporal dimension absent from the earlier sprayed surfaces. There are discernible differences in pressure and inflection from one point to another; one imagines the painter repeatedly lifting his hand and recommencing. In a December 9, 1987 letter to Hantaï, to whom he gave these works (and who donated them to the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris after the younger man's death), Parmentier writes of trying to "break the hand," and "make 'lyricism' give way to 'neutrality'"; further on, he declares the need to "break the automatisms, the 'releases' of the hand that would still be all too pleasant" (Parmentier 2015: 41-42). Such comments call attention to the sustained nature of the effort as a whole: lyricism, they suggest, catches one unawares, whereas "neutrality" can only be approached with time, effort, and vigilance. (The way has, precisely, to be "studied.") The requisite "breaking" is manifest in the strenuously enforced intermittency of his marking.

With the *Études*, Parmentier shifts his practice decisively onto different ground, one where inscription appears a process of dispropriation — the very means or medium of what he will soon call working "in loss" or (what appears a version of the same thing) loving "for nothing." This stance would be keyed to what the painter presents as the "only essential problems" in any life: "solitude and the sentiment of one's death." Yet as the broader field of Parmentier's folded and unfolded work makes clear, this fundamental reorientation enabled a number of intimately related developments: "palimpsestic" alterations of his earlier striped canvases that also show him thinking through, and implicitly "correcting," aspects of his 1967 collaborations with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni. It is to those further modifications that I shall devote the remainder of this essay.

1. There is, to begin with, the question of format. As we have seen, the last two manifestations prominently involved the display of square paintings, their equal dimensions at once insisting on a shared stake in "neutrality" and emphasizing the fundamental equivalence of the different marks. Yet Parmentier's striped paintings both before and after his collaborations with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni typically retain a slightly vertical orientation, a feature that strengthens what I have presented as a deep analogy between these folded and unfolded supports and an individual self that is always, in Parmentier's estimation, structured by reserve. That the roughly square format should return in his late work is therefore significant, but it does so only after a struggle that transforms it.

Integral to these negotiations is a major procedural shift. Parmentier's earliest folded and unfolded works with freehand marking use the same cheap printing paper as the roughly contemporaneous *Études*. But rather than confine himself to one continuous area, as in those relatively small works, the artist, from as early as 1986, multiplies vertical segments of equal length, folding and stapling each one individually and enchaining them laterally on the wall prior to the marking process. Where each upright strip revives, indeed exacerbates, something of the earlier paintings' verticality (or indeed, that of the 1967 parallelepiped), each appears equally as given over in advance to a plurality: it is one band among others. Indeed, the "neutrality"of the strips emerges only within the context of that multiplicity, as an effect of such matters as the constant width, equivalent length, regular plumb lines, and uniform *pliage* of *all* the bands — that is, of a whole range of repetition effects that only become salient within a larger, lateral field. To put this another way, each work now takes up actively something of Parmentier's earlier repetition across works: each is at once singular and irreducibly plural.

Initially at least, Parmentier's formats are quite variable. Numerically, the bands might range from as few as three to as many as twenty-five, the overall orientation shifting accordingly from strikingly vertical to exaggeratedly horizontal. In the latter instance, as in the work *16 juillet 1988* (July 16, 1988), the confrontation of extremes can appear residually agonistic, the relentless enchainment of units suggesting a kind of ruthlessness — an outsize continuation of the *Études*' attempt to break down or humiliate individuality as such, as analogized now through the individual vertical band. On this view, the monotonous yet physically extenuating nature of the largest works — what one might even call their "*inintelligence*" (unintelligence), a word that enters the painter's writing around this time (Parmentier [1988] 2014: 99 (see p. 146 and pp. 152-155)) — also appears bound in their maker's ongoing attempt to exhaust *his* individuality. "Agreed on the passage from 'I' to 'one' and all that that might, perhaps, signify," Parmentier writes to Hantaï on December 9, 1987 (Parmentier 2015: 42). The more determinedly lateral fields dramatize that "neutralization" in part as an irresolvable dialectic between upright segment and horizontal drift.

At the same time, in a further mark of the unsettled nature of Parmentier's practice in this moment, the total formats of many 1988 works are not fixed, but contingent: according to Guy Massaux, president of the Association Michel Parmentier, larger instances could be broken up for exhibition or even sale, provided one maintain a minimum of three bands at a time (personal communication). The number is significant: if one is an individual, and two is a dyad, three is the threshold from which there is something like community. But the variability itself is no less telling, insisting as it does on the literal separateness of the bands at the very moment of their appearance, while simultaneously eroding from within whatever sense of monumentality might otherwise accrue to the work as a whole. These groupings, like the earlier collaborations with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, are made and unmade in time.

Against this backdrop, the squares that populate Parmentier's practice after 1989 appear deeply earned. Precisely balancing the verticality of the individual unit by the pressure of the lateral, they suggest a view of selfhood in which one's insuperable finitude is caught up in, but in no way simply undone by, a broader field of adjacent relations. Further reinforcing the point, Parmentier soon takes to stamping and at times numbering each vertical band individually, on its very face. The dating underscores the discreteness — the literal "solitude" — of each constituent element, while the numbering assigns that strip a distinctive place within the inherently plural format. (It might be taken equally as making temporality explicitly a part of our mutual facing, further reinforcing the idea that one is never transparently present to another.) Correcting the error of Manifestation 5, Parmentier reminds us yet again that equivalence is not exchangeability.

2. Analogous negotiations take place on the level of Parmentier's freehand marking. By later 1988, Parmentier's traits in the folded and unfolded works appear far more regularized than those of the *Études*: nearer to the graphic equivalent of his fully routinized *pliage*. Yet they also register a continued tension between the claims of the self and a set of notionally "impersonal" limits. On one hand, the short, vertical marks read as deduced from the larger-scale "traits" of the vertical bands; on the other, they appear no less actively keyed to Parmentier's individuality before those bands. For they inevitably reveal variations in width and length, pressure and inflection — local divergences set off all the more powerfully by the wholly regular lines of the paper segments whose form the drawn traces so imperfectly echo. (In some cases, one may want to say these marks also recall the inevitably irregular drips that appear in the earliest stripe paintings on canvas, which Parmentier similarly had executed on a vertical axis — with the crucial difference that the painter now produces these events deliberately, indeed painstakingly.) These repeating traits refigure the uniformly monochromatic zones of the earlier paintings as a site of repeated, but never self-identical, iteration. They do not build to any particular climax or conclusion; they are, as Parmentier might say, there "for nothing."

In the work after 1989, by contrast, those discrete traces give way to various forms of *frottage*, or rubbing. In *19 avril 1991* (April 19, 1991) and *20 janvier 1994* (January 20, 1994), two works on tracing paper, rubbed but still regularized traits (in gray pastel and oil bar, respectively) traverse each marked band in what appear to be two vertically stacked tiers divided horizontally by the trace of a fold. Recalling those earlier traces made in the *Études* by turning the implement on its side, each mark is an internally variegated plane, containing a range of inflections. Elsewhere, as in *12 octobre 1989* (October 12, 1989), Parmentier eschews traits altogether in favor of more allover rubbing within bands, a choice that more closely recalls the earlier painted stripes.

Yet there is a crucial difference between the earlier spraying and the later *frottage*. A rubbed mark is not deposited or projected *upon* a surface, but produced through a more or less sustained encounter *with* that surface, conditioned by the material specificity and resistance of the latter. Where the implied eroticism of the process has been integral to the technique since surrealism, it offers a new context in which to understand Parmentier's emphasis on loving "for nothing." For, in a clear departure from surrealist thinking, this marking would do no more — but also no less — than re-mark the finitude and mutual exteriority on which this relation depends. That this way of working does not fuse or obscure, but in fact tends to highlight, the edges between immediately adjacent vertical bands, also is to the point.

3. And then, of course, there is the question of color. Between 1966 and 1968, as we have seen, Parmentier had changed the hue of his stripes annually, so as to avoid the suggestion of personal preference or symbolic significance. Roughly in keeping with the broader refusal of interiority on the parts of Buren, Mosset, and Toroni, this approach nonetheless was undone by the reduction to black and white stripes in 1983.

Parmentier's late work "rewrites" all of this. The minimally contrastive gray and white bands that appear throughout his work of the early 1990s in particular take over the graphic axis of his final works on canvas, even as they deny those paintings' peremptory quality: they are meaningfully *after* that mode of address, a visibly "impoverished" version of it. Yet in reintroducing some degree of alternation among values — in abandoning uniform repetition, as he previously had abandoned the yearly color shifts — Parmentier might be said to foreground the ineradicable problem of choice itself, the fact that there is no way to neutrality but through an irreducibly subjective decision, however minimal. (To put this another way: these grays and whites may be "equivalent" in their neutrality, as Parmentier previously had said of the four painters' marks, but one nonetheless takes up *one* in particular.) This switching from gray to white and back again parallels the contemporary recourse to different modes of marking.

Indeed, the two movements are of a piece, for both contribute to the seemingly "a-historical" quality Parmentier held up as a defining feature of his work in this period. Already in the black paintings, the severing of the chromatic link to the calendar was one way of framing the work as "less acted upon by history," and in that sense underscoring the extent to which these paintings are instead borne by, and carry forward, a certain labor upon the self (Parmentier [1986] 2014: 83 (see pp. 132-134)). The late works inherit that reduction, but resist the allure of the absolute: if the multiple works in white-on-white are as close as Parmentier will come to the monochrome — a limit endlessly begged — the return to or of grayness just as insistently defers that eventuality. "*The more derisory it is, the more essential it is,*" Parmentier had written to Hantaï; what is "essential," here, is precisely the refusal to dominate or be done with it.

4. A final set of considerations turns upon the relation of Parmentier's work to the time and place of its appearance. As we have seen, each of the manifestations with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni sets up a certain kind of situation; and in so doing, Manifestations 1 and 3 in particular explicitly temporalized the acts of making and looking at paintings, respectively. That their paintings are *to be looked at,* and nothing more — that they have no "emollient property," and "simply exist" — is the group's central claim; yet the four men also are concerned to *stage* that existence within highly specific temporal and spatial conditions.

Parmentier's late work extends that interest in the time and place of the work's appearance, as it also prolongs the group's emphasis on the literal existence of the support. But in changing the nature of the latter, he transforms the entire mode of address. For as we have seen, Parmentier does not just exchange the spray can for graphite, pastel, charcoal, and oil bar; he also exchanges canvas for comparatively lightweight supports: printing paper, tracing paper, polyester film.[8] As Laura Lisbon has noted, he adopted these materials in part to preserve the traces of folding more clearly (Lisbon 2001: 139 (see p. 221)); but their translucency and diaphanous nature also open the works to their surroundings: the delicate bands appear traversed, inflected, by any number of situational effects.

Parmentier's preferred mode of display heightens this sense of permeability. Already in 1966-68, the artist had opted to affix his paintings to the wall uniquely along their upper edges, leaving the unstretched canvas hanging freely. Indeed, he had adopted the stretcher only for moments of collective statement, to bring his painting in line with those by Buren, Mosset, and Toroni. The later paintings reprise this decision, even as their supports prove considerably more reactive to fluctuations of air and, of course, the movement of other bodies in the surrounding space. Further, the minimally contrastive yet importantly mutable nature of Parmentier's work — including the tendency of the differently inflected facets to engage the ambient light in subtly varied ways — actively encourages physical displacement on the part of the beholder. One is led to shift from side to side, to stoop and stand again by turns, before these near-weightless and highly reactive supports.

If we want to say these works "leave the spectator alone with himself," and "simply exist," they nonetheless do so rather differently than the work Claura had in mind in 1967. In Parmentier's final period, the work ceases to read as a sovereign insertion within a space and appears instead as meaningfully exposed, "acted upon" as well as "acting." Never simply present to self, they figure existence as inherently aspectual, folding and unfolding through temporalities beyond the individual. They offer us finitude (theirs, our own), which cannot be imposed; they are there for nothing and ask nothing in return.

1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 My reading here differs from that put forward recently by art historian Sami Siegelbaum, who presents "Buren and his co-conspirators" as taking aim at "the modernist ideologies of aesthetic autonomy and individual expression" (Siegelbaum 2012: 61); "aesthetic autonomy" and "individual expression" are quite distinct ideas, and where Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni clearly refuse the latter (as they refuse expression tout court), I take them to be calling for a more radical version of the former. Siegelbaum seems to be folding Buren's later encoding of art as a "visual tool" back on the earlier, arguably very different understanding of painting as an end in itself. Parmentier has criticized this shift (Parmentier [1988] 2014: 104-05 **(see pp. 146 and 152-155)**).

3 In the four-way interview included in the ORTF film, Buren reprises some of the language of the group's first tract, declaring: "What we are doing is of no use [*ne sert à rien*]. And it is the opposite of all the painting that is of use [*qui sert à quelque chose*]" (Chabaud 1967).

4 Here one might begin to parse the relationship of these manifestations to the more straightforwardly political demonstrations they inevitably conjure. As Siegelbaum has made clear, the Salon de la Jeune Peinture was in 1967 a relatively politicized space, where a certain form of politically engaged art not only survived but flourished (Siegelbaum 2012). Yet Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni's manifestations clearly do not fit the latter model — even or perhaps precisely where, as Buren has noted, they incorporate techniques of address lifted directly from contemporary protest culture, including banners, tracts, and soundtrack (Buren and Parmentier [1991] 2014: 165. Rather, as I have been suggesting, they figure the four men's activity — indeed, the sheer "existence" of the results — as profoundly recalcitrant to instrumentalization. This very resistance, too, has political implications; but the latter do not map without remainder onto any organized party platform or militant program. Also see in this connection Parmentier's distinction between "citizen" and "painter": "It's not the painter Buren who marches in the street, it's the citizen Buren. [...] Furthermore, in the street we demonstrated like any other left-leaning citizens. We didn't want to confound the citizen and the painter" (ibid).

5 The four painters' well-known repudiation of the group designation "BMPT" (a label first used by critic Otto Hahn) is germane here. A related, foundational point: The first document co-signed by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni, in December 1966, significantly does not announce the founding of a *group* — but rather, the first in an unspecified number of manifestations in which the signatories intend to participate, further suggesting the open-ended and contingent nature of the enterprise as a whole (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni [1966], 2014: 35 **(see fig. 33, p. 55)**.

6 I do not ignore perhaps the most surprising, if parenthetical, reference in the letter, Parmentier's "(and God, perhaps)." While a fuller analysis of this remark lies beyond the scope of the present paper, one wants to note the extent to which God appears here precisely as a *problem*, indeed an *essential problem* — one that Parmentier is, as it were, willing to assume. One would also have to read this seeming aside against the opening of a slightly later text, originally published on the occasion of Parmentier's 1988 exhibition at the Centre national des arts plastiques, in which the artist refers to "the gaping void left behind by the supposed death of God" (Parmentier [1988] 2014: 91; **(see p. 146 and 152-155)**. In the latter instance, Parmentier is professing his admiration for Bram van Velde (another recurrent touchstone) as a rare artist who, in his view, does not try to fill this hole, who on the contrary refuses to resuscitate "the mystifying pirouette-art," and who resigns himself instead to a "vain" or "stupid questioning," an interrogation that "is not only without a response but *does not expect one*" (emphasis in original). With these and related formulations (e.g., "appalled stammering"), we are very close indeed to the terms in which Parmentier describes his own attempts to "work in loss" and "love for nothing"; close, as well, to his central commitment to doubt, a point to which the 1988 text returns (with help from Levinas) **(pp. 146 and 152-155**). Finally, I note simply that it is no coincidence that this "problem" should surface in a letter to Hantaï; for more on the latter's sustained reckoning with the Christian past of painting, see Warnock 2012 and Warnock 2014; the latter deals with Hantaï's late work and thought contemporaneously with this period of Parmentier's practice.

7 According to new dating suggested by the Association Michel Parmentier. My thanks to Guy Massaux for this clarification (personal communication).

8 Initially at least, Parmentier appears to have construed the printing paper of the *Études* and other works as a momentary choice. "*Blacken some paper to arrive at grayness*," reads the December 9, 1987 letter to Hantaï: "then I'll doubtless try on canvas" (Parmentier 2015: 42; emphasis in original). That he never did return to canvas suggests that other supports came to count for him in ways that he had yet to appropriate fully at the time of writing these words.

Works Cited

- Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni ([1966], 2014), "Lettre d'invitation, Manifestation 1," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p. 35.
- ([1967a] 2014), "Tract, Manifestation 1," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p 36.
- ([1967b] 2014), "Bande Sonore, Manifestation 1," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p. 37.
- ([1967c] 2014), "Lettre ouverte, Manifestation 2," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p. 39.
- ([1967d] 2014), "Tract, Manifestation 3," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p. 41.
- ([1967e] 2014), "Bande Sonore, Manifestation 4," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, p. 42.
- Buren, D. (2012), "Exposition: "Cinquième Biennale de Paris" – Manifestation 4," *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972*, http://catalogue.danielburen.com/exhibits/view/19. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- Buren, D. and Parmentier, M. ([1991] 2014, "Propos délibérés," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.) *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 133-259.

- Chaboud, C. (1967), *Le groupe BMPT: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, Paris: Office national de radiodiffusion télévision française; online at http://www.ina.fr/video/I09107931. Accessed 6 January 2016.
- Claura, M. (1967a), "Groupe Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," in *Cinquième biennale de Paris*, Paris: Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, p. 175.
- ([1967b] 1991), reprinted in D. Buren and M. Parmentier, *Propos délibérés*, Villeurbanne, Art Édition, p. 152.
- Gatellier, G. (1967), "5e Biennale de Paris," *Opus international 4*, p. 81
- Lisbon, L. (2001), "Michel Parmentier," P. Armstrong, L. Lisbon, and S. Melville (eds.), *As Painting: Division and Displacement*, Cambridge and London/Columbus: MIT Press/Wexner Center for the Arts, pp. 137-41.
- Lovin, P.-A. (1967), "Au Luna Park de l'art contemporain, le journal de la Biennale," *Les lettres françaises*, 1203, pp. 27-28.
- Parmentier, M. ([1967] 2014), "Le groupe Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni n'existe plus," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.) *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 43-46.
- ([1972] 2014), "Lettre ouverte à François Mathey," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 51-55.
- ([1986] 2014), "Entretien avec Bernard Blistène" (1986), reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 81-86.
- ([1988] 2014), "Dire, redire et bafouiller, me contredire, dévier en apparence, digresser, bref: rhizomer toujours. M'avouer. Notes, mars-juillet 1988," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 91-119.
- (2004-05), "Trois brouillons fin 1971, début 1972," *La Part de l'oeil*, 20, pp. 61-70.
- (2015), "Lettres à Simon Hantaï" (ed. M. Warnock), *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, 132, pp. 40-43.
- Siegelbaum, S. (2012), "The Riddle of May '68:" Collectivity and Protest in the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, *Oxford Art Journal*, 35.1, pp. 53-73.
- Vallet. J ([1981] 2014), "Michel Parmentier, profession non-peintre," reprinted in A. Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens*, Paris: BlackJack Éditions, pp. 60-64.
- Warnock, M. (2012), *Penser la peinture: Simon Hantaï* (trans. Patrick Hersant), Paris: Gallimard.
- (2014), "Simon Hantaï and the Limits of Pliage," *Hantai*, Budapest: Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, pp. 26-39.

Michel Parmentier
(1938-2000)

Michel Parmentier – Exhibitions
Solo Exhibitions

1965 "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Galerie H. Le Gendre, April 23 – May 15.

1978 "Michel Parmentier (3 canvases from 1966, 1967, 1968)," Paris (France), Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, February 11 – March 16.

1984 "Parmentier 1983-1984," Paris (France), Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9.

1988
- "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 10 – October 11.
- "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31. Curator: Alfred Pacquement.

1991 "Buren Parmentier," Brussels (Belgium), Palais des Beaux-Arts, June 7 – July 20. Coordinator: Dirk Snauwaert.

1992 "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Galerie Christine and Isy Brachot, April 29 – May 30.

1994 "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Carré des Arts, March 17 – May 15. Curator: Agnès Foiret. General coordinator: Marie-Odile Van Caeneghem.

1997 "Michel Parmentier, (304 × 308 cm) (076 × 308 cm) (304 × 308 cm), March 15, 1994, July 5, 1995, May 26, 1996," Brussels (Belgium), Atelier Marconi, April 19. Curators: Guy Massaux and Bruno van Lierde.

Salons and Group Exhibitions

1962 13th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January.

1963
- 14th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January.
- Prix Lefranc de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Galerie Lefranc, June 13 – July 5, with Barszcz, Lévêque, Prosi, Fabre.
- IIIe Biennale de Paris, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 28 – November 3, with Aillaud, Arroyo, Brusse, Biass, Camacho, Ferró, Hockney, Pinoncelli, Rancillac.
- Untitled, Paris (France), Galerie H. Le Gendre, November 22 – December 7, with Alleyn, Filhos, Monory, Queneau.
- 5th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, December 14 – January 5, 1964, with Aillaud, Alechinsky, Appel, Arroyo, Buraglio, Matta, Poliakoff, Rebeyrolle, Recalcati.

1964
- 20th Salon de Mai, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, May 16 – June 7. Among the artists: Adami, Aillaud, Alechinsky, Appel, Arman, Arnal, Arroyo, Bacon, Bertrand, Bishop, Bury, Caro, Corneille, Dine, Dmitrienko, Dufour, Ernst, Fautrier, Fromanger, Giacometti, Grinberg, Hausner, Johns, Jousselin, LeWitt, Lichtenstein, Lindstrom, Man Ray, Masson, Matta, Mendelson, Messagier, Mihailovitch, Miró, Monory, Mucha, Nam, Peverelli, Picasso, Poliakoff, Rancillac, Rauschenberg, Ravel, Rebeyrolle, Recalcati, Revel, Rosenquist, Saint Phalle, Shimizu, Silva, Smith, Soulages, Spoerri, Tàpies, Télémaque, Tisserand, Tobey, Trouille, Bram van Velde, Geer van Velde, Voss, Warhol, Zao.
- 6th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, October 5 – November 2, with Aillaud, Adilon, Andreou, Arnal, Arroyo, Aubert, Baboulène, Bryen, Corneille, Fautrier, Hayden, Lanskoy, Lesieur, Piaubert, Romathier, Sarthou, van Velde.

1965
- "Gouaches et papiers collés," Yverdon (Switzerland), Galerie Le Couloir, June 27 – August 31, with Bodek, Buraglio, Buren, Dupuis, Gouillard, Touilly, Vionnet.
- IVe Biennale de Paris, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 29 – November 3, with Blake, Boltanski, Buren, Dietman, Raynaud, Stämpfli, Titus-Carmel, Toroni, Venet.
- "Exposition inaugurale [50 artistes/50 œuvres]," Paris (France), Galerie Lutèce, November 9 – December, with Brustlein, Dmitrienko, Man Ray, Meurice, Rouan.

1966
- 7th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 9-31. Among the painters: Arnal, Bolin, Bores, Brauner, Brô, Bryen, Buraglio, Buren, Corneille, Debré, Dmitrienko, Dufour, Dumitresco, Duvillier, Ernst, Fernandez, Ferrer, Gafgen, Germain, Gouillard, Grinberg, Kermarrec, Lam, Lanskoy, Lebenstein, Magritte, Matta, Messagier, Miró, Poli, Poliakoff, Prosi, Rouan, Saint Phalle, Saura, Segui, Seuphor, Tal-Coat, Ubac, Van Velde, Vionnet.
- 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 9 – February 1. Among the painters: Adami, Aillaud, Alleyn, Arroyo, Bioules, Bodek, Buraglio, Buren, Buri, Cueco, Dufo, Gasiorowski, Kermarrec, Latil, Masi, Meurice, Miralda, Mosset, Parre, Peraro, Poli, Prosi, Rabascall, Recalcati, Rancillac, Raynaud, Rietti, Robles, Roldan, Romero, Sarkis, Schlosser, Sellier, Stämpfli, Tisserand, Topor, Toroni, Vaiano, Velickovic, Venet, Voss.
- "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, July – September, with Buraglio, Buren, Hantaï, Meurice, Riopelle, Tàpies.
- "Impact," Musée de Céret, Céret (France), July 15 – September 25, with Argimon, Arman, Ben, Bioulès, Biras, Buraglio, Buren, Chubac, Dufo, Eppele, Farhi, Gali-Camprubi, Gette, Gili, Kermarrec, Malaval, Miralda, Parre, Pericot, Prosi, Rabascall, Rouan, Salvado, Stotzky, Tissinier, Toroni, Valles, Venet, Viallat. Curators: Jacques Lepage and Claude Viallat.

1967 **Group Exhibitions (with Buren, Mosset, Toroni)**
- Manifestation 1, 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (January 3-25), January 3, with Buren, Mosset, Toroni.
- Manifestation 2, 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (January 3-25), January 3, with Buren, Mosset, Toroni.
- Manifestation 3, Paris (France), Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), June 2, with Buren, Mosset, Toroni.
- Manifestation 4, Ve Biennale de Paris, Paris (France), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 30 – November 5, with Buren, Mosset, Toroni.

1970 "De l'unité à la détérioration. Exposition information N° 1," Nice (France), Galerie Ben doute de tout, February 27 – March 12. Exhibition organized without the artist's knowledge, with Alocco, Bioulès, Buren, Cane, Charvolen, Dezeuze, Dolla, Mosset, Osti, Pincemin, Saytour, Toroni, Viallat. Curator: Ben Vautier.

1972 "Douze ans d'art contemporain en France 1960-1972," Paris (France), Grand Palais, May 7 – September 18, with Agam, Alechinsky, Arman, Aubertin, Ben, Bennett, Bettencourt, Boltanski, Buri, Bury, César, Christo, Courmes, Courtin, Coopérative des Malassis, Cruz-Diez, Cueco, Dado, Degottex, Deschamps, Dewasne, Dolla, Dufrêne, Dupuy, Erró, Étienne-Martin, Fleury, Folon, Gäfgen, Garcia-Rossi, Gasiorowski, Hains, Hantaï, Hicks, Honegger, Jaccard, Kalinowski, Kermarrec, Klein, Kowalski, Kudo, Le Gac, Latil, Malaval, Messagier, Monory, Morellet, Müller, Olivier, Parré, Raynaud, Reinhoud, Requichot, Rotella, Rouan, Saint Phalle, Sanejouand, Sobrino, Soto, Spoerri, Stämpfli, Stein, Szafran, Takis, Télémaque, Tinguely, Tisserand, Titus-Carmel, Topor, Velickovic, Venet, Viallat, Villeglé, Yvaral, Zeimert. Curator: François Mathey.

1979 "Quelques acquisitions du Musée de Grenoble 1968-1978," Grenoble (France), Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, September 12 – December 17, with Adami, Agam, Aillaud, Barrere, Bertholin, Bill, Bishop, Brauner, Cane, Cruz-Diez, Degottex, Dibbets, Doesburg, Francis, Gabo, Gorin, Gris, Heizer, Honneger, Huebler, Kelly, Kermarrec, Klasen, LeWitt, Long, Messager, Moholy-Nagy, Monory, Nevelson, Noland, Oppenheim, Pages, Paolozzi, Raysse, Reigl, Takis, Twombly, Viallat, Wesselman. Curators: Christine Breton, Thierry Raspail, and Hélène Vincent.

1980 "Quelques acquisitions du Musée de Grenoble 1968-1978," Chalon-sur-Saône (France), Maison de la Culture, May 2 – June 30. Curators: Christine Breton, Thierry Raspail, and Hélène Vincent.

1982 "Sans titre – 4 années d'acquisition au Musée de Toulon," Toulon (France), Musée d'Art, July 16 – September 30. Curators: François Bazzoli and Marie-Claude Beaud.

1983 "Art en France 1960-1980," Coutances (France), Centre d'Animation Les Unelles, July 13 – September 16, with Adami, Arman, Arroyo, Ayme, Ben, Boutibonnes, Buren, Bury, Devade, Cadere, Cane, César, Dezeuze, Dolla, Hantaï, Klein, Meurice, Mosset, Monory, Pane, Parant, Raynaud, Rutault, Titus-Carmel, Toroni, Viallat.

1987 "Voies diverses," Paris (France), Centre Pompidou/Musée national d'art moderne, July 1 – August 30. Curator: Fabrice Hergott.

1989
- "L'art politique en France, de la Renaissance à nos jours," Villefranche-sur-Saône (France), Centre d'Arts Plastiques, April 21 – June 10. Exhibition organized without the artist's knowledge.
- "Liberté & Egalité. Freiheit und Gleichheit, Wiederholung und Abweichung in der neueren französischen Kunst," Essen (Germany), Museum Folkwang, June 4 – August 27, with Barré, Bertrand, Bourget, Buraglio, Buren, Cadere, Dubuffet, Filliou, Gette, Grand, Hains, Hantaï, Lavier, Le Gac, Morellet, Pages, Perrodin, Rutault, Toroni, Verjux, Viallat, Vieille. Curators: Erich Franz and Dieter Schwarz.
- "Choix d'œuvres de la collection du Frac Bourgogne," La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland), Musée des Beaux-Arts, June 17– August 17. Exhibition organised without the artist knowing it.
- "Liberté & Egalité. Freiheit und Gleichheit, Wiederholung und Abweichung in der neueren französischen Kunst," Winterthur (Switzerland), Kunstmuseum, September 24 – November 12. Curators: Erich Franz and Dieter Schwarz.

1990 "Um 1968 konkrete utopien in kunst und gesellschaft," Düsseldorf (Germany), Städtische Kunsthalle, May 27 – July 8, with Adami, Aillaud, Andre, Arman, Arroyo, Beuys, Bioulès, Broodthaers, Brouwn, Buraglio, Buren, Cage, Cane, César, Cueco, Dezeuze, Duchamp, Erró, Fahlström, Filliou, Flanagan, Gerz, Grand, Haacke, Hains, Immendorff, Jorn, Kounellis, Lichtenstein, Manzoni, Merz, Morris, Mosset, Newman, Pagès, Paik, Pane, Pistoletto, Polke, Rainer, Rancillac, Recalcati, Reinhardt, Saytour, Sorge, Stella, Toroni, Viallat, Villeglé, Vostell, Warhol. Curators: Marie Luise Syring and Karin Thomas.

1991
- "Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France," Toronto (Canada), Art Gallery of Ontario, January 25 – April 7, with Alberola, Baquié, Beaugrand, Bertrand, Blocher, Boltanski, Buren, Calle, Garouste, Kuntzel, Lavier, Messager, Toroni. Curators: Marie-Claude Jeune and Roald Nasgaard.

1992
- "Manifeste, 30 ans de création en perspective, 1960-1990 Manifeste 9/Manifeste 10," Paris (France), Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, June 18 – September 28. Exhibition organized without the artist's knowledge.
- "Das offene Bild I, Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945," Münster (Germany), Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, November 15 – February 7, 1993, with Armleder, Barré, Bertrand, Beuys, Buraglio, Buren, Cane, Darboven, Dezeuze, Fautrier, Filliou, Fontana, Frize, Hains, Hantaï, Klein, Krasinski, Lavier, Manzoni, Morellet, Mosset, Perrodin, Polke, Richter, Rutault, Saytour, Schiess, Spoerri, Tápies, Toroni, Vautier, Villeglé. Curators: Erich Franz and Eva Schmidt.

1993 "Das offene Bild II, Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945," Leipzig (Germany), Museum der bildenden Kunst, April 8 – May 31, with Armleder, Barré, Bertrand, Beuys, Buraglio, Buren, Cane, Darboven, Dezeuze, Fautrier, Filliou, Fontana, Frize, Hains, Hantaï, Klein, Krasinski, Lavier, Manzoni, Morellet, Mosset, Perrodin, Polke, Richter, Rutault, Saytour, Schiess, Spoerri, Tàpies, Toroni, Vautier, Villeglé. Curators: Erich Franz and Eva Schmidt.

1997 "Les Péchés capitaux – 4/L'Avarice," Paris (France), Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, May 28 – June 30. With Bell, Charlton, Judd, Klein, Malevich, Manzoni, Martin, McCollum, Mosset, Perrodin, Picabia, Richter, Rothko, Stella. Curator: Didier Ottinger. Exhibition organized without the artist's knowledge.

1999
- "Rayures tradition et modernité: Acte II," Mantes-la-Jolie (France), Musée de l'Hôtel Dieu, June 20 – September 20. Exhibition organised without the artist knowing it, with Ackling, Asse, Barré, Bertrand, Bioulès, Dezeuze, Flavin. Exhibition organized without the artist's knowledge.
- "JARS IV tegenvleug/à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, December 19 – February 20, with Goosse, Hantaï, Krebber, Lisbon, Mees, Meskens, Oorebeek, Trafeli, Van Snick, Welling. Curators: Luk Lambrecht and Guy Massaux.

Solo Exhibitions (posthumous)

2000 "Michel Parmentier: Presentation of the work 20 11 99," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, November 20 – December 16.

2001 "Simon Hantaï/Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Centre Pompidou/Musée national d'art moderne, Galerie du Musée, January 17 – March 19. Curator: Nadine Pouillon. Adviser: Guy Massaux.

2002 "Michel Parmentier, Rétrospective, 1965-1991," Paris (France), Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 8 – November 16.

2007 "Michel Parmentier, Peintures 1962-1994," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, March 15 – April 21.

2010 "Michel Parmentier, Peintures 1961-1968," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, November 25 – January 8, 2011.

2014
- "Michel Parmentier," Paris (France), Galerie Loevenbruck, April 4 – May 25.
- "Avant les bandes, 1962-1965," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, May 22 – June 21.
- "Michel Parmentier, déc. 1965 – 20 nov. 1999, une rétrospective," La Seyne-sur-Mer (France), Villa Tamaris, June 7 – September 14. Director: Robert Bonaccorsi. Curator: Guy Massaux.

2016 "Michel Parmentier, *17 juillet 1989* (July 17, 1989)–*20 février 1990* (February 20, 1990)," Paris (France), Galerie Loevenbruck, June 3 – July 16.

2018
- "Michel Parmentier: Paintings & Works on Paper," New York (USA), Ortuzar Projects, February 16 – April 7.

"Michel Parmentier," East Lansing (USA), Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, April 28 – October 7.

Group Exhibitions (posthumous)

2001 "As Painting: Division and Displacement," Columbus (USA), Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, May 12 – August 12, with Apfelbaum, Barré, Bishop, Bochner, Bonnefoi, Buren, Cadere, Degottex, Dezeuze, Dryer, Dufrêne, Hantaï, Judd, Knoebel, Levine, Martin, Richter, Rouan, Ryman, Smithson, Truitt, Valensi, Viallat, Villeglé, Welling. Curators: Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen Melville.

2002
- "Les Années 70: l'art en cause," Bordeaux (France), CAPC musée d'art contemporain, October 18 – January 19, 2003, with Abramović, Acconci, Andre, Anselmo, Arakawa, Art & Language, Baldessari, Barry, Baselitz, Bertrand, Beuys, Bioulès, Bishop, Boltanski, Broodthaers, Buraglio, Burden, Buren, Cadere, Cane, Lygia Clark, Darboven, Devade, Dezeuze, Dibbets, Dietman, Dolla, Fabro, Graham, Grand, Haacke, Hantaï, Huebler, Jaccard, Jonas, Journiac, Kawara, Knoebel, Le Gac, Malassis, McCarthy, Mangold, Merz, Messager, Meurice, Monory, Morris, Mosset, Opalka, Paik, Penck, Penone, Pincemin, Pistoletto, Polke, Raynaud, Richter, Rouan, Rusha, Sandback, Sanejouand, Sarkis, Saytour, Serra, Smithson, Snow, Stella, Toroni, Tremlett, Turrel, Tuttle, Valensi, Venet, Viallat, Viola, Vostell, Wegman, Weiner, Wilson, Zorio. Curator: Maurice Fréchuret.
- "Repères 1960-1990: Les collections du Musée de Grenoble," Grenoble (France), Musée de Grenoble, November 1 – February 5, 2003.

2003
- "Trésors publics/Un tableau dans le décor–Peinture 1970/2000," Nantes (France), Musée du Château des Ducs de Bretagne, June 28 – October 12, with Andre, Barré, Ben, Bertrand, Bioulès, Boltanski, Buraglio, Buren, Cadere, Cane, Debré, Degottex, Dezeuze, Dolla, Dufrêne, Flavin, Frize, Haacke, Hains, Hantaï, Journiac, Judd, Lavier, Lawler, LeWitt, Martin, Masson, Michaux, Mosset, Kawara, Opalka, Parrino, Penone, Richter, Riopelle, Rouan, Smithson, Soulages, Tal-Coat, Tàpies, Télémaque, Titus-Carmel, Toroni, Verjux, Villeglé, Weiner, Welling.
- "Le diable évidemment: un ensemble d'œuvres du FRAC Bretagne et un choix de peintures des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Brest," Brest (France), Musée des Beaux-Arts, July 2 – October 15, with Amigoni, Aubry, Ballet, Bassano, Batoni, Bauduin, Beaumont, Beinashi, Blais, Blum, Bonnefoi, Bourdon, Brassaï, Brélivet, Canaletto, Carré, Casanova, Cavalier d'Arpin, Collin-Thiébaut, Collyer, Courtois, Coypel, Crespi, Di Mura, Dinahet, Dolci, Dolla, Duncan, Ehrmann, Erhard, Fanchon, Fridfinnsson, Friedmann, Genée, Giordano, Hains, Houasse, Huber, Jie Chang, Joseph, Kauffmann, Knifer, Knoebel, La Fosse, Lamandé, Langlands & Bell, Le Guerchin, Lemée, Le Quernec, Luti, Maurige, Miller, Morin, Mosset, Museum in Progress, Nicola, Perrodin, Pinaud, Recco, Régnault, Rosa, Rosi, Roux, Ruff, Sablet, Salerno, Saraceni, Seekatz, Shrigley, Snow, Spoerri, Tesson, Trémorin, Van Loo, Villeglé, Volaire, Zérah. Curator: Jean-Pierre Bertrand.

2004 "L'art au futur antérieur. Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, l'engagement d'une galerie, 1975-2004," Grenoble (France), Musée de Grenoble, July 10 – October 4, with Anselmo, Beuys, Boetti, Boltanski, Broodthaers, Brouwn, Buraglio, Burgin, Burkhard, Cadere, Charlton, Collin-Thiébaut, Darboven, Fabro, Federle, Feldmann, Flanagan, Garouste, Graham, Haacke, Honegger, Kosuth, Kounellis, Lavier, Lautréamont, Manzoni, Merz, Morellet, Oppenheim, Panamarenko, Paolini, Parmiggiani, Pei-Ming, Penone, Pistoletto, Richter, Rousse, Rückriem, Rutault, Sandback, Tatah, Tosani, Tremlett, Ufan, Vercruysse, Verjux, Visser, Warhol, Zorio. Curator: Guy Tosatto.

2005 "Big Bang–Destruction et création dans l'art du 20e siècle," Paris (France), Centre Pompidou/Musée national d'art moderne, June 15 – April 3, 2006, with Artschwager, Brauner, Broodthaers, Currin, Duchamp, Lawler, Magritte, Oldenburg, Picabia, Raysse, Rutault, Schutte. Curator: Catherine Grenier.

2006 "Couleur en série," Pontivy (France), Church of Saint-Joseph, July 1 – September 10, with Bertrand, Dilasser, Fédorenko, Jaffe, Mahéo, Mencoboni, Molnar, Thurnauer.

2007 "La couleur toujours recommencée, Hommage à Jean Fournier, marchand à Paris (1922-2006)," Montpellier (France), Musée Fabre, February 2 – May 5, with Bishop, Bordarier, Buraglio, Buren, Clément, Degottex, Demozay, Fauchier, Gardair, Jaffe, Lebelle, Leroy-Fiévée, Lucien, Maurige, Piffaretti, Ravel, Soriano, Viallat.

2008 "Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today," New York (USA), Museum of Modern Art, March 2 – May 12, with Ader, Arcangel, Baldessari, Bartlett, Batchelor, Boetti, Bulloch, Buren, Cadere, Chamberlain, Deschenes, Dine, Dibbets, Duchamp, Flavin, Fritsch, Graham, Hirst, Johns, Judd, Kawara, Kelley, Kelly, Kim, Klein, Lambie, Levine, LeWitt, Morellet, Nauman, Palermo, Paolini, Raad, Rauschenberg, Richter, Ruscha, Serra, Stella, Toroni, Warhol, Weems, Weiner, Williams. Curator: Ann Temkin.

2009
- "Colour Chart: Reinventing Colour, 1950 to Today," Tate Liverpool (UK), May 29 – September 13, with Ader, Arcangel, Baldessari, Bartlett, Batchelor, Boetti, Bulloch, Buren, Cadere, Chamberlain, Deschenes, Dine, Dibbets, Duchamp, Flavin, Fritsch, Graham, Hirst, Johns, Judd, Kawara, Kelley, Kelly, Kim, Klein, Lambie, Levine, LeWitt, Morellet, Nauman, Palermo, Paolini, Raad, Rauschenberg, Richter, Ruscha, Serra, Stella, Toroni, Warhol, Weems, Weiner, Williams. Curators: Christoph Grunenberg and Sook-Kyung Lee.
- "Locus Oculi," Saint-Étienne-Le-Molard (France), Château de la Bâtie d'Urfé, June 21 – October 4, with Anselmo, Baldus, Beato, Blanc and Demilly, Carpeaux, Courbet, Cragg, Evans, Fabro, Faigenbaum, Filliou, Lucio Fontana, Prospero Fontana, Gerdes, Giraudon, Grand, Hausmann, Janssens, Judd, Kawara, Kuhn, Lafont, Leccia, Léger, Lhomme, Malich, Maurin, Merz, Millet, Milovanoff, Moro, Morris, Mosset, Mucha, Peruzzini and Magnasco, Rüdiger, Sander, Schütte, Sommer, Stratmann, Thiollier, Vermeiren, Zorio, and anonymous artists. Curator: Bernhard Rüdiger, with the collections of the Institut d'art contemporain de Villeurbanne and the Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne Métropole.

2010
- Untitled, Brussels (Belgium), Marie-Puck Broodthaers Gallery, April 21 – June 30, with Alÿs, Broodthaers, Byars, Cadere, Graham, Huyghe, Janssens, Orozco, Penone, Struth, Weiner.
- "Points de fuite: perspectives de et dans l'art moderne et contemporain," Saint-Étienne-Le-Molard (France), Château de la Bâtie d'Urfé, June 12 – October 3, with Buraglio, Buren, Dolla, Gerdes, Mosset, Piranèse, Toroni, Valensi.
- "Almeria," Paris (France), Galerie Chantal Crousel, June 26 – August 28, with Bisch, Chardon, Goldstein, Guyton, Hirschhorn, Moulène, Mosset, Palermo, Price, Rodriguez, Rodzielski, Spaulings, Van Golden, Zobernig. Curators: Nicolas Chardon, Julien Fronsacq and Niklas Svennung.

2011
- Untitled, Brussels (Belgium), Marie-Puck Broodthaers Gallery, April, with Alÿs, Broodthaers, Bru, Byars, Cadere, Duchamp, Janssens, Salkin, Santos Brasil, Stevenart, Swennen, Vergara.
- "Singulier(s)/Pluriel. Le CNAP au LaM," Villeneuve-d'Ascq (France), works loaned to the Centre national des arts plastiques, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, LaM–Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, October 3 – May 15, 2012, with Art & Language, Baldessari, Baya, Buren, Bourgeois, Chaissac, Collins, Hatoum, Masson, McCollum, Mosset, Smith, Van Genk.

2012 "Déplacer, déplier, découvrir: La peinture en actes, 1960-1999," Villeneuve-d'Ascq (France), LaM–Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, March 3 – May 27, with Barré, Degottex, Devade, Hantaï. Curators: Marc Donnadieu and Marie-Amélie Senot.

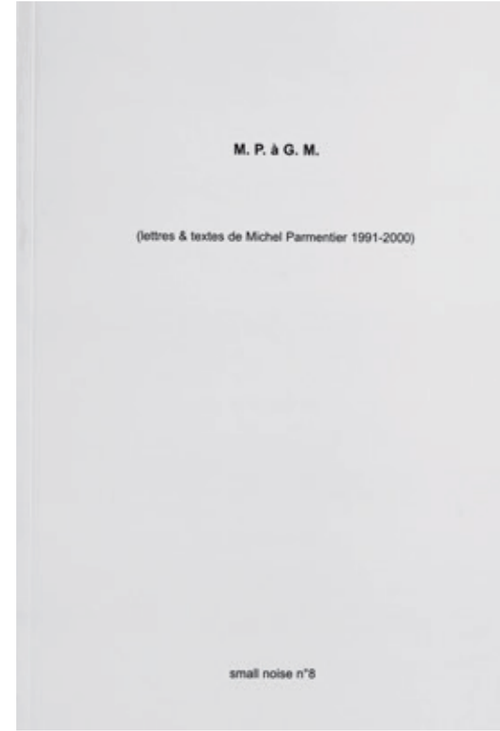
2013
- "Steven Parrino," Paris (France), Gagosian Gallery, March 21 – May 25, with Armleder, Barré, Buren, Hantaï, Mosset, Toroni.
- "Presque noire et blanche," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, October 10 – November 16, with Bordarier, Buraglio, Demozay, Elemento, Francis, Gelzer, Hantaï, Jaffe, Jézéquel, Lucien, Mabille, Maurige, Smith, Rouan, Tétot, Viallat. Curator: Émilie Ovaere-Corthay.

2014
- "10 ans!," new hanging of the Albers-Honegger collection, Mouans-Sartoux (France), Espace de l'Art Concret, permanent collection from June 21, 2014, with Aubertin, Bertrand, Bill, Buren, Cahn, Charlton, Sonia Delaunay, Herman de Vries, Honegger, McCracken, Morellet, Mosset, Perrodin, Nemours, Schiess, Toroni, Venet. Curator: Fabienne Fulchéri.
- "(Im)matériel," Paris (France), Galerie Jean Fournier, December 4 – January 17, 2015, with Buraglio, Hantaï, Legrand, Nanni, Vescovi.
- "Collection. Un rêve d'éternité," Rennes (France), Frac Bretagne, December 13 – April 26, 2015, with Burgin, Cottencin, Bruno Di Rosa, Doll, E Il Topo, Filliou, Fridfinnsson, Horn, Knifer, Lavier, L'Hermitte, Mirra, Orozco, Anne and Patrick Poirier, Pressager, Raffray, Sarkis, Sturtevant, Zaugg. Curator: Catherine Elkar.

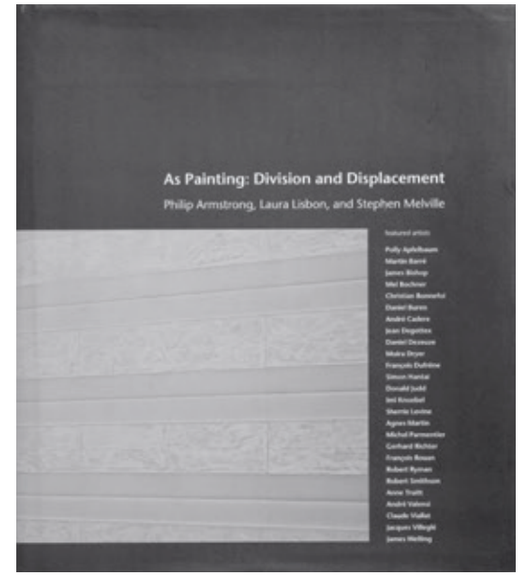
2016
- "Daniel Buren: A Tiger Cannot Change Its Stripes - een triptiek," Strombeek (Belgium), Cultuurcentrum, January 9 – February 10, with Buren, Hantaï, Ioannou, De Kooning, Villeglé, including Rompre la couleur unique, Simon Hantaï and Michel Parmentier. Directors: Luk Lambrecht and Lieze Eneman. Guest curator: Guy Massaux.
- "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni n'exposent pas," New York (USA), Hunter College Art Galleries, February 11 – April 10, with Buren, Mosset, and Toroni.
- "Tales of Ratiocination," London (UK), Campoli Presti, February 20 – April 9, with Polly Apfelbaum, Christian Bonnefoi, André Cadere, R. H. Quaytman, Cheney Thompson, and Amy Sillman.
- "Accrochage," Venice (Italy), Punta della Dogana, April 17 – November 20, with Absalon, Calzolari, Canell, Dean, Dreher, Gomes, Huyghe, Kawara, Krasinski, Lawler, Leblon, LeWitt, Lohaus, Macuga, Mauri, Meppayil, Moulène, Olesen, Parreno, Pumhösl, Ray, Schütte, Sehgal, Steinbach, Toroni, Uecker, Valentine, West, and Wyn Evans. Curator: Caroline Bourgeois.
- "L'Œil du collectionneur – Neuf collections particulières strasbourgeoises," September 17, 2016 – March 26, 2017 (Focus 2, "Collectionner les forms," December 10, 2016 – March 26, 2017), Strasbourg (France), Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, with Armleder, Balula, Barry, Bobrow, Boyce, Bulloch, Charlton, Czerlitzki, Dafflon, Elrod, Felton, Fischer, Flood, Förg, Gillick, Halley, Hildebrandt, Höfer, Knoebel, Lavier, Mccollum, Morellet, Morris, Mosset, Moulène, Mullican, Pimentao, Price, Renggli, Ruff, Steinbach, Wallace, Walsch, Zarka, Curator: Estelle Pietrzyk.
- "Tant de Temps! 50 Artistes contemporains," Rodez (France), Musée Soulages, December 3 – April 30, 2017, with Jean Michel Alberola, Arman, Laurette Atrux-Tallau, Philippe Bazin, Michel Blazy, Mel Bochner, Christian Boltanski, Marcel Broodthaers, Philippe Cognée, Henri Cueco, Dado, Marie Denis, Herman de Vries, François Dilasser, Renaud-Auguste Dormeuil, Erró, Jean Fautrier, Robert Filliou, Peter Fischli, Lucio Fontana, Gérard Fromanger, Gérard Gasiorowski, Gilgian Gelzer, Laurent Grasso, On Kawara, Bertrand Lavier, Guillaume Lemarchal, Eugène Leroy, Etienne Martin, André Masson, Joachim Mogarra, Roman Opalka, Dennis Oppenheim, Gina Pane, Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Claudio Parmiggiani, François Poivret, Anton Prinner, Gerhard Richter, Sophie Ristelhueber, Daniel Spoerri, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Patrick Tosani, Maria- Elena Vieira da Silva, Jacques Villeglé, Bill Viola, David Weiss. Curator: Aurore Méchain.
- "Daniel Buren. Une fresque," Brussels (Belgium), BOZAR, February 16 – May 22.
- "From the Collection: 1960 – 1969," New York (USA), The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), March 26 – March 19.

2017
- "Le Geste et la Matière, une abstraction 'autre,' Paris 1945-1965," Le François (Martinique-France), Collection of the Pompidou, Fondation Clément, January 22 – April 16, with François Arnal, Geneviève Asse, Jean Atlan, Martin Barré, Jean Bazaine, Claude Bellegarde, Frédéric Benrath, Roger Bissière, Albert Bitran, Camille Bryen, Olivier Debré, Jean Degottex, Jean Dubuffet, René Duvillier, Maurice Estève, Simon Hantaï, Hans Hartung, Zoltán Kemény, René Laubiès, Alfred Manessier, Georges Mathieu, Joan Mitchell, Georges Noël, Serge Poliakoff, Judit Reigl, Gérard Schneider, Joseph Sima, Pierre Soulages, Nicolas de Staël, Arpád Szenes, Tal-Coat, Bram van Velde, Geer van Velde, Maria Helena Vieira Da Silva, Wols, Léon Zack, Zao Wou-Ki. Curator: Christian Briend. Curatorial assistant: Nathalie Ernoult.
- "Iconostase," Paris (France), Galerie Loevenbruck, February 10 – April 22, with Gilles Aillaud, John Baldessari, Key Hiraga, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux, Philippe Mayaux, Frédéric Pardo, Steven Parrino, Nobuo Sekine, Alina Szapocznikow, Hannah Wilke.
- "L'esprit français, Contre-cultures, 1969-1989," Paris (France) la maison rouge, fondation Antoine de Galbert, February 24 – May 21, with Lea Lublin, Pierre Molinier, Pierre Klossowski, Michel Journiac. Curators: Guillaume Désanges and François Piron.
- "From the Collection: 1960-1969," New York (USA), The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), March 26 – March 19.

2018
- "Philippe Decrauzat - Michel Parmentier," Madrid (Spain), Parra & Romero, November 25 – February 3, with Decrauzat.



149



150

149 ***M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier 1991-2000)*** **(Brussels, Belgium: Éditions small noise, no. 8, January 2001), edition of 500, cover, 25 × 17.5 cm.**
This publication brought together the letters and texts that Parmentier sent to Guy Massaux from September 3, 1991 to January 16, 2000. Another volume was planned but Parmentier's death changed the position of publisher Francis Mary at Éditions small noise, Brussels.

150 **Catalogue of the exhibition "As Painting: Division and Displacement," Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen W. Melville (eds.), Columbus (USA), Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, May 12 – August 12, 2001 (Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, 2001), cover, 23.4 × 20.8 cm.**
Parmentier planned to travel to Columbus with Guy Massaux to produce several pieces for the exhibition. The trip did not take place. Other works were exhibited, including *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), reproduced on the catalogue cover. Laura Lisbon wrote the text presenting Parmentier's work **(see pp. 208-209, translated p. 221)**.

Michel Parmentier – Bibliography

Publisher's note:
For the twenty-eight texts (1966-1999) and the four interviews (1981-1991) published during Michel Parmentier's lifetime, we use the titles published on the contents page of Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014).

To this bibliography we have added the "Droit de réponse à Hervé Gauville" (Right of reply to Hervé Gauville), the "Lettre à Niele Toroni" (Letter to Niele Toroni), and the "Text for the Columbus Catalogue–'Did You Say "Ethics"'?," in English.

Letter of Invitation Manifestation 1

1966 "Il se passe quelque chose" (Something is happening), letters-tracts announcing Manifestation 1 for January 3, 1967, co-signed by Buren, Mosset, Toroni, Paris, dated December 23, 24. and 25, 1966.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Actualité," *VH101,* no. 5 (Spring 1971): 40-47.
- Reprinted [December 24, 1966] in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 153.
- *Catalogue raisonné: 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted [December 23, 1966] in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 35.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 55.

Tract, Manifestation 1

1967 Manifestation 1, tract cosigned by Buren, Mosset, Toroni, Paris, January 1, 1967.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris Commentary," *Studio International,* vol. 177, no. 907 (January 1969): 47 (English).
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Actualité," *VH101,* no. 5 (Spring 1971): 40-47.
- Reprinted in "Gemeinschaftsaktion von Buren, Mosset, Parmentier und Toroni," in Laszlo Glozer, *WestKunst* (Cologne, DuMont Buchverlag, 1981), p. 317 (German).
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I:* 1965-1976 (Bordeaux, CAPC musée d'art contemporain, 1991), p. 21.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 154.
- Reprinted in "Because painting is...," *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 71 (English).
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris Commentary," in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge (Mass.) and London: MIT Press, 2000), p. 84 (English).
- Reprinted in "Puisque peindre c'est un jeu," in Daniel Buren, *Mot à Mot* (Paris: Éditions Centre Pompidou, Éditions Xavier Barral and Éditions de La Martinière, 2002), p. M05.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Actualité–1971," *La Part de l'Œil (dossier "Ouvrir le support"),* no. 20 (2004-2005): 99.
- Reprinted in "Puisque peindre c'est...," Le funzioni del museo. Arte, museo, pubblico nella contemporaneità" (Florence: Le Lettere, 2009), p. 210.
- *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 36.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965-20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 55.

Soundtrack, Manifestation 1

1967 "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni vous conseillent de devenir intelligent," Manifestation 1, text of the soundtrack played during the public production of their canvases (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni), during the opening of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture (January 3, 1967); these words were spoken by Lucie Scheler in English, Spanish, and French.
- *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted and described in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 37.
- Reprinted with description in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 54.

Banner, Manifestation 2

1967 "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni n'exposent pas," Manifestation 2, text for the banner substituted at 20h15 for the canvases made in public during the six hours of the opening of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 38.
Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 58. Lettre ouverte, Manifestation 2.

Open Letter, Manifestation 2

1967 Manifestation 2, typewritten open letter cosigned by Buren, Mosset, Toroni, Paris, January 3, 1967.
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976* (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), pp. 23-24.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 155.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren, *Mot à Mot* (Paris: Éditions Centre Pompidou, Éditions Xavier Barral and Éditions de La Martinière, 2002), p. M07.
- Reprinted and reproduced in Daniel Buren online *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 39.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 59.

Tract, Manifestation 3

1967 Manifestation 3, tract cosigned by Buren, Mosset, Toroni, distributed after Manifestation 3, Paris, auditorium of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, June 2, 1967.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris commentary," *Studio International,* vol. 177, no. 907 (January 1969): 48 (English).
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990),* Tome I: 1965-1976 (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), p. 25.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris commentary," in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge (Mass.) and London: MIT Press, 2000), p. 84 (English).
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren, *Mot à Mot* (Paris: Éditions Centre Pompidou, Éditions Xavier Barral and Éditions de La Martinière, 2002), p. M10.
- Reprinted with description and reproduction in Daniel Buren online *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 41.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 63.

Answer to Ben

1967 "À Ben, pour son 'Fourre-tout,'" letter/tract cosigned by Buren, Mosset, Toroni, in *Fourre-tout,* no. 2, Nice, Ben Vautier (May 2, 1967).
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I:* 1965-1976 (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), p. 27.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 40.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 65.

Soundtrack, Manifestation 4

1967 Manifestation 4, soundtrack played during Manifestation 4, 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 30 – November 5 1967, synchronized with the projection of slides on the ceiling and with the lighting of the canvases corresponding with the moment when each of the four names was spoken.
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris commentary," *Studio International* vol. 177, no. 907 (January 1969) :48 (English).
- Reprinted in Michel Claura, "Paris commentary," in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge (Mass.) and London: MIT Press, 2000), p. 85 (English).
- Reprinted with description and reproductions in Daniel Buren online *Catalogue raisonné 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 42.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 66 and 68.

Tract, "le groupe Buren, Mosset, Parmentier,Toroni n'existe plus" ("The Group Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni No Longer Exists")

1967 "Le Groupe Buren–Mosset–Parmentier–Toroni n'existe plus," tract by Michel Parmentier declaring the disbanding of the group Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, Paris, December 6, 1967.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren, *Mot à Mot* (Paris: Éditions Centre Pompidou, Éditions Xavier Barral and Éditions de La Martinière, 2002), p. M14.
- Reprinted in *Michel Parmentier,* exhibition catalogue, Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, 1988, "Documents," p. I.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), pp. 150-151.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 43.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 76.

Open Letter to François Mathey

1972 "Lettre ouverte à François Mathey," published in the exhibition catalogue Douze ans d'art contemporain en France 1960 – 1972, Paris, Grand Palais, May 7 – September 18, 1972, pp. 294-296.
- Reprinted in *Michel Parmentier, exhibition catalogue,* Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, 1988, "Documents," pp. IV-V.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), pp. 142-145.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 51-55.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 96-97.

Open Letter to Otto Hahn

1974 "Lettre ouverte à Machin" to Otto Hahn, photocopied letter co-signed by Buren, Toroni, Paris, July 10, 1974.
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976* (Bordeaux: CAPC musée d'art contemporain, 1991), p. 355.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 141.
- Reprinted in Michel Parmentier, "Trois brouillons fin 1971, début 1972," posthumously published open letter, transcribed by Aristide Bianchi in *La Part de l'oeil, dossier* "Ouvrir le support," Brussels, no. 20 (2004-2005): 67-70.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 56.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 101.

Tract, Galerie Durand-Dessert

1978 "Démenti (extrait)" (Refutation (extract)) followed by "Allégation" (Allegation), tract printed for the retrospective exhibition of three canvases from 1966-1968, Paris, Galerie Liliane et Michel Durand-Dessert, 43, rue de Montmorency, February 11 – March 16, 1978.
- Reprinted in *Michel Parmentier,* exhibition catalogue, Paris, Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris, 1988, "Documents," p. VII.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 57.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 103.

Open Letter to Claude Viallat

1980 "Mettez-m'en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à diner ce soir" (Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette's coming round for dinner tonight), open letter to Claude Viallat, cosigned by Buren, Toroni, Paris, September 1980.
- Reprinted in *Le Fou parle, revue d'art et d'humeur,* no. 16, Paris (March 1981): 27.
- Reprinted in Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.), Daniel Buren, *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976* (Bordeaux: CAPC musée d'art contemporain, 1991), pp. 273-275.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), p. 149.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 58-59.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 107.

Article by Jacques Vallet based on an interview with Michel Parmentier

1981 "Michel Parmentier, profession non-peintre," by Jacques Vallet, published in *Le Fou parle, revue d'art et d'humeur,* no. 16, Paris (March 1981): 25-28.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 61-64.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 108-109.

"B. M. T. Moi et les autres" ("B.M.T., Me, and the Others")

1981 "B. M. T. Moi et les autres," published in *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain,* no. 11, Paris (June-July 1982): 27-30.
- Reprinted in Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), pp. 134-137.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 65-75.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999: une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 110-111.

Erratum

1982 "Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement," published in *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d'art contemporain*, no 12 (August-September 1982): 29.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 76-77.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 112-113.

Interview with Bernard Blistène

1986 "Michel Parmentier, entretien with Bernard Blistène," published in *Flash Art,* French edition, no. 10, Paris (March 1986): 19-21.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 81-86.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 128-129.

Catalogue Text, Centre national des arts plastiques

1988 Michel Parmentier, "Dire, redire et bafouiller, me contredire, dévier en apparence, digresser, bref: rhizomer toujours. M'avouer. (notes mars-juillet 88)" (Say, repeat and stutter, contradict myself, deviate in appearance, digress: in short, keep rhizoming. Self-avowal. (Notes, March-July, 1988)), Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31, Paris, 1988, pp. 57-75.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier: Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 91-119.

Interview with Michel Nuridsany

1988 "Michel Parmentier, entretien avec Michel Nuridsany," *art press,* no 128, Paris (September 1988): 31-34.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 120-127.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 144-145.

"Toronto" Text

1991 Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren, "Il faut sérieusement douter...," [April 1990], in catalogue *Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France,* Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1991, pp. 132-135 (French), pp. 166-169 (English).
- Reprinted in *Galeries Magazine,* no. 41, Paris (February-March 1991): 5.
- Reprinted in "Extrait de l'intervention de Daniel Buren à propos de l'exposition 'Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France'," *Quand les artistes font école / Vingt-quatre Journées de l'Institut des hautes études en Arts Plastiques 1988-1990,* vol. I (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou–Amis de l'IHEAP and Marseille: Musées de Marseille, 2004), pp. 439-469.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 131-132.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 153.

"Droit de réponse à Hervé Gauville" (Right of reply to Hervé Gauville)

1991 "Droit de réponse," letter from Buren cosigned by Parmentier, addressed to Hervé Gauville after his article in *Libération,* no. 3068 (April 2, 1991), previously unpublished, see Daniel Buren online *Catalogue raisonné: 1967-1972* (http://catalogue.danielburen.com), updated in 2011.

Propos délibérés (Deliberate remarks)

1991 *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren Michel Parmentier, entretiens réalisés par Anne Baldassari les 11, 23 et 28 janvier 1990* (Lyon: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), pp. 9-122.
- Reprinted and edited in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 133-259.

Letter to Niele Toroni

1991 "Mon pauvre Chéri," letter written by Michel Parmentier (on the same day Buren wrote a letter starting "Dear Niele") addressed to Niele Toroni on June 17, 1991, in response to his open letter "D'UNE PICHENETTE IL REPOUSSA LES FAUX JETONS: DEUX ROULERENT SOUS LA TABLE," June 10, 1991, in Guy Massaux (ed.), *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000* (Brussels: Éditions small noise, no 8, 2001),n. p. Editorial note: We have chosen not to include this letter or its translation since Parmentier (like Buren) never made his response to Toroni public.

Open Letter to Michel Durand-Dessert

1991 "Quand des questions que nous voulons sérieuses sont éludées entre poire et cigare dans les dîners en ville" (When the questions we want taken seriously are eluded between brandy and cigars in fancy dinners in town), open letter to Michel Durand-Dessert, November 1, 1991.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000)* (Brussels: Éditions small noise, no 8, 2001), n. p.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 260-261.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 160.

Text for Pierrette Bloch– "sans doute" (No doubt)

1992 "Sans doute," June 15, 1992, published in Pierrette Bloch, *Dessins de crin,* Paris, Galerie de France, 1992, n. p.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000)* (Brussels: Éditions small noise, no 8, 2001), n. p.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014, pp. 262-263.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 162-163.

Text for the Carré des Arts Catalogue

1994 Catalogue text for Carré des Arts, dated January 26, 1994, published in *Michel Parmentier,* Paris, Carré des Arts, March 1994, n. p.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000)* (Brussels: Éditions small noise, no 8, 2001), n. p.
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), pp. 264-265.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), p. 180.

Text for the Columbus Catalogue, "Vous avez dit 'éthique'?" (Did you say 'Ethics'?)

1999 "Vous avez dit 'éthique'?," October 1999, published in Guy Massaux (ed.), *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000)* (Brussels: Éditions small noise, no 8, 2001), n. p. (written in French for publication in English).
- Reprinted in Aristide Bianchi (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (Paris: Blackjack Éditions, 2014), p. 266-269.
- Reprinted in Guy Massaux (ed.), *Michel Parmentier, décembre 1965 – 20 novembre 1999, une rétrospective* (Paris, Éditions Loevenbruck, 2016), pp. 196-197.

Columbus Catalogue Text, "Did you say 'Ethics'?"

1999 "Did You Say 'Ethics'?," trans. Anthony Allen in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen W. Melville (eds.), *As Painting: Division and Displacement* (Columbus (Ohio): Wexner Center for the Arts and Cambridge (Mass.) and London: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 231-232.

Michel Parmentier – Works Reproduced

p.38 ***Peinture – oct. 65* (Painting – Oct. 65),** 1965
Glycero paint on Lana Docelles watermarked paper
73 × 52.3 cm
Private Collection
AMP inventory: MP651000N00

p.36 ***Peinture N° 10 – 1965* (Painting N° 10 – 1965),**
October-November (?) 1965
Glycero paint on canvas on stretcher
240 × 170 cm
Paris (France), collection Galerie Jean Fournier
AMP inventory: MP650000N10

p.37 ***Peinture N° 13 – 1965* (Painting N° 13 – 1965),**
October-November (?) 1965
Glycero paint on canvas on stretcher
236 × 205 cm
Paris (France), collection Lucie Scheler, courtesy Galerie Jean Fournier
AMP inventory: MP650000N13

p.39 ***Peinture N° 39 – nov. 65* (Painting N° 39 – Nov. 65),** 1965
Glycero paint on Lana Docelles watermarked paper
74.5 × 52 cm
Paris (France), courtesy Galerie Natalie Seroussi
AMP inventory: MP651100N39

p. 40 ***Peinture N° 42 – nov. 65* (Painting N° 42 – Nov. 65),** 1965
Glycero paint on Lana Docelles watermarked paper
74 × 51 cm
Paris (France), courtesy Galerie Natalie Seroussi
AMP inventory: MP651100N42

p.24 ***Décembre 1965* (December 1965)**
[- Déc. 1965 (- Dec. 1965)], 1965
Paint on unstretched canvas, 4 painted horizontal bands, alternating Lefranc medium blue and white gloss, 44 cm wide (2+2); at the top, 1 partial white band, 17.5 cm; at the bottom; 1 partial blue band, 17.5 cm
234.5 × 211 cm
Villeneuve-d'Ascq (France), LaM Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, inventory: 2007.1.27, purchased by the state in 1968; attribution to Lille Métropole Communauté urbaine in 2008
AMP inventory: MP651200

p.50 ***5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966),** 1966
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating laque Lefranc medium blue and white, 38 cm wide (3+4) and, at the top and the bottom, 2 partial blue bands 5 cm and 10 cm wide
281 × 245 cm
Paris (France) courtesy galerie Loevenbruck and New York (USA) Ortuzar Projects
AMP inventory: MP660405

p.48 ***15 avril 1966* (April 15, 1966),** 1966
Date stamp on Ingres Fabriano watermarked paper
109 × 76 cm
Rennes (France), collection Frac Bretagne
AMP inventory: MP660415TD

p.72 ***3 janvier 1967 (a)* (January 3, 1967 (a)),** 1967
Paint on unstretched canvas, 5 painted horizontal bands, alternating dove gray Krylon gloss and white, 38 cm wide (3+2) and, at the top and bottom, 2 partial white bands 5 cm wide
198 × 195.5 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP670103a

p.73 ***3 janvier 1967 (b)* (January 3, 1967 (b)),** 1967
Paint on unstretched canvas, 5 painted horizontal bands, dove gray Krylon gloss and white, 38 cm wide (3+2) and, at the bottom, 1 partial white band 12 cm wide
200 × 195.5 cm
Paris (France), collection Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris
AMP inventory: MP670103b

p.78 ***20 mars 1967* (March 20, 1967),** 1967
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating dove gray Krylon gloss and white, 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 partial white bands 8 cm wide
282 × 239.4 cm
Paris (France), collection Chantal and Daniel Buren
AMP inventory: MP670320

p.84 ***18 février 1968* (February 18, 1968),** 1968
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating Ripolin poppy red gloss and white 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the bottom, 1 partial white band 13 cm wide
279 × 245 cm
Paris (France), Caza Collection
AMP inventory: MP680218

p.136 ***13 janvier 1984* (January 13, 1984),** 1984
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating black and white 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the bottom, 1 partial white band 15.5 cm wide
281.5 × 243 cm
Paris (France) , Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP840113

p.137 ***15 février 1984* (February 15, 1984),** 1984
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating black and white 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the bottom, 1 partial white band 11 cm wide
279 × 244 cm
Private Collection, courtesy of Ales Ortuzar
AMP inventory: MP840215

p.138 ***22 juillet 1985* (July 22, 1985),** 1985
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating black and white 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom,
2 partial white bands and 9 cm and 7 cm wide
282.5 × 253 cm
Paris (France), Sorbac Collection
AMP inventory: MP850722

p.139 ***12 août 1985* (August 12, 1985),** 1985
Paint on unstretched canvas, 7 painted horizontal bands, alternating black and white 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 partial white bands 9 cm and 7.5 cm wide
282.5 × 252 cm
Paris (France), Caza Collection
AMP inventory: MP850812

pp.158-159 ***16 juillet 1988* (July 16, 1988),** 1988
Graphite pencil on paper, 9 horizontal bands alternating de 33 cm wide (4+5) and, at the top and bottom, 2 partial graphite pencil bands of 6 and 5 cm
307.5 × 687.5 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP880716

p.160 ***17 juillet 1989* (July 17, 1989),** 1989
Graphite rubbed on paper, 7 horizontal alternating bands, 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 302.5 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP890717

p.161 ***5 août 1989* (August 5, 1989),** 1989
Graphite rubbed on paper, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands of 19 cm
304 × 302.5 cm
Paris (France), courtesy Loevenbruck
AMP inventory: MP890805

p.176 ***24 décembre 1989* (December 24, 1989),** 1989
Fusain rubbed on tracing paper, 7 horizontal bands alternating 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Private Collection
AMP inventory: MP891224

p.177 ***5 janvier 1990* (January 5, 1990),** 1990
White pastel applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3), and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), Sorbac Collection
AMP inventory: MP900105

p.178 ***6 mars 1991* (March 6, 1991),** 1991
White pastel applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3), and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Private Collection
AMP inventory: MP910306

p.179 ***5 avril 1991* (April 5, 1991),** 1991
White pastel applied flat, vertically, on tracingpaper, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3), and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Private Collection
AMP inventory: MP910405

p.180 ***19 avril 1991* (April 19, 1991),** 1991
Gray pastel applied flat, vertically, on calque paper, 7 horizontal bands alternating 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), courtesy Loevenbruck
AMP inventory: MP910419

p.181 ***25 avril 1991* (April 25, 1991),** 1991
Gray pastel applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, 7 horizontal bands alternating 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), courtesy Loevenbruck
AMP inventory: MP910425

p.182 ***5 mai 1991 II* (May 5, 1991 II),** 1991
White oil bar applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP910505B

p.183 ***5 mai 1991 IV* (May 5, 1991 IV),** 1991
Oil bar blanc applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, alternating 7 horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP910505D

p.184 ***4 juin 1991 II* (June 4, 1991 II),** 1991
Gray pastel applied flat, vertically, on tracing paper, 7 horizontal bands alternating 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP910604B

p. 210 ***31 mars 1993* (March 31, 1993),** 1993
Oil bar blanc applied flat, vertically, on Herculene transparent polyester, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 308 cm
(France), Pinault Collection
AMP inventory: MP930331

p. 211 ***1 avril 1993* (April 1, 1993),** 1993
Oil bar blanc applied flat, vertically, on Herculene transparent polyester, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 308 cm
Private Collection
AMP inventory: MP930401

p. 25 ***20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999),** 1999
White oil bar applied randomly on Canson transparent polyester, 7 alternating horizontal bands 38 cm wide (4+3) and, at the top and bottom, 2 blank partial bands 19 cm wide
304 × 300 cm
Paris (France), Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Inventory: AM 2002–114, purchased in 2002
AMP inventory: MP991120

Reproduced Documents

The numbers given in brackets refer to the figures in the catalogue

p. 11 (1) Michel Parmentier in Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), 16 photographs (15 black and white and 1color), black-and-white reproduction from negatives and transparency, 6 × 6 cm each, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10178 à 10193

p. 15 (2) Poster for exhibition "Michel Parmentier, Déc. 1965 – 20 Nov. 1999, une rétrospective.," 2014, La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris centre d'art, June 7 – September 14, 2014, Brussels, graphic design: ÜBERKNACKIG, Vincent Carlier, Atelier Vertical, silk-screen prints, edition of 70 for each color (blue, gray, red, black), including 10 not for sale and 10 numbered I to X, 100 × 70 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03158

December 1965 – November 20, 1999: A Retrospective

pp. 20-28

(3) *Peinture N° 15–1965* (Painting N° 15–1965), Daniel Buren's studio, color photograph, reproduced from transparency, 6 × 6 cm, Brussels, AMP–Fonds Michel Parmentier, AMP inv.: 10101

(4) *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), Daniel Buren's studio, photographic print dated January 1966, black-and-white, 22 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10102

(5) Digital photomontage, 2014, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10165

(6) Recto and verso of *Peinture N° 15–1965 (*Painting N° 15–1965), October-November (?) 1965, glycerophtalic paint on canvas, 231 × 196 cm (partial size of the canvas mounted on stretcher), 251 × 238.5 cm (with the parts of the canvas folded down at the back), signed on the back with the indication "245 × 205 cm" written in felt pen by Parmentier, Switzerland, private collection, AMP inv.: 10166 and 10167

(7) Estimate no. 779 for restoration of the work *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, Documentation department, file on works by Michel Parmentier, no. 29341, AMP inv.: 03018

(8) A4 sheet folded/unfolded, model for folding and conservation of the work *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-Cci, collection of files on works, visual arts documentation service, AMP inv.: 05013

(9) *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), exhibition "JARS IV. Tegenvleug / à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, December 19, 1999-February 20, 2000, color photograph, 11.5 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10163

(10) Simon Hantaï, *Tabula, 1982-1986,* Acrylic paint on canvas, 300 × 482 cm, private collection, AMP inv.: 10176

(11) Loan certificate concerning *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), signed by Michel Parmentier December 4, 1999, for the exhibition "JARS IV. tegenvleug / à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, 29.7 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03052M

(12) Invitation to the exhibition "JARS IV. tegenvleug / à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, December 19, 1999-February 20, 2000, recto and verso, 11 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03350–1, 03350–2

(13) Exhibition leaflet in French, English and Dutch for "JARS IV. tegenvleug / à rebrousse-poil," Sittard (The Netherlands), Kunstcentrum, December 19, 1999-February 20, 2000, recto and verso, 21 × 15 cm (closed), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03351–1, 03351–2

(14) Michel Parmentier's personal notebook, 21 × 16 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05048

Antichamber (October–November, 1965)

pp. 30-35

(15) Poster for the 4th Biennale de Paris, 1965, Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 29 – November 3, 1965, lithographic print, 80 × 40 cm, Paris, Imprimerie du Lion, Atelier Pierre Faucheux, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03118

(16) Catalogue for the 4th Biennale de Paris, 1965, Manifestation Biennale et Internationale des Jeunes Artistes, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 29 – November 3, 1965, Paris, Les Presses Artistiques, 1965, cover and pp. 134-135, 21 × 10.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15410

(17) Receipt from Galerie Lutèce, Paris, for seven works on loan by Michel Parmentier, December 4, 1965, 26.9 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03002

(18) Invitation and insert for the "Exposition inaugurale (50 artistes/50 oeuvres)," Galerie Lutèce, Paris, November 9 and 23, 1965, 10.7 × 13.9 cm (folded) and 10.4 × 13.7 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03312–1 and 03312–2

(19) Invitation to the 7th Salon Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 9-31, 1966, 10.6 × 14.1 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03314

(20) Invitation to the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 9 – February 1, 1966, 8.9 × 13.9 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03315

(21) Catalogue of the 17th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 9 – February 1, 1966, Paris, Édition La Jeune Peinture, Imprimerie Michel Brient, 1966, unpaginated, cover and flyleaf, 18.4 × 13 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15414

(22) Letter from Michel Parmentier to Marc Netter, February 5, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm, AMP inv.: 03904

(23) Letter from Marc Netter to Michel Parmentier, February 19, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm, AMP inv.: 03906

(24) Letter from Michel Parmentier to Marc Netter, February 23, 1966, 29.7 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03907

1966 [blue]

pp. 42-47

(25) Unstretched blue canvas, Daniel Buren's studio, color photograph, reproduced from transparency, 6 × 6 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10177

(26) Invitation to the exhibition "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," with Buraglio, Buren, Hantaï, Meurice, Riopelle, Tàpies, Paris, Jean Fournier & Cie, July-September 1966, December 1966 – January 1967, July-September 1967, recto and verso, 10 × 7.5 cm (folded), Brussels, Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03316

(27) Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren *Peinture aux formes indéfinies* (Painting with Indefinite Forms) and *Peinture N° 9* (Painting N° 9) Michel Parmentier *Décembre 1965* (December 1965), view of the exhibition "Pour une exposition en forme de triptyque," Paris, Galerie Jean Fournier & Cie, July-September 1966, detail, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10103

(28) Photos-souvenirs, in Annick Boisnard and Daniel Buren (eds.), *Daniel Buren. Catalogue raisonné chronologique Tome II–1964/1966* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole and Le Bourget: Éditions 11/28/48, 2000), cover and pp. 134-135, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15467

(29) Letter from Jacques Lepage to Michel Parmentier, February 5, 1966, organization of the exhibition "Impact" at the Musée de Céret, signed mimeographed letter, with "Mongolfier S.M." watermark, 27 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03905

(30) Catalogue of the exhibition "Impact," Céret, Musée de Céret, July 15 – September 25, 1966, Céret, Musée de Céret/PO [Pyrénées-Orientales], 1966, unpaginated, cover and double page, 27.5 × 11 cm, archives of the Musée de Céret, AMP inv.: 15416

(31) Poster for *Impact*, "Sur une idée de Viallat, une affiche d'Arman" ("After an idea by Viallat, a poster by Arman"). Exhibition Musée de Céret, July 15 – September 25, 1966, 55.5 × 59.8 cm, archives of the Musée de Céret, AMP inv.: 03119

1967 [gray] Manifestation 1-4

pp. 54-71

(32) Catalogue of the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3-25, 1967, without place or date, cover and double page, unpaginated, 18.5 × 13 cm, Pierre Restany collection, INHA-collection Archives de la Critique d'Art, AMP inv.: 15419

(33) Open letter signed by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, "Il se passe quelque chose pour la première fois, le 3 Janvier 1967, au Salon de la Jeune Peinture" ("Something is happening for the first time on January 3, 1967, at the Salon of Young Painters"), December 23, 1966, reproduced typed pamphlet, 500 copies, 29.7 × 21 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-Cci, Kandinsky Library, General Archives, AMP inv.: 05001

(34) Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," view of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967, detail, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10104

(35) Printed tract "Nous ne sommes pas peintres" ("We are not painters"), January 1, 1967, 21 × 13.5 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 05002

(36) Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," view of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967, details, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10105 to 10113

(37) Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," view of the exhibition at the 18th Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967, details, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10115, 10114, 10116

(38) Open letter signed by Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, "Aujourd'hui à 20 h 15 précises nous avons quitté le Salon de la Jeune Peinture..." ("Today at 8.15 pm precisely we left the Salon de la Jeune Peinture..."), "Manifestation 2", January 3, 1967, mimeographed leaflet with handwritten time and signatures, 27 × 21 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-Cci, Kandinsky Library, General Archives, AMP inv.: 05006

(39) Photo-souvenir: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, rue de Rennes, Paris, 1967, contact sheet: Paris, Bernard Boyer, 30.3 × 19.8 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10117

(40) Poster for "Manifestation 3", Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), June 2, 1967, 59.7 × 40.1 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 03135

(41) Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), June 2, 1967, contact sheet: Paris, Bernard Boyer, 30.3 × 19.8 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10120

(42) Tract, "Il ne s'agissait évidemment que de regarder..." (Obviously, it was simply a question of looking..."), June 2, 1967, distributed at the end of "Manifestation 3", 21 × 13.5 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 05003

(43) Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Centre Expérimental du Spectacle (théâtre), June 2, 1967, details, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10118, 10119b

(44)
- Photo-souvenir: Cover of Daniel Buren *Les Écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976,* Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.) (Bordeaux, CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 15444
- Photo-souvenir: Letter/tract, "À Ben pour son 'Fourre-tout'" ("To Ben for His 'Fourre-Tout'"), June 1967, in Daniel Buren *Les écrits (1965-1990), Tome I: 1965-1976,* Jean-Marc Poinsot (ed.) (Bordeaux, CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), p. 27, Daniel Buren archives AMP inv.: 05004

(45) Invitation to the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 29, 1967, 9 × 20.7 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03320

(46) Photo-souvenir: "Manifestation 4: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," exhibition view at the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 30 – November 5, 1967, detail, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10121

(47) Photo-souvenir: poster for "Manifestation 4," 5th Biennale de Paris, September 1967, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 03121

(48) Catalogue for the 5th Biennale de Paris, 288 pages, 21 × 10.5 cm, cover and pp. 175-177, text by Michel Claura, "Groupe Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," including titles of works given by the artists, pp. 175-176, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives

(49) Photos-souvenirs: "Manifestation 4: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," view of the exhibition at the 5th Biennale de Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 1967, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10122 à 10129

(50) Photo-souvenir: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, Paris, September 1967, Daniel Buren archives, AMP inv.: 10130

(51) Raoul-Jean Moulin, "La Ve Biennale de Paris. Anthologie des groupes," *Opus International,* no. 3, October 1967, cover and pp. 70-71, 27 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16019

(52) Jeanine Warnod, "Les jeunes peintres de la biennale" (The Young Painters at the Biennale), *Le Figaro,* October 3, 1967, "Les arts au jour le jour" ("The Arts from Day to Day") section, press cutting, 16.3 × 14.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16026

(53) Marc Albert-Levin, "Le journal de la Biennale de Paris. Au Luna-Park de l'art contemporain," *Les Lettres françaises,* no. 1203, October 11, 1967, "Les Arts" section, p. 27, press cutting, 43.5 × 14.8 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16029

(54) Marc Albert-Levin, "Le journal de la Biennale de Paris. Au Luna-Park de l'art contemporain," *Les Lettres françaises,* no. 1205, October 25, 1967, press cutting, 26.9 × 15.6 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16016

1967 [gray] December 6 "The Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni Group no longer exists"

pp. 76-77

(55) Pamphlet by Michel Parmentier, "Le Groupe Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni n'existe plus" ("The Buren – Mosset – Parmentier – Toroni Group no longer exists"), December 6, 1967, 48 × 22 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 05005

(56) Michel Claura, "Buren, Mosset Toroni," *Les Lettres françaises,* no 1211, December 6 – 12, 1967, cover and "Les Arts" section, p. 33, 43 × 30 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16018

1968 [red]

p. 80

(57) Michel Claura, "Structures primaires et art minimal" ("Primary Strcutures and Minimal Art"), *Les Lettres françaises,* no. 1222, February 21, 1968, "Les Arts" section, pp. 29-30, handwritten annotations by Michel Parmentier, 43 × 30 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16034

1968–1983 “A cessé définitivement de peindre en 1968” (“Ceased painting definitively in 1968”)

pp.91-119

(58) Invitation to the exhibition “De l’unité à la détérioration” (“From Unity to Deterioration”), Nice, Galerie Ben doute de tout, February 27 – March 12, 1970, 14 × 10.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03321–1

(59) Handwritten texts by Michel Parmentier, “Point limite...,” “La démonstration de Claura...,” “*VH101*...,” late 1971 – early 1972, spiral-bound orange-yellow notebook, 22 × 17 cm (closed), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05050

(60) Letter from Michel Parmentier to Jean Fournier, March 2, 1971, recto and verso, 29.7 × 21 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Galerie Jean Fournier collection, AMP inv.: 03909

(61) Letter from Jean Fournier replying to Michel Parmentier, March 16, 1971, 21 × 15 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-Cci, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, fonds Galerie Jean Fournier, AMP inv.: 03910

(62) Michel Claura, “Actualité,” *VH101*, no. 5, 1971, cover and pp. 40-47, 25 × 19 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16035

(63) Catalogue of the exhibition “Douze ans d’art contemporain en France 1960-1972,” Paris, Grand Palais, May 7 – September 18, 1972, Paris, Éditions des Musées Nationaux, cover and pp. 292-296, 32 × 23 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15423–1, 15423-2, 15423–3, 15423–4

(64) Jean Clair, “Art en France. Une nouvelle génération,” Paris, Éditions du Chêne, 1972, cover and pp. 96-97, 27 × 20.4 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15422

(65) Transparency with *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), photograph by Jacqueline Hyde, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, collection of files on works, visual arts documentation service, Galerie Jean Fournier, AMP inv.: 10139

(66) Excerpt from “Lettre ouverte à François Mathey” (“Open Letter to François Mathey”), March 16, 1972, instructions for hanging and conservation of the work *1968* [rouge] (1968 [red]), Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, collection of files on on works, visual arts documentation service, AMP inv.: 05013–1

(67) Otto Hahn, “Le groupe BMPT la mort supposée de l’art” (“The BMPT Group and the Purported Death of Art”), *art press*, no. 12, June-August 1974, cover and p. 14, 32.5 × 25 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16037

(68) Open letter from Michel Parmentier cosigned by Buren and Toroni, “Lettre ouverte à Machin...” (“Open Letter to “what’s-his-name”), addressed to Otto Hahn, July 10, 1974, typewritten, with “Duplalfa” watermark 29.7 × 21 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Galerie Jean Fournier collection, AMP inv.: 05016

(69) Copy of an excerpt from the transcription of Michel Parmentier’s interview with Sylvain Roumette, two typewritten pages, one of them annotated, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Paris, Sylvain Roumette archives, AMP inv.: 05017–1,05017

(70) Invitation to the exhibition “Parmentier* (3 toiles de 1966, 1967, 1968),” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, February 11 – March 16 1978, 10.5 × 14.9 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03324

(71) Tract “Démenti [...] Allégation” (“Refutation [...] Allegation”), accompanying the invitation to the exhibition “Parmentier* (3 toiles de 1966, 1967, 1968).” With “Extra Strong” watermark, 27 × 21 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 05018

(72) Three canvases from 1966, 1967 and 1968, Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, print from original black-and-white photograph, 24 × 18 cm, Paris, Christine Fleurent archives, AMP inv.: 10131

(73) Contract between Michel Parmentier and Michel Durand-Dessert for *5 avril 1966* (April 5, 1966) *and 15 février 1978*, (February 15, 1978) 29.7 × 21 cm,Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03009

(74) Catalogue *1968-78:* Catalogue *1968-78: Quelques... Acquistions Musée de Grenoble*, Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble (France), 1979-1980 unpaginated, 21 × 30 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15444

(75) Letter from Michel Durand-Dessert to Christian Besson, June 26, 1980, 2 typewritten pages with “Extra Strong” watermark and 1 photocopy, stapled, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03914–1M, 03914-2M, 03914–3M

(76) Open letter signed by Buren Parmentier Toroni, “Mettez-m’en trois belles tranches, dit-elle, on a Ginette à dîner ce soir” (“Give me three nice slices, she said, Ginette’s coming round for dinner tonight”), addressed to Claude Viallat, September 1980, typewritten with “Extra Strong” watermark, 29.7 × 21 cm, Paris, Galerie Loevenbruck, AMP inv.: 05019

(77) Jacques Vallet, “Michel Parmentier profession non-peintre” (“Michel Parmentier, Profession Non-Painter”), *Le Fou parle: revue d’art et d’humeur*, no. 16, March 1981, cover and pp. 25-28, 27.7 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16041

(78) Text-article by Michel Parmentier, “B.M.T. Moi et les autres” (“B.M.T., Me, and the Others”), January 1967/January 1981, *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d’art contemporain*, no. 11, June-July 1982, cover and pp. 26-30, 30 × 22 cm, Brussels, Michel Parmentier archives, AMP inv.: 16042

(79) Text-article by Michel Parmentier, “Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement” (“For an erratum, with two r’s and disenchantment”), June 10, 1982, in reaction to *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d’art contemporain*, no. 11, June-July 1982, 2 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03915M

(80) Text-article by Michel Parmentier, “Pour un erratum, avec deux r et désenchantement” (“For an erratum, with two r’s and disenchantment”), June 10, 1982, in *Artistes: revue bimestrielle d’art contemporain*, no. 12, August-September 1982, 30 × 22 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16043–2

(81) Catalogue of the exhibition “Art en France: 1960–1980,” Coutances, Les Unelles, July 13 – September 16, 1983, Coutances, Les Unelles, 1983, unpaginated, 20 × 23 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15429

(82) View of the exhibition “Art en France: 1960-1980,” Coutances, Les Unelles, black-and-white silver gelatin print, 12.6 × 16 cm, not attributed, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMPinv.: 10132

(83) Mimeographed letter from Michel Parmentier to Gérard Houssin, September 27, 1983, 3 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03917–1M, 03917–2M, 03917–3M

1983 January 25 – 1985 August 12 [black]

pp.124-141

(84) Handwritten résumé by Michel Parmentier, 29.7 × 21 cm, Brusels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05023

(85) Michel Parmentier and Michel Durand-Dessert at the exhibition “Parmentier 1983–1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, print from original black-and-white photograph, 12 ×18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10133

(86) Hanging of the exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white contact sheet no. 844-2, 30.5 × 24 cm, Paris, Christine Fleurent archives, AMP inv.: 10134

(87) Exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white contact sheet no. 844–1, 24.2 × 30.8 cm, Paris, Christine Fleurent archives, AMP inv.: 10135

(88) Invitation to the exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, 15 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03329

(89) View of the exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 10.2 × 12.7 cm, Paris, Adam Rzepka archives, AMP inv.: 10138

(90) View of the exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photographic print, 24 × 17.8 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10136

(91) View of the exhibition “Parmentier 1983-1984,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 15 – October 9, 1984, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 10.2 × 12.7 cm, Paris, Adam Rzepka archives, AMP inv.: 10137

(92) Typed résumé by Michel Parmentier, 2 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05024–1, 05024–2

(93) Michel Nuridsany, “Parmentier donne le ton” (“Parmentier Sets the Tone”), *Le Figaro*, “La vie culturelle” section, September 21, 1984, 53.6 × 38.7 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16046

(94) Interview with Bernard Blistène, “Michel Parmentier,” *Flash Art*, no. 10, March 1986, pp. 19-21, 27 × 20.4 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16052–1M

(95) Portrait of Michel Parmentier, black-and-white photograph, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10170

1986 April 22 – 1989 December 18 [papers]

pp.144-151

(96) Invitation to the exhibition “Michel Parmentier,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, September 10 – October 11, 1988, 12 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03331

(97) Exhibition “Michel Parmentier,” Paris, Galerie Liliane & Michel Durand-Dessert, color photograph, black-and-white reproduction from transparency, 10.2 × 12.7 cm, Paris, Adam Rzepka archives, AMP inv.: 10140

(98) J-M Baillieu, in *l’hercule des arts*, Paris, Hercule de Paris, October 1988, cover and double page, 21 × 14.9 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16068

(99) Invitation to the exhibition “Michel Parmentier,” Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31, 1988, 21 × 10 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03332

(100) Catalogue of the exhibition “Michel Parmentier,” Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31, 1988, cover and p. 57, 27.8 × 20.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15435

(101) Exhibition “Michel Parmentier,” Paris, Centre national des arts plastiques, September 20 – October 31, 1988, black-and-white photographic prints, 11.5 × 18 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10141 and 10142

(102) Michel Parmentier in Max Wechsler’s studio, black-and-white photographic prints, 18 × 11.5 cm and 11.5 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10172 et 10174

(103) *25 mai 1988* (May 25, 1988), black-and-white photographic print, 24 × 18 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 10171

(104) Exhibition catalogue (cover and appendix) “Liberté & Egalité. Freiheit und Gleichheit. Wiederholung und Abweichungcin der neueren franzsischen Kunst,” Erich Franz and Dieter Schwarz (eds.), Essen, Museum Folkwang, June 4 – August 27, 1989, Winterthur, Kunstmuseum, September 24– November 12, 1989, Essen and Winterthur, Museum Folkwang and Kunstmuseum, cover, pp. 40-41 and unpaginated double page, 27 × 21.1 cm, Brussels, AMP–Fonds Michel Parmentier, AMP inv.: 15437 and 15438

(105) Interview with Michel Nuridsany, “Michel Parmentier: une voix de fin silence” (“Michel Parmentier: A Voice of Fine Silence”), *art press*, no. 128, September 1988, cover and pp. 31-34, 28.4 × 22.2 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 16056

1989 October 12 – 1991 June 14 [tracing papers]

pp.164-175

(106) The two covers of the exhibition catalogue “Um 1968 konkrete utopien in kunst und gesellschaft,” Marie Luise Syring (ed.), Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, May 27 – July 8, 1990, Cologne, DuMont, 1990 (soft and hard cover), 25.1 × 20 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15442

(107) Text by Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren, “Il faut sérieusement douter...” (“It is highly doubtful...”), in exhibition catalogue “Individualités: 14 Contemporary Artists from France,” Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, January 25 – April 7, 1991, pp. 166-167 (English) and cover, pp. 167-169 (French), 25.4 × 18.7 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15447

(108)
- Photo-souvenir: *Propos délibérés, Daniel Buren-Michel Parmentier, entretiens avec Anne Baldassari*, Villeurbanne and Brussels, Art Édition and Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991, cover, Brussels, AMP–Fonds Michel Parmentier, AMP inv.: 15448, 15449
- Photo-souvenir: *Bewuste uitspraken: Daniel Buren-Michel Parmentier*, interviews with Anne Baldassari (Villeurbanne: Art Édition and Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1991), cover, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15449

(109) “Buren Parmentier” poster, June 7 – July 20, 1991, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 60 × 40 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03136

(110) Invitation to the exhibition “Buren Parmentier,” Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, June 7 – July 20, 1991, recto and verso, 19 × 13 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03339

(111) Photo-souvenir: Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, June 1991, black-and-white photograph from negative, 24 × 36 mm, Brussels, Philippe De Gobert archives, AMP inv.: 10143

(112-117) Photos-souvenirs: Exhibition “Buren Parmentier,” Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, black-and-white and color photographs, black-and-white reproduction from negatives and transparencies, 6 × 6 cm each, Brussels, Philippe De Gobert archives, AMP inv.: 10144, 10145, 10146, 10148.10147 and 10149

(118) Open letter from Michel Parmentier, “Quand des questions que nous voulons sérieuses sont éludées entre poire et cigare dans les dîners en ville” (“When the questions we want taken seriously are eluded between brandy and cigars at fancy dinners in town”), November 1, 1991, photocopy, recto and verso, 29.7 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05029–1M

(119) Table for cutting and pre-folding the strips in Guy Massaux’s studio, 123 rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 6 × 6 cm, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10152

(120) Handwritten letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, March 25, 1992, letter paper with “Jeand’heurf Extra Strong” watermark and sketch/diagram of a strip, 4 pages, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03935–1, 03935–2, 03935–3, 03935–4

(121) Invitation to the exhibition by Pierrette Bloch “Dessins de crin” (“Hair Drawings”), Paris, Galerie de France, 1992, text by Michel Parmentier, “Sans doute” (“No Doubt”), June 15, 1992, 15 × 30 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03341

1993 March 31 – 1999 November 20 [polyester calque]

pp.186-217

(122) View of the exhibition “Das offene Bild, Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945,” Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, November 15, 1992-February 7, 1993, color photograph, black-and-white reproduction from color slide, Münster-Roxel, Erich Franz archives, AMP inv.: 10150

(123) Invitation to the exhibition “Das offene Bild Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945,” Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, November 15, 1992-February 7, 1993, recto and verso, 21 × 14.9 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03342

(124) Catalogue Das offene Bild, Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach 1945, Stuttgart, Cantz Verlag, 1992, cover and pp. 218-219, 26 × 21 cm, Brussels, Michel Parmentier archives, AMP inv.: 15450

(125) View of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Paris, Galerie Christine et Isy Brachot, April 29 – May 30, 1992, black-and-white photograph, reproduction from black-and-white negative, 6 × 6 cm, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10151

(126) Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier," Paris, Galerie Christine et Isy Brachot, April 29 – May 30, 1992, 24 × 16 cm, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, Kandinsky Library, General Archives AMP inv.: 03340

(127) Contract with Isy Brachot, dated April 21, 1993, concerning the work *31 mai 1991 I* (May 31, 1991 I), 29.6 × 20.9 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03048

(128) Catalogue *Michel Parmentier*, Paris, Carré des Arts, March 17 – May 15, 1994, Paris, Carré des Arts, 1994, unpaginated, cover and double page, 28 × 23 cm, Brussels, AMP – Kandinsky Library, General Archives, AMP inv.: 15456

(129) Michel Parmentier in Guy Massaux's studio, 123 rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), black-and-white photograph, reproduction from negative, 6 × 6 cm, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10175

(130) Screenplay co-written by Bernard Bloch and Agnès Foiret, *Michel Parmentier. Presque le silence (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence),* documentary project, 26 minutes, format 35mm, 1995, Gentilly, Les Productions de l'Œil Sauvage, Gentilly, Bernard Bloch archives, AMP inv.: 05039

(131) Production schedule drawn up by Bernard Bloch for *Michel Parmentier. Presque le silence (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence),* 29.7 × 21 cm, Gentilly, Bernard Bloch archives, AMP inv.: 05040

(132) Story-board by Bernard Bloch for *Michel Parmentier. Presque le silence (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence),* Gentilly, Les Productions de l'Œil Sauvage, cover, 21 × 29.7 cm (closed), Gentilly, Bernard Bloch archives, AMP inv.: 05041

(133) Shooting the film *304 × 308 (Presque le silence) (Michel Parmentier: Almost silence),* in Guy Massaux's studio, 123 rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), four black-and-white photographs, reproduction from color negatives, 24 × 36 mm each, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10153, 10154, 10155, 10156, 10157

(134) Handwritten letters by Michel Parmentier to Bernard Bloch, September 5, 1995 and September 12, 1995, 29.7 × 21 cm each, Gentilly, Bernard Bloch archives, AMP inv.: 03954 and 03955

(135) Contract between Michel Parmentier and Herman J. Daled, May 25, 1996, concerning *15 mars 1994* (March 15, 1994), 29.7 × 21 cm, New York, gift of Herman J. Daled, Herman and Nicole Daled Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, AMP inv.: 03051

(136) Letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, February 18, 1997, recto and verso and 3 pages, 14.8 × 21 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03970–1M, 03970–2M, 03970-3M, 03970-4M

(137-138) Invitation to the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, (304 × 308 cm) (076 × 308 cm) (304 × 308 cm), 15 mars 1994, 5 juillet 1995, 26 mai 1996," at Guy Massaux's studio, 123, rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), April 19, 1997, recto and verso and insert, edition limited to 100, 21 × 16 cm (folded) and 20.1 × 14.9 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03346 et 03346–1

(139-143) Views of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, (304 × 308 cm) (076 × 308 cm) (304 × 308 cm) 15 mars 1994, 5 juillet 1995, 26 mai 1996," Guy Massaux's studio, 123 rue Marconi, Forest (Brussels), color photographs, black-and-white reproduction from transparencies, 6 × 6 cm each, Brussels, Michel Parmentier archives, AMP inv.: 10159, 10160, 10161, 10158, 10162

(144) Letter from Michel Parmentier to Guy Massaux, June 22, 1997, pp. 2-3, 27.9 × 21.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03973–2M, 03973–3M

(145) Sketches numbered from 1 to 8, 27.9 × 21.5 cm each, Brussels, AMP–Fonds Michel Parmentier, AMP inv.: 05051–1 à 05051-8

(146) "Vous avez dit 'éthique'?," typescripts and notes by Michel Parmentier, 1999, English version, "Did You Say "Ethics"?," in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon and Stephen W. Melville (eds.), *As Painting: Division and Displacement*, exhib. cat. Columbus, Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, May 12 – August 2, 2001, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, translated by Anthony Allen, May 2001, pp. 231-232, 29.7 × 21 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 05047–1M, 05047–2, 05047–3

(147) Invitation to the exhibition "présentation de l'oeuvre 20 11 99," Paris, Galerie Jean Fournier, November 21 – December 16, 2000, 3.5 × 21 cm (folded), Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03352

(148) *20 novembre 1999* (November 20, 1999), exhibition "présentation de l'oeuvre 20 11 99," Paris, Galerie Jean Fournier, color photograph, black-and-white reproduction from transparency, 6 × 6 cm, Paris, Philippe Simon archives, AMP inv.: 10164

Appendices

pp. 232-241

(149) *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier 1991-2000),* Brussels, Éditions small noise, no. 8, January 2001, edition of 500, cover, 25×17.5 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15470

(150) Catalogue of the exhibition 'As Painting: Division and Displacement," Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen W. Melville (eds.), Columbus, Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, May 12 – August 12, 2001, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, The MIT Press, May 2001, cover, 23.4 × 20.8 cm, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 15471

(151) View of the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, Déc. 1965 – 20 Nov. 1999, une rétrospective." La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris centre d'art, June 7 – September 14, digital color photograph, AMP. inv.: 10179.

Notes on the Contributors

Philip Armstrong

A professor at The Ohio State University, Philip Armstrong has published numerous essays on contemporary visual arts, as well as on contemporary political theory, including: *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political* (2009) and (with Jean-Luc Nancy) *Politique et au-delà. Entretien avec Philip Armstrong et Jason E. Smith* (2011). With Laura Lisbon and Stephen Melville, he co-curated the exhibition "As Painting: Division and Displacement," at the Wexner Center for the Arts (2001), Columbus, and contributed a text to the exhibition catalogue "Déplacer, déplier, découvrir la peinture en actes, 1960-1999" (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 2012). He is a member of the Association Michel Parmentier.

Robert Bonaccorsi

After carrying out research into popular literature, notably as editor-in-chief of *Cahiers pour la littérature populaire* from 1983 to 2003, Robert Bonaccorsi became involved with improvised music events. He was artistic director of the Jazz au Fort Napoléon festival and director of the Celp Musiques label.

He is also a curator and has written many books on contemporary art. As director of the Villa Tamaris at La Seyne-sur-Mer, he co-curated with Guy Massaux the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, Déc. 1965–20 Nov. 1999, une rétrospective." in 2014.

Agnès Foiret

Agnès Foiret is an artist and lecturer at the Université Paris–1–Panthéon-Sorbonne. Her research interests cover the physical data of painting and the forms of its exhibition. She contributes to numerous journals in this field as well as to exhibition catalogues, including *Michel Parmentier* (Paris, 1994). She also co-wrote with Michel Parmentier the narrative used for the screenplay in Bernard Bloch's film *304 × 308 (Presque le silence)* (1995). The definitive version of this text is published in this catalogue for the first time.

Laura Lisbon

Laura Lisbon is an artist and professor at The Ohio State University. She has exhibited work in Scotland, Holland, France, Belgium, and Portugal. In 2010, she exhibited works in "Le Paradox du Diaphane et du Mur" at the Tanneries and Galerie L'AGART in Amilly, France. In 2017, she participated in "Impermanent Durations: On Painting and Time" in Lancaster, UK, as well as "Gray Matters" at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, USA. In 2001, Lisbon co-curated "As Painting: Division and Displacement"at the Wexner Center for the Arts. She has published on drawing in *La Part de l'Œil* and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Contemporary Painting*.

Guy Massaux

Guy Massaux is an artist and professor of Art in Public Space (AEsP). He teaches at the Académie Royale des Beaux-arts in Brussels. From 1991 to 2000 he shared his studio with and assisted Michel Parmentier. He has edited and published his correspondence with Parmentier in *M. P. à G. M. (lettres & textes de Michel Parmentier, 1991-2000)* (2001).

He is cofounder with Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet of the Association Michel Parmentier and of the Michel Parmentier Archives, comprising archives pertaining to the artist's work and activities. They are working on the project of a catalogue raisonné and initiated the project for the book edited by Aristide Bianchi, *Michel Parmentier, Textes et entretiens* (2014).

Guy Massaux curated the exhibition "Michel Parmentier, Déc. 1965–20 Nov. 1999, une rétrospective." at La Seyne-sur-Mer (2014).

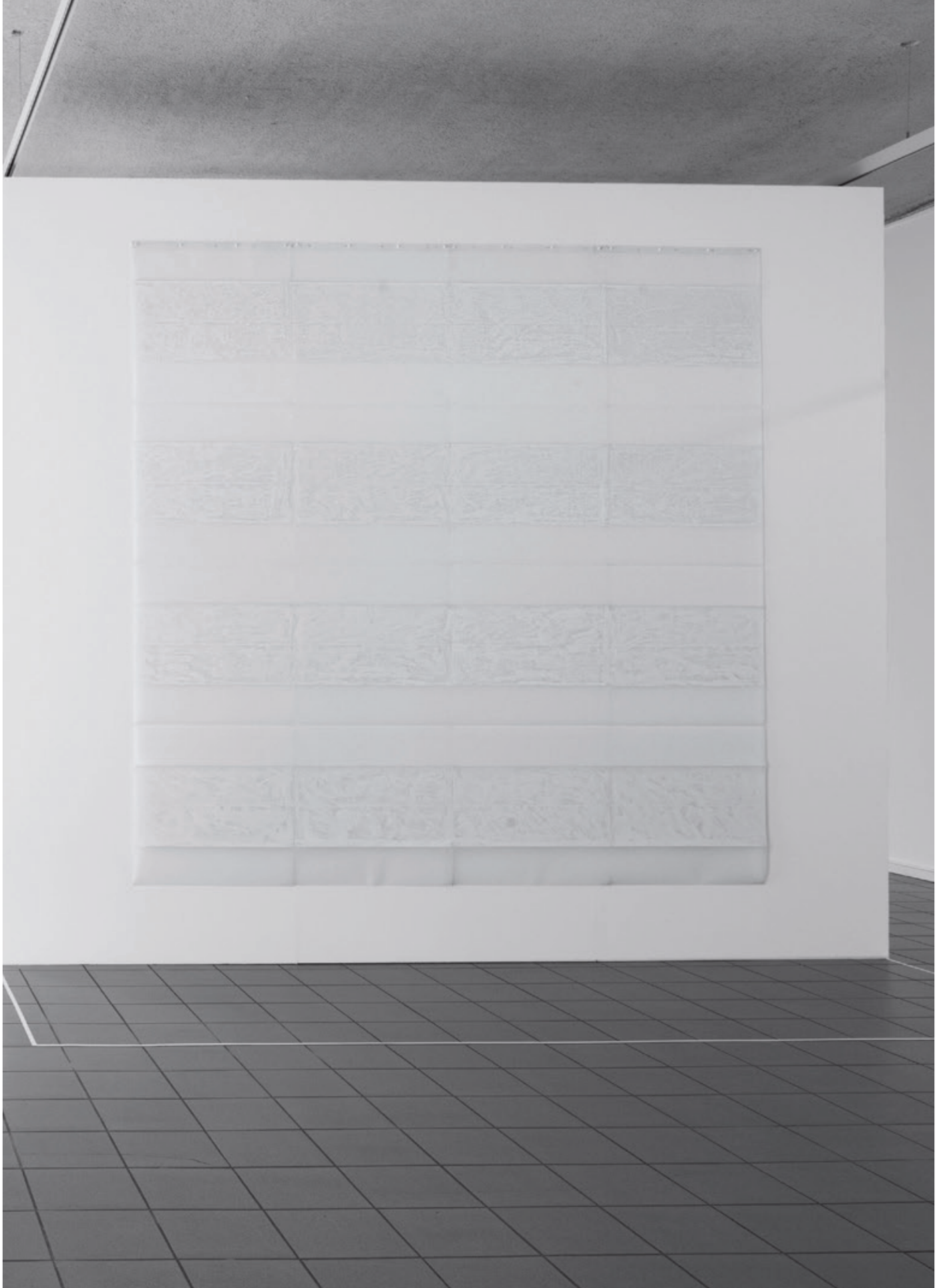
Jean-Marc Poinsot

Jean-Marc Poinsot is an art historian with a particular interest in the movements that emerged from the 1960s to the 1980s. He is the author of a thesis on the writings and painting of the group Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni and Supports-Surfaces ("L'Histoire d'une avant-garde, la peinture et les écrits de Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, Niele Toroni et de Supports-Surfaces") and contributed an essay on Michel Parmentier, "Histoire d'une oeuvre inachevée" for the catalogue of the "Michel Parmentier"exhibition in Paris (1988).

He is president of the Archives de la Critique d'Art, a center for research into art criticism, and editor of *Critique d'art*, a journal specializing in criticism of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art in France and internationally.

Molly Warnock

An assistant professor in History of Art at Johns Hopkins University, Molly Warnock specializes in twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and theory, with a particular focus on abstraction. The author of *Penser la peinture: Simon Hantaï* (Gallimard, 2012), she has also published writings in, among other journals, *Artforum, Art in America, Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne, Journal of Contemporary Painting*, and on nonsite.org, as well as in numerous exhibition catalogues.



151 Exhibition view, "Michel Parmentier, Déc. 1965-Nov. 1999, une rétrospective." La Seyne-sur-Mer (France), Villa Tamaris centre d'art, June 7 – September 14, 2014. Digital color photograph.

Photography Credits

For all images relating to work by Michel Parmentier:
© ADAGP, Paris 2019.

For all works by Michel Parmentier:
© ADAGP, Paris 2019.
AMP–Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels. The Estate of Michel Parmentier.
Courtesy Loevenbruck, Paris

The following illustrations require distinct or additional credits:
© ADAGP, Paris 2019. Archives Simon Hantaï: **p. 26 (10)**.
© Antwerp, courtesy Ceuleers & Van de Velde Booksellers: **p. 67 (47)**.
© Brussels, AMP–Michel Parmentier Archives: **pp. 20 (5), 27 (12), 31 (17), 32, 42 (26), 54 (32), 91 (58), 106 (73), 130, 146 (99), 191, 216 (147).**
© Photo: Brussels, Guy Massaux: **p. 26 (9)**.
© Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts. Photo: Brussels, Philippe De Gobert. **pp. 169-171**; Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren *Les Camélias*, 1991. **p. 168 (109)**; Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren *Les Camélias*, 1991. Photo: Brussels, Philippe De Gobert: **p. 168 (110)**.
© Design: Brussels, ÜBERKNACKIG. Brussels, AMP–Michel Parmentier Archives. La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris centre d'art: **p. 15**.
© DB-ADAGP Paris. Archives Daniel Buren: **pp. 42-43 (27), 68**; Photo: Paris, Bernard Boyer: **pp. 20 (3-4), 42 (25), 54 (34), 56-58, 64, 66 (46), 69**.
© Céret, Musée d'Art moderne: **p. 46**; Photo: Spain, Robin Townsend: **p. 47**.
© Documentation of the Centre national des arts plastiques: **p. 22**.
© Photo: Münster-Roxel (Germany), Erich Franz: **pp. 186-187**.
© Photo: Paris, Malek Alloula: **p. 140**.
© Original photos: Paris, Bernard Boyer. Photo: Brussels, Philippe De Gobert: **pp. 60, 62**.
© Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky: **pp. 55 (33), 59 (38), 92–93, 103, 190 (126)**.
© Paris, Centre Pompidou, Mnam-CCI / Georges Meguerditchian: **pp. 23, 100 (65), 101 (66)**.
© Original photos: Paris, Christine Fleurent. Photo: Brussels, Philippe De Gobert: **pp. 105 (72), 126–127, 128 (90)**.
© Paris, courtesy Galerie Jean Fournier. Photo: Paris, Laurent Lecat: **pp. 36-37**.
© Paris, courtesy Loevenbruck. Photo: Brussels, Philippe De Gobert: **pp. 26 (11), 27 (13), 28, 30-31 (15-16), 33-35, 44-45, 65, 66 (45), 67 (48), 70-71, 77, 80-81, 91 (59), 94-99, 100-101 (64), 102, 104, 105 (70), 106-108 (74-75), 110-115, 116 (81), 118-119, 124 (84), 128 (88), 131-133, 137-139, 144 (96), 145, 146 (100), 149-151, 160-161, 164-167, 172, 173 (120), 174-179, 181-184, 188-189, 192, 194-195, 198-211, 232**.
Photo: Paris, Olivier Amsellem: **pp. 25, 72, 158-159, 180, 240-241**.
Photo: Paris, Fabrice Gousset: **pp. 21, 38-40, 50, 55 (35), 61, 63, 76, 105 (71), 109**. Photo: Paris, André Morin: **p. 78**.
© Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris/Roger-Viollet. Photo: Paris, Éric Emo: **p. 73**.
© Photo: Paris, Adam Rzepka: **pp. 128 (89), 129, 136, 144 (97).**
© Photo: Paris, Philippe Simon: **pp. 11, 173 (119), 190 (125), 193, 196-197, 216-217 (148)**.
© Photo: Paris, Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet: **pp. 124-125 (85), 147, 148 (102)**.
© Photo: Romainville, Marc Tulane: **pp. 48, 148 (103)**.
© Sotheby's / Art Digital Studio: **p. 84**.
© All rights reserved: **pp. 116-117 (82)**.
© Villeneuve-d'Ascq, LaM, Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut. Photo: Paris, Philip Bernard: **p. 24**.

Credits and Acknowledgments

Michel Parmentier,
December 1965 – November 20, 1999
A Retrospective

Published by

Ortuzar Projects
9 White Street,
New York, NY 10013
info@alesortuzar.com

Éditions Loevenbruck
6 Rue Jacques Callot
75006 Paris
editions@loevenbruck.com

Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum
Michigan State University
547 East Circle Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48824

With the support of the Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris and Villa Tamaris centre d'art, La Seyne-sur-Mer

Publication Manager
Todd Bradway
Alexandra Schillinger

Editor
Guy Massaux

Authors
Philip Armstrong, Robert Bonaccorsi, Agnès Foiret, Laura Lisbon, Guy Massaux, Jean-Marc Poinsot, Molly Warnock

Copy Editor
Louise Sørensen

Translation Editor
Philip Armstrong

Translations
Philip Armstrong, Charles Penwarden

Documentary and Visual Research
Nadège Guichard-Fournié

Proofreading
Miles Champion

Graphic Design
Ludovic Balland, Typography Cabinet, Basel
with Enea Bortone

Original Typography
NEXT © Ludovic Balland

Printing
Musumeci S.p.A.–Quart (AO)–Italy
Consultant: Michele Abrigo

Distribution
North America: ARTBOOK | D.A.P.
www.artbook.com

France, Belgium, and Switzerland: Les presses du réel
www.lespressesdureel.com

Rest of the world: Idea Books
www.ideabooks.nl

Print run
1900 copies

ISBN 978-2-916636-08-5

Originally published to coincide with the exhibition
"Michel Parmentier, Déc.1965 – Nov. 1999, une rétrospective."
June 7– September 14, 2014

Villa Tamaris centre d'art
Communauté d'Agglomération
Toulon Provence Méditerranée
Avenue de la Grande-Maison
83500 La Seyne-sur-Mer, France
www.villatamaris.fr

Hubert Falco
President of the Communauté d'Agglomération
Toulon Provence Méditerranée
Former Minister

Jean-Sébastien Vialatte
Deputy Mayor of Six-Fours-les-Plages
Vice-president of the Communauté d'Agglomération
Toulon Provence Méditerranée

Director
Robert Bonaccorsi

Curator
Guy Massaux

Executive Curator
Robert Bonaccorsi

Coordination and Registrars
Villa Tamaris centre d'art
Monira Yourid, Mireille Rousseaud

In collaboration with
Association Michel Parmentier (AMP)
– Michel Parmentier Archives, Brussels
www.michel-parmentier.org

Co-founders
Guy Massaux and Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet

Documentary and Visual Research
Nadège Guichard-Fourni

With contributions by
Philip Armstrong, Jean-François Fontaine, Jérémy Fournié, Aurore Massaux, Cambyse Naddaf

English edition published to coincide with the exhibitions
"Michel Parmentier: Paintings and Works on Paper"
February 16 – April 7, 2018

Ortuzar Projects
9 White Street
New York, NY 10013
www.ortuzarprojects.com

"Michel Parmentier"
April 28 – October 7, 2018

Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum
Michigan State University
547 East Circle Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48824
www.broadmuseum.msu.edu

"Michel Parmentier" was organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and curated by Marc-Olivier Wahler, Director, with Steven L. Bridges, Associate Curator. Support for the exhibition was provided by a gift from the estate of Dr. Clyde L. Burton and Étant donnés Contemporary Art, a program of the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE) Foundation. Étant donnés is developed with lead funding from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the French Ministry of Culture, and Institut Français.

Acknowledgments

Hervé Loevenbruck, Ales Ortuzar, Marc-Olivier Wahler, and Guy Massaux would like to offer their warmest thanks to Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet, assignee of the estate of Michel Parmentier, for her trust and support in producing this publication.

Bénédicte Victor-Pujebet and Guy Massaux would especially like to thank Bernard Blistène, Daniel Buren, and Alfred Pacquement, who have shown unfailing support for the work of Michel Parmentier.

We are extremely grateful to the private and public lenders of the artwork and documents reproduced in this book:

Archives Bernard Bloch, Archives Christine Fleurent, Archives Sylvain Roumette, Archives Philippe Simon, Jean-Louis Avril, Caza Collection, Jill and Bob Bronstein, Collection Chantal and Daniel Buren, Collection Fréderic de Goldschmidt, Pinault Collection, private collections, Herman J. Daled, Liliane and Michel Durand-Dessert, Galerie Jean Fournier, Galerie Loevenbruck, Galerie Natalie Seroussi, Zsuzsa Hantaï and Succession Simon Hantaï, Lucie Scheler, Sorbac Collection

The directors of the following institutions:

Yves Robert, Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap), Paris; Bernard Blistène Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, Paris (France); Catherine Elkar, Fonds régional d'Art Contemporain Bretagne, Rennes (France); François Pinault (founder) and Martin Bethenod, Pinault Collection, Paris (France) and Venezia (Italy); Sébastien Delot, LaM Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Villeneuve-d'Ascq (France); Nathalie Gallissot, Musée d'art moderne, Céret (France); Fabrice Hergott, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (France); Glenn D. Lowry, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (USA); Paul Dujardin, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Belgium)

We are also deeply grateful to all those who provided valuable insights into Michel Parmentier's work and writings:

Malek Alloula, Philip Armstrong, Anne Baldassari, Maurice Benhamou, Christian Besson, Aristide Bianchi, Pierrette Bloch, Robert Bonaccorsi, Michel Claura, Agnès Foiret, Erich Franz, Laura Lisbon, Stephen Melville, Olivier Mosset, Michel Nuridsany, Jean-Marc Poinsot, Dirk Snauwaert, Niele Toroni, Jacques Vallet, Marie-Odile Van Caeneghem, Molly Warnock

Our thanks to everyone who assisted with the exhibitions and the French and English editions of this book:

Brian Anderson, M. and Mme. Jérome Beaucamps, Ismaël Bennani, Véronique Borgeaud, Caroline Bourgeois, Bernard Boyer, Christine and Isy Brachot, Marie-Puck Broodthaers, Jan Ceuleers, Christophe Chérix, Emmanuel Crivelli, Laurence Dalivoust, Katia de Azevedo, M. and Mme Christian de Dancourt, Katia de Azevedo, Philippe De Gobert, Odile de La Bouchère, Aurore de Montpellier, Nicolas Dewitte, Brigitte Dieu, M. and Mme Philippe Dolfi, Marc Donnadieu, Sophie Duplaix, Michelle Elligott, Morgane Esteve, Stéphanie Fargier-Demergès, Jennifer Etkin, Laudine Fauchon, Marine Feray, Ann Flas, Nic Flood, Jean-François Fontaine, Jérémy Fournié, Noémie Golberg, Fabrice Gousset, Orphée Grandhomme, Emmanuel Grenard, Maxime Guitton, Anna Hantaï, Daniel Hantaï, Kiêu Hoang, Philippe Hunt, Christine Jamart, François Jupin, Luk Lambrecht, Perrine Latrive, Clio Lavau, Laurence Le Poupon, Éléonore Levai, Bruno van Lierde, Olga Makhroff, Aude Marchand, Francis Mary, Lucien Massaert, Aurore Massaux, Élodie Massaux, Sophie Morel, André Morin, Cambyse Naddaf, Grazia Nicosia, Emilie Ovaere-Corthay, Adriana Pigeon, Scott Portnoy, Christopher Prause, Perrine Renaud, Stéphanie Rivoire, Odile Rousseau, Mireille Rousseaud, Bernhard Rüdiger, Adam Rzepka, Didier Schulmann, Veerle Soens, Jonathan Sullam, Marc Tulane, Ronny Van de Velde, Christine Velut, M. and Mme Arnaud Vidal, Brigitte Vincens, Mathilde Violain

Daphné de Hemptinne, Director, and the Research Unit of the Académie Royale des Beaux-arts de la Ville de Bruxelles–École Supérieure des Arts, Brussels (Belgium). Christine Jamart, Chief Editor, l'art même, Brussels (Belgium).

With exceptional contributions by:
Philip Armstrong, Ludovic Balland, Enea Bortone, Todd Bradway, Alexandra Schillinger, Louise Sørensen and the collaboration of Sophie Streefkerk (Buren Studio). In preparing the translations, Philip Armstrong would like to thank Robert Hughes, Charles Penwarden, and Louise Sørensen for their care and meticulous help in bringing the catalogue to completion.

Back cover
P. 15 (2) Poster for exhibition "Michel Parmentier, Déc 1965 – 20 Nov. 1999, une rétrospective.," 2014, La Seyne-sur-Mer, Villa Tamaris centre d'art, June 7 – September 14, 2014, Brussels, graphic design: ÜBERKNACKIG, Vincent Carlier, Atelier Vertical, silk-screen prints, edition of 70 for each color (blue, gray, red, black), including 10 not for sale and 10 numbered I to X, 100 × 70 cm each, Brussels, AMP – Michel Parmentier Archives, AMP inv.: 03158