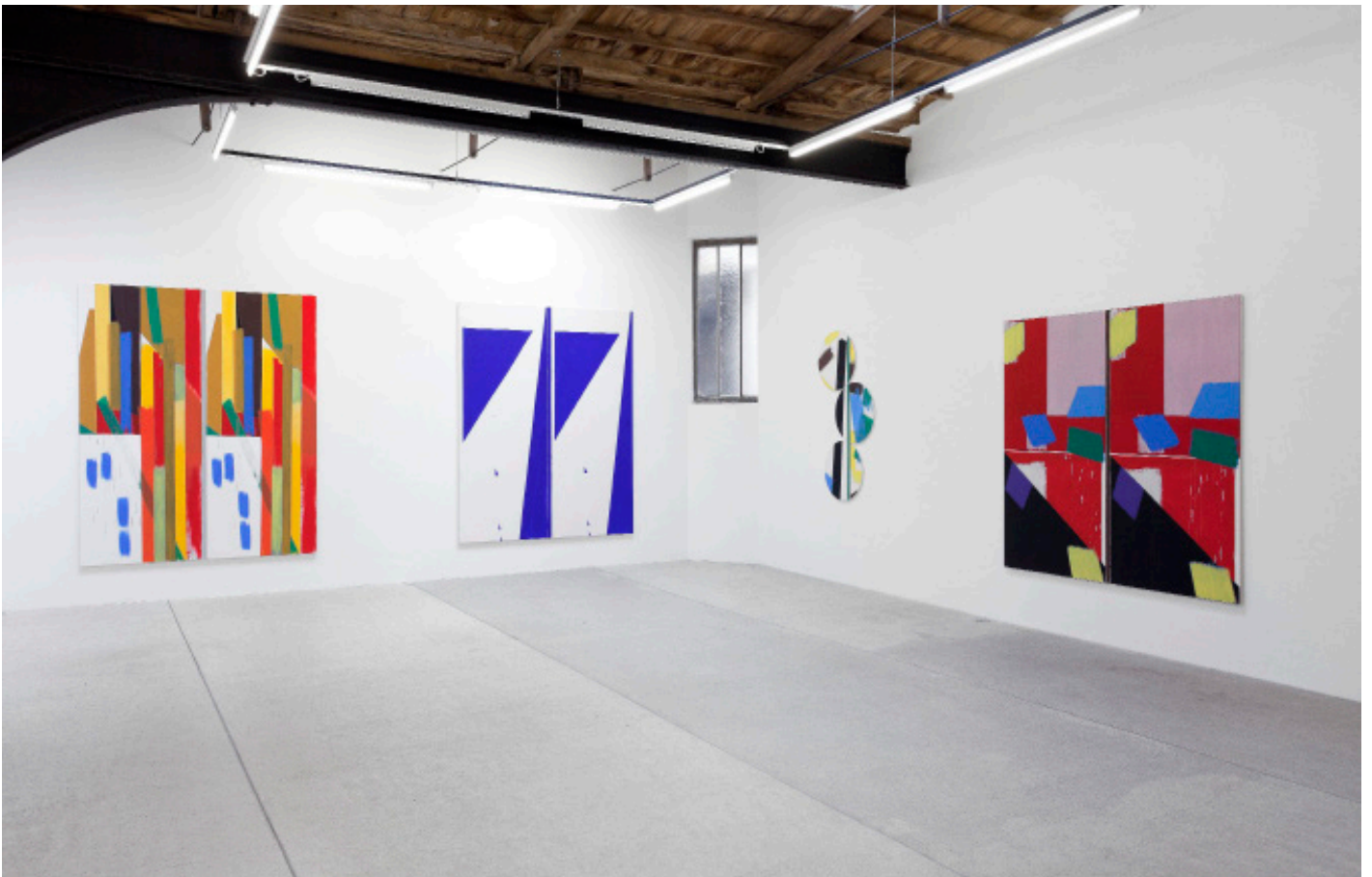


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**Bernard Piffaretti**

**KLEMM'S**





untitled, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

## Duplication is a Question

(...) Duplication is a negation, not fraught with heroic pathos, which paradoxically questions, shows the canvas and speaks painting. When there is sufficient clarity or density in the paint on the first side of the canvas (which is either to the right or to the left of the central mark), the simple act of redoing, almost identically, everything that was painted the first time round, has the effect of cutting off any subjective effects due to the painting's form, style or colour, so that it is now just painting. It is not a copy, because a copy is made in relation to a final state. It really is a matter of displacement, of a wholly repeated time. A "theft", to quote Gilles Deleuze once again.

Thus the paintings are only real in the time of the movement from one side to the other. It is no longer possible to establish a chronology or a series. Each painting arises from a contrast with the one or ones that went before. The paintings are all different therefore but all quite similar. As you will have understood, the only finality that this duplication, this fact, can have, is to speak of the pursuit of this practice. Of the materiality of the painting right up to its manifestation. And that is what fascinates me. Duplication is not deconstruction because it shows all the painting all at once. It is a sort of apparition, a "conscious hallucination" (quoting nobody). The more I show the primacy of the formal the more I escape formalism. Forms eat forms. It is a case of self-declared self-cannibalism.

Duplication is a kind of "update", and, here, I refer to the writings of Pierre Schneider, where he positions psychoanalysis as the emblem, precisely, of this "update". I quote: "To free myself (from this traumatic vision), I am asked to go back in time to when it happened. The answer, I am told, is to relive it, but also, as I do so, to record its chronology, which means: write its (his)story".

I too make my way back to the arkhi, like an archaeologist, converting the lived past into present knowledge, step by step. When I reach it I make the origin switch into history. I desacralise it, banalise, destroy it.

Duplication reveals the effect of an after-image, expressing a "second time" that exists in the history of painting. Here again I duplicate Pierre Schneider. The echo of the Pietas will be David's Death of Marat. The double of Fra Angelico's Christ before his Tomb will be Watteau's Gilles. Painting is full of these second acts. Duplication is the tool of a negative constant that obliges me to impose no iconographic obligations. It is through this paradox that the equalisation of all iconographic possibilities, which is the true "subject" of my painting, can occur. This duplication will produce an active nihilism, in the sense advocated by Dubuffet. As he himself says, "only nihilism is constructive".

I don't take myself for a Zarathustra of painting, but I do paint with an acceptance of this eternal recurrence which will have a double meaning. First of all, that of the painting, just paintings, then of my capacity as a painter, just a painter. (...)

excerpt from Bernard Piffaretti, "La question du double", symposium March 26-28, 1996, Ecole Régionale des Beaux-Arts du Mans.



untitled, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm









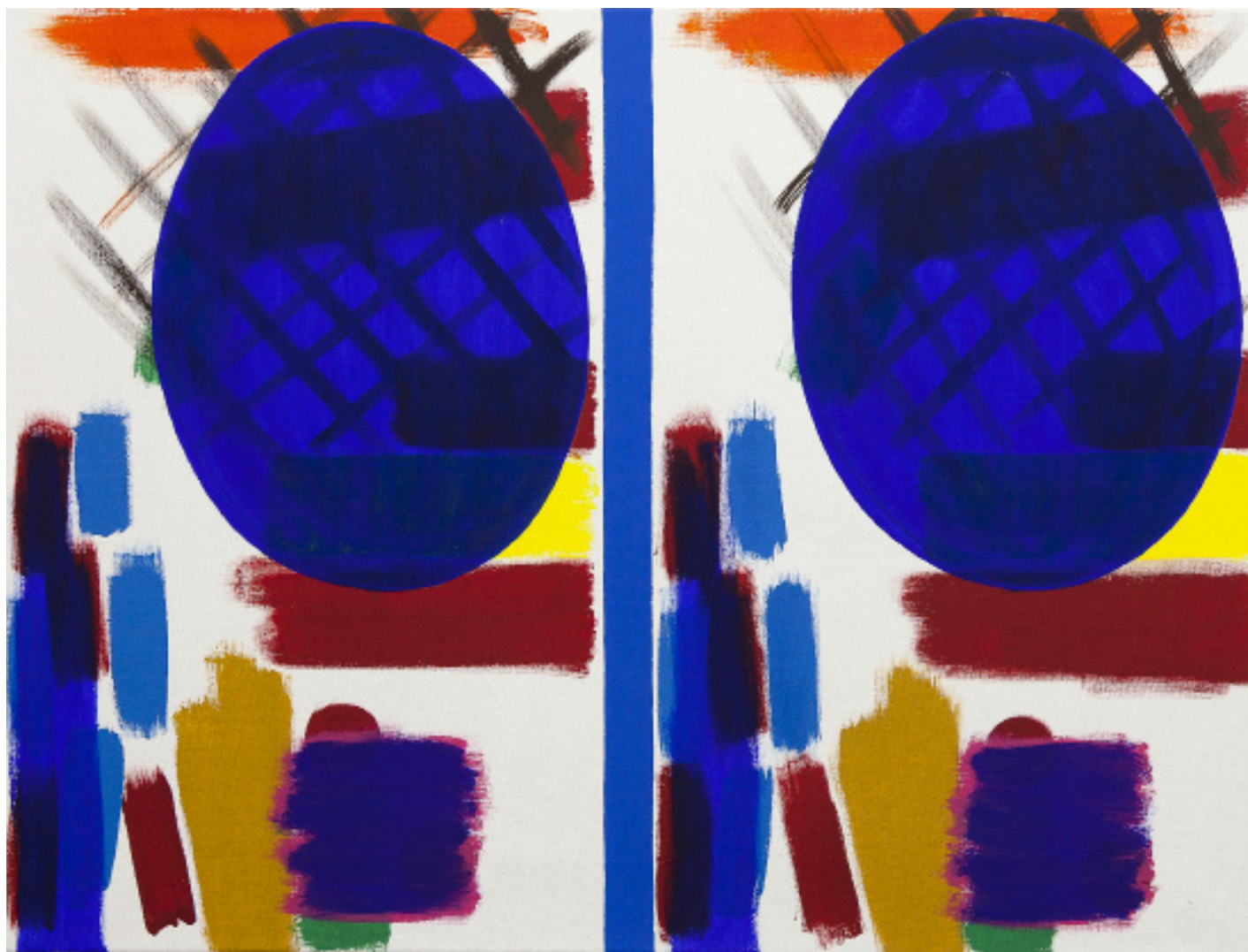


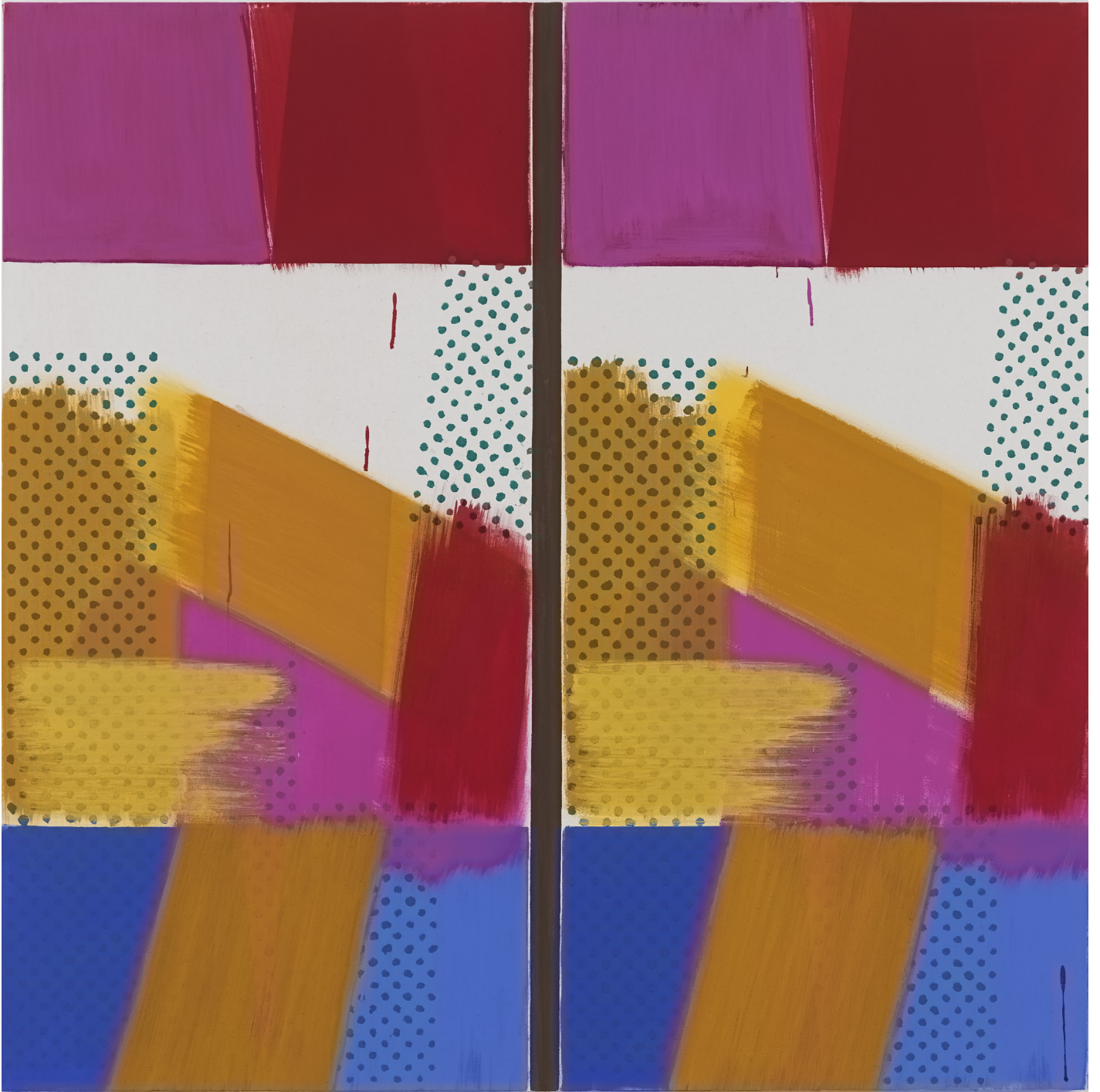




untitled, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 130 x 130 cm







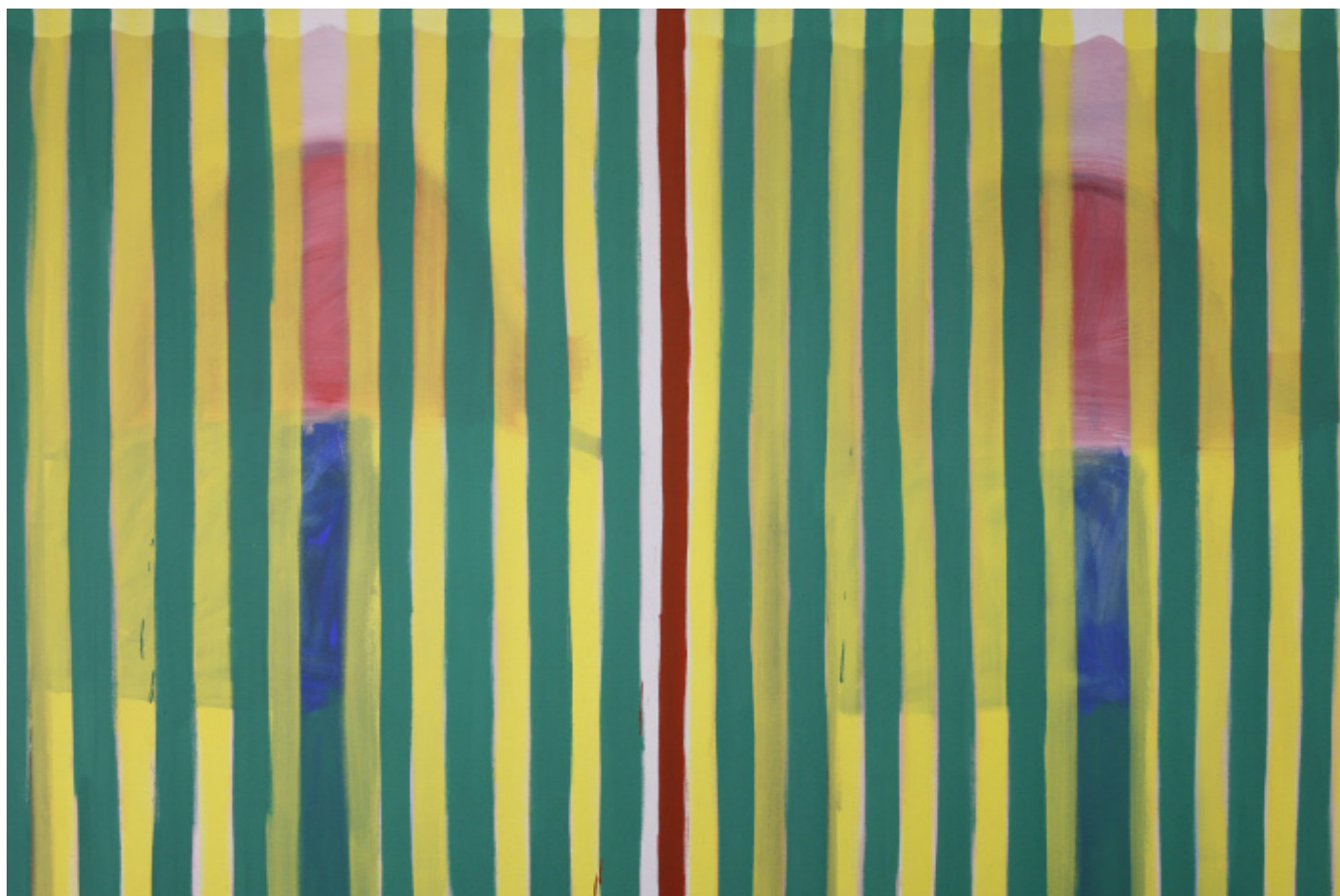
untitled, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 130 x 130 cm























untitled, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 220 x 170 cm





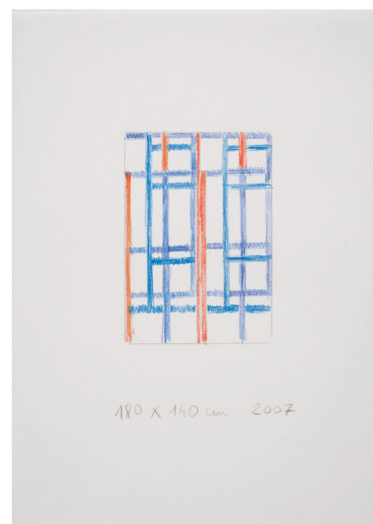


untitled, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 100 cm



untitled, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 240x 200 cm





## The Joyous Dance of Skeletons – The Status of Drawing in the Painting of Bernard Piffaretti

No doubt because for centuries it has substituted the always partisan ideologies of its images for the indecipherable reality of the world, but perhaps also because it has physically covered the grain of the cave wall, then that of the wall and later of the canvas with its smooth opacity, painting invites us to conceive the intuition of a truth that its paradoxical nature would have it hide at the very moment it offers to reveal it to us, a truth that, having caressed it with the wet colour from its bristles, the brush has somehow irrevocably encoded, abandoning us to centuries filled with the thousand and one tricks of the purported mysteries of art. As with the Divine Plan behind the infinite diversity of natural phenomena, or the anonymous skeleton beneath the apparent singularity of bodies and faces, we have learnt to expect drawing to offer us a more ultimate meaning of the picture than the one proposed by the different effects of the pigments organised on its surface.

What a great disappointment, though, are these X-rays of famous paintings which, instead of the secrets and weighty consequences we are expecting, reveal to us only boudoir intimacies, little technical tricks and dispiriting court intrigues. Often, exhumed from the muck that protected their pretensions, taken past the chatter of anecdote, the entity hidden between the surface of the ground and the ground of the surface soon returns to its nature as project, as rough, as an intermediate genre whose interest is quickly confined to the documentary. We are talking, of course, about the kind of drawing whose status is subordinate to that of the painting of which it is only a quicker and not always necessary stage, and not the kind of drawing that is in itself the highest manifestation of the artist. This is the drawing between the lines of which we glimpse the weave of the canvas or the paper or the wall, and which has never been hidden from the gaze, revealing nothing of that which painting, by hiding it, led us dangerously to suppose was the Canvas of the Gods: nothing other than the absurd and rather flat materiality of the support.

This was what Lucio Fontana understood when he made his radical gesture of opening both canvas and painting onto the emptiness at their back, thereby opening onto a greater lucidity, even if this may, wrongly, seem more desperate, less liable at any rate to the always disillusioned illusions that it finally allows us to dispense with once and for all. And any possible despair here gives way to the new exaltation that takes hold of the painter as he grapples with the very question of painting and its culture as the object of the canvas, which question constitutes one of the great foundations of the contemporary project. It is essentially in this light that we need to apprehend the drawings of Bernard Piffaretti, in this light that we can glimpse the new relation that they institute with the picture support, the tableau, and the meanings they discover in it.

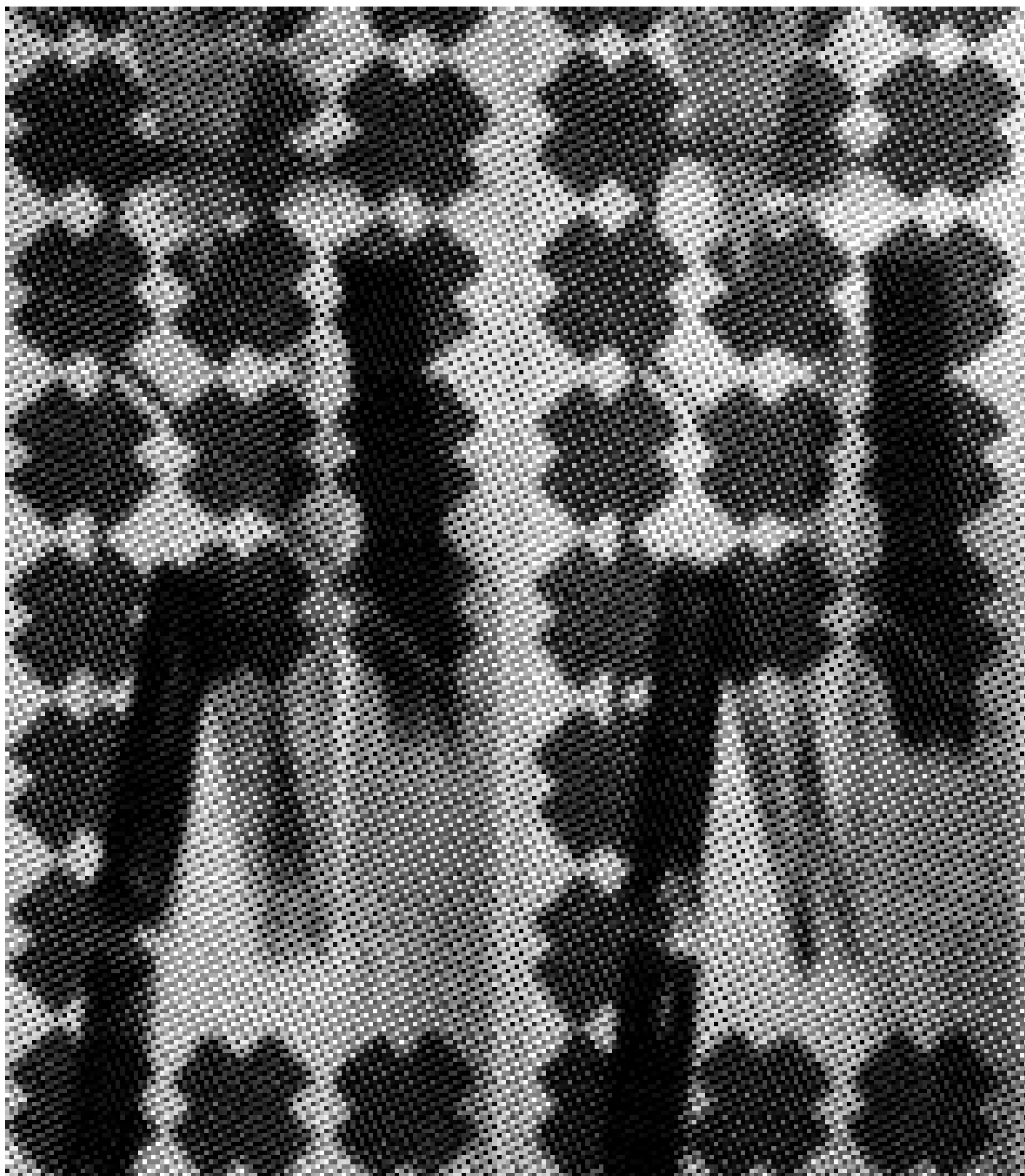
And, to begin with the beginning, the fact that these drawings never mark the beginning of the *œuvre*, that they never take the form of a sketch or a plan, nor that of a rough or an experiment, nor even that of a note to be executed in a future work: Bernard Piffaretti draws when drawing is no longer necessary, when the dice have already been cast, when the curtain is down, when the gesture has no justifying utility, not really even their documentary quality which he readily invokes when faced with the excess of the question, but which in reality lacks credibility given the abundance of photographic traces that, like every artist today, he keeps of his own work. He draws his paintings when they are finished, he draws several, at the same moment, when he has completed several and feels the need to file them away, so to

speak. We know that in the repetition of the motif which constitutes this painter's method, the origin of the painting is practically lost, dominated by the line which, by defining the partitioning of the canvas into two halves of which one will have the vocation of hastily reproducing the other, merely reiterates, from one painting to the next, his decision to subordinate the practice of his art to adhesion to his method. We know of the extraordinary freedom that Bernard Piffaretti has conquered with regard to the motif, the care that he takes not to limit it by any discourse. In the constancy of his production of these drawings since he began his *œuvre*, in the absolute uniformity of their supports – as it happens, ordinary A4 paper (21 x 29.7 cm) – we find a confirmation of the coherence of his undertaking: one that is more violent than it first appears. Behind the lines of the drawing there is no other mystery than the flatness of a format whose conventionality is enough to index the age without excess gravitas; behind the perfect uselessness of this maniacal reportage of the pencil lead the meticulous and patiently subversive confirmation of the painter's project, a radical gesture regarding the basis, the origin, the cause – in a word, the artist's motif (motive), that which acts in the form that he has decided to give to his actions.

By reproducing the painting with no other reason than the a posteriori affirmation of having done it, the drawing makes its work of being out of work, makes this redundancy an occasion of the work's meaning, the opportunity to question the nature of the painter's activity when he paints the second half, when, in a sense, he repaints, but also an opportunity to question his activity when he paints the first half, to question, more precisely, the very feeble reasons he may have for increasing day by day the collection of motifs he has undertaken, which seems to correspond to no special form of heroism, the opportunity to question the very activity of painting that does not really do justice to its sources or its ends, no more than to its pretexts or excuses.

In the work of Bernard Piffaretti, drawing lies behind his painting, that word here having a very different meaning from under. Rather than having a preliminary function, it has the status of a confirmation: by reproducing the painting, it draws what the painting has done, how one half of the painting has reproduced the other, and in no event does it reiterate the method, since each drawing is made outright, as a whole, with the concern to embrace the particular modality of the mime on the occasion of that particular motif, taking up a posture that would consist in trying to renew the experience, and which would obviously be false under the circumstances, leading not to the representation of that particular painting, but to the presentation of the sketch of another.

Just as skeletons can only really be brought to light after the event, after the body, although they constitute its undeniable underlying assumption, the drawings of Bernard can only appear after the paintings. Like skeletons, whose dance is more grating in life than it is informative in death, about which they have already forgotten all they knew, the round of Bernard Piffaretti's drawings executes the merry dance of his paintings, confirming their precious singularity, which is that of having drawn time, of having, for a time, embodied the miraculous awareness thereof. And like them, finally, their quantity refers more to the sense of their anonymous resemblance than to that of the singular identity of each one, which, if that were necessary, gives a particularly clear measure of the degree of abstraction of this painter's approach.





View of the exhibition V.O. (version originale sous-titrée), Musée Matisse, Le Catau-Cambrésis, 2008



,Report, 2013, exhibition view Cherry & Martin, Los Angeles, USA



Chronique du tableau 2002-2006, 2007, exhibition view Centre d'art contemporain de Sète, France





V.O. (version originale sous-titrée), 2008, exhibition view Musée Matisse, Le Catau-Cambrésis, France

**Biography**

**1955**

born in in Saint-Etienne, France. Lives and works in Paris, France

**Education**

**1974-79**

Beaux-Arts de Saint-Etienne, France

**Publications (selection)**

**2016**

Bernard Piffaretti, Works: 1986-2015, Karma, New York

**2009**

On inachève bien les tableaux. Catalogue de l'exposition. Musée d'art moderne de Saint Etienne, textes de Lorand Hegui, Michel Giroud, Didier Semin.

**2008**

Si vous avez manqué la première partie.... Compilation de textes critiques, éditions: Les presses du réel, collection Mamco, Genève.

**2008**

V.O. (version originale sous-titrée). Catalogue de l'exposition. Musée Matisse, incluant exposition Crac de Sète et du MAMCO de Genève. Textes de Bernard Marcadé, Emilie Ovaere, Michel Giroud, Arnaud Pierre, Guitemie Maldonado et un entretien de Yann Chateigné avec Bernard Piffaretti.

**2007**

After pas égaux, dessins après tableaux 1998/2006 Editions de la Villa Saint-Clair

**2006**

Le propre et le figuré, texte d'Isabelle Ewig, Galerie Beaumont Public, Luxembourg

**2003**

Avatars 1982/2002, texte de Jean Fournier, Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris

**2003**

Le motif n'était pas dans le tapis, édité par Bernard Piffaretti

**2002**

Art. C Issoire textes de Jean Marc Huitorel et de Bruneau Haas

**2002**

La figure de droite est à l'image de celle de gauche - La figure de gauche n'est pas à l'image de celle de droite, Palais des Beaux Arts, Charleroi. Texte de Laurent Busine : « Le Pays divisé », et Bernard Piffaretti : « Dans la peinture ! (au fil de l'image) ».

**2000**

Va-et-vient, Come and Go, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris. Textes de Éric de Chasse, Timo Vuorikoski et Bernard Piffaretti. Dialogue entre Catherine Perret et Raphael Rubinstein.

**1998**

FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon / La Box, Bourges. Textes d'Emmanuel Latreille et Jean-Philippe Vienne, Christian Bernard, Jean-Marc Huitorel et Bernard Piffaretti.

**1996**

Faits divers et variés, Galerie Jean Fournier. Texte de Robert Fleck.

**1991**

Tableaux 1982-1990, Villa Arson, Texte de Christian Bernard. Entretien avec Werner Meyer.

**1990**

Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, Textes de Yves Michaud, Jean-Pierre Criqui, Didier Semin.

**1990**

Institut Français d'Innsbruck. Textes de Robert Fleck et Jean-Michel Foray.

**1988**

Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris. Texte de Jean-Michel Foray.

Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, 1986. Texte d'Yves Michaud.

Musée Sainte Croix, Poitiers, 1985 - Préface de Blandine Chavanne.

Texte d'Yves Michaud.

**Solo exhibitions (selection)**

**2019**

Kontinuum, Klemm's, Berlin, DE

**2018**

Duel, Galeria Marta Cervera, Madrid, Spain

A page from my intimate journal, Gordon Robichaux, New York, USA

**2017/18**

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

**2016**

No Chronology, Klemm's, Berlin, Germany

Frank Elbaz, Paris, France

**2015**

Moving Pictures, Cherry & Martin, Los Angeles, USA

Juste retour (des choses et des mots), FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon, France

Nous sommes deux soeur jumelles: Bernard Piffaretti - Martin Barré, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes (Hangar à bananes), France

**2014**

re-marquable, Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris

**2013**

Mitte, KLEMM'S, Berlin, Germany

Report, Cherry & Martin, Los Angeles, USA

**2011**

Montage, galerie frank elbaz

bande-annonce, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France

**2010**

Avant/Post, Frac Haute-Normandie, Rouen, France

Sarabande, Le Portique, Le Havre, France

**2009**

On inachève bien les tableaux, Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Etienne, France

**2008**

Musée d'art moderne de Saint Etienne, France

Galerie Nicolas Krupp, Basel, Switzerland

V.O (version originale sous-titrée), Musée Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France

**2007**

Presque Suisse, Mamco, Geneva, Switzerland

Chronique du tableau 2002-2006, Centre d'art contemporain de Sète, France

**2006**

Poncif, Galerie Beaumont Public, Luxembourg

**2004**

Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France

**2003**

Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France

**2002**

Galerie Cheim & Read, New York, USA

Galerie Itsutsuji, Tokyo, Japan

Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France

Art.C Issoire, France

**2001**

Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland

Beaumont Public + König Bloc, Luxembourg

Palais des Beaux Arts, Charleroi, Belgium

**2000**

Va-et-vient / Come and Go, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France

**1998**

La Box, Bourges, France

Galerie Jean Fournier, FIAC, Paris, France

- 1997**  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg
- 1996**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France  
Galerie Iris Bruckgraber, Cologne, Germany
- Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France  
Institut Français de Cologne, Germany
- 1994**  
Institut Français de Thessalonique, Greece  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- 1993**  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg  
Château de Chareil, Chareil-Cintrat, France  
Centre d'art de Flaine, France
- 1992**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- 1991**  
Tableaux 1982-1990, Villa Arson, Nice, France  
Städtische Galerie, Göppingen, Germany  
Hôtel des Arts – Rue Beryer, Paris, France  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France  
Galerie Gokelaere et Janssen, Brussels, Belgium
- 1990**  
Institut Français d'Innsbruck, Austria
- 1988**  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- 1987**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, FIAC, Paris, France
- 1986**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- 1985**  
Musée Sainte Croix, Poitiers, France  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg
- 1983**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- Group Exhibitions (selection)**
- 2019**  
1989, The end of the 20th Century, Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia, Spain
- 2017**  
Fifteen, Kate MacGarry, London, UK  
Agora, Galerie R-2, Paris, FR  
Meandering, Absractly, galerie frank elbaz, Dallas, US  
Joy in Repetition, galerie Onrust, Amsterdam, NL
- 2016**  
Reflections: Larry Bell, Anne Collier, Bernard Piffaretti, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York
- 2015**  
Abstraction / Figuration, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, France  
Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles, USA
- 2013**  
Cover up, Galerie Krinzinger, Wien, Austria  
group show, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France  
Herald Street, London, Great Britain  
Verein Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, Germany  
source codes, KLEMM'S gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2012**  
Où donc, et quand?, Oeuvres des Frac Bourgogne et Frac Franche-Comté, Château de Tanlay, Frankreich  
Persistence of vision, Galerie Kavi Gupta, Berlin
- 2011**  
Décor et installations, Galerie des Gobelins, Paris, France  
Masterpieces of Museum of St Etienne, Daejeon Museum of Art, South Corea  
Strates et Arts, autour de François Morellet, Galerie Hervé Bize, Nancy, France  
Double Fantasy, Galerie Hervé Bize, Nancy, France
- 2010**  
Reproduire, le 6B, Kurt-forever, Saint-Denis, France  
Lost in translation, Centre international d'art contemporain, Pont-Aven, France  
Luxe, calme et volupté, Le Studio, Berlin, Germany  
Le tableau, Galerie Cheim & Read, New-York, USA  
Galerie Miquel Alzueta, Barcelona, Spain  
Babel, Frac Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France  
Répétition dans l'épilogue, Galerie L. Corty, Paris, France
- 2009**  
Domaine de Kerguéhennec, France  
Le Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse, France  
Galerie Beaumont Public, Luxembourg
- 2008**  
L'entrée, CRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète, France
- 2007**  
50 ?, Musée Paul Dini, Villefranche sur Saône, France  
La couleur toujours recommencée, Hommage à Jean Fournier, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France
- 2006**  
Peintures Malerei, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany  
La force de l'art, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, France  
La peinture en principe, Centre d'art de l'Yonne, Château de Tanlay, France  
Idées de la peinture, Hommage à Martin Barré, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France
- 2005**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France  
B.a-ba, domaine de Kerguéhennec, France  
Les apparences sont souvent trompeuses, CAPC musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France  
UGGC un choix de Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France  
Le bonheur des peintres, Musée d'art moderne, Collioure, France
- 2004**  
Pour les oiseaux, FRAC des Pays de Loire, Carquefou, France  
De leurs temps, Musée des Beaux Arts de Tourcoing, France  
Le syndrome de Babylone, Centre d'Art Contemporain de la Villa du Parc, Annemasse, France
- 2003**  
Simple marks, Galerie Cheim & Read, New York, USA
- 2002**  
Centre d'art contemporain, Sierre, Switzerland  
Fondation d'art contemporain Daniel et Florence Guerlain, Les Mesnuls, France  
Voilà la France, Musée Luigi Mallè, Dronero, Italy
- 2001**  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France  
Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Austria
- 2000**  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg  
Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France  
Basse Normandie et Abbaye aux Dames, Caen, France
- 1999**  
Centre d'art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France  
Amitiés significantes 1, Centre d'art contemporain, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France
- 1998**  
Le dessin en procès, Le Château d'eau, Bourges, France  
Les règles du jeu – Le peintre et la contrainte, FRAC

- 1997**  
Abstraction / Abstractions – Géométries provisoires, Musée d'art moderne, Saint-Étienne, France  
Made in France, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France  
Openstelling, Musée de Hasselt, Belgium  
Peintures françaises, Villa Médicis, Rome, Italy  
Bis repetita placent, FRAC Bourgogne, France
- 1995**  
Présences françaises, Brussels, Belgium  
Le Capitou, Fréjus, France
- 1994**  
Galerie Françoise Knabe, Frankfurt, Germany  
CAPC Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France  
Galerie Renos Xippas, Paris, France  
Paso Doble, Musée d'art contemporain, Lausanne, Switzerland  
Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus, Coblenz, Germany
- 1993**  
Toni Grand / Bernard Piffaretti, Art Transit, Marseille, France  
Zentrum Paris, Klagenfurt, Austria
- 1992**  
Too French, Hara Museum ARC, Japan  
Folkwangmuseum, Essen, Germany  
Robert Miller Gallery, New York, USA
- 1991**  
Mouvements, Galeries contemporaines, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France  
Correspondances, Musée d'art moderne, Saint-Étienne, France  
Too French, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, China  
Lato Sensus, Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Kampnagelfabrik, Hamburg, Germany  
Kunstverein, Friburg, Switzerland  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mulhouse, France  
Galerie Holly Solomon, New York, USA  
Kunst Europa, Kunstverein, Heidenheim, Germany
- 1990**  
Une collection pour la grande Arche, La Défense, Paris, France  
Bewegungen, BASF Feierabendhaus, Ludwigshafen, Germany
- 1989**  
Correspondances, Berlinische Galerie, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany
- 1988**  
Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg  
Hommage à la France, Fondation Sonja Henie-Niels Onstad, Oslo, Norway
- 1987**  
Les inédits du Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne, Musée Saint-Pierre, Lyon, France  
Carte blanche à Yves Michaud, CREDAC, Ivry-sur-Seine, France
- 1986**  
Galerie Barbara Braathen, New York, USA
- 1985**  
La Voie abstraite, Hôtel de Ville, salle Saint-Jean, Paris, France  
18 artistes français, Nouvelle Biennale de Paris, Créteil, France  
Salon de Montrouge, France  
L'autre nouvelle génération, Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Sweden
- 1984**  
Sur invitation, Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, France  
L'autre nouvelle génération, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 1983**  
Fragments et Figures, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal, Canada
- 1982**  
Fragments et Figures, CAPC Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France
- Fundació Caja de Pensiones, Madrid, Spain  
Fondation Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain