

Narrative Figuration 60s-70s

CURATED BY RICHARD F. TAITTINGER IN COLLABORATION WITH YOYO MAEGHT

M A R C H 1 3 - M A Y 1 6 , 2 0 2 1

OPENING RECEPTION MARCH 13TH 2-8PM

VALERIO ADAMI

EDUARDO ARROYO

ERRÓ

GÉRARD FROMANGER

JACQUES MONORY

BERNARD RANCILLAC

PETER SAUL

HERVÉ TÉLÉMAQUE

CYBÈLE VARELA

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NARRATIVE FIGURATION

Essay by Jean Luc Chalumeau

Fifty-seven years after it first appeared in Paris, Narrative Figuration is presented in New York as a historical movement, thanks to the Richard Taittinger Gallery. It was in fact in 1964 that an exhibition which has become legendary was organized at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris: *Mythologies Quotidiennes*. This group exhibition immediately entered the Paris-New York debate. To contextualize the exhibition: Ileana Sonnabend had moved to Paris in 1962 and, as early as 1963, she was exhibiting **Andy Warhol's** already notoriously famous *Marilyn*. Artists of all nationalities working in France were therefore directly confronted with Pop art, as they had long been with American Abstract Expressionism, a style that had triumphed since the 1950s. A painting by the Icelandic **Erró** soon summed up a feeling widely shared by young painters with his work *The Background of Pollock* (acrylic on canvas, 260 x 200 cm, 1967). The guardian figure of **Pollock** seemed to dominate and complete the history of art according to the outline then imposed by **Clement Greenberg**: from Manet to Cézanne and from Cézanne to **Pollock**, the disappearance of the anecdote was consummated. Painting no longer had to tell stories, it was time to abstain from narration. Pop artists weren't abstract, but they portrayed objects of industrial society without commenting on them: they didn't tell stories either. What brought together the artists of Narrative Figuration was the need to give meaning to their works, and more precisely, a political meaning.

Three examples of this that dominated in the early 1970s were; the large painting *En Chine, à Hu-Xian* (oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm, National Museum of Modern Art-Center Pompidou), painted in 1974 by **Gérard Fromanger** following a trip to Mao's China, which presented itself as a challenge to the Maoist conformism of many intellectuals of the time. The painter's critical intelligence had detected the gigantic imposture hidden behind the phraseology of the "cultural revolution" of the Great Helmsman and had denounced it with exclusively plastic means. Another was *Il Gile di Lénine* (oil on canvas, 239 x 367 cm, Center Pompidou), a work completed in 1972 by the Italian painter **Valerio Adami**. It was painted with an extremely precise and elliptical design, predominantly in red chromatic, which emphasized a typically small element of bourgeois clothing: the waistcoat, rendering the tribute to the father of the October Revolution ironically critical! Thirdly, the Spaniard **Eduardo Arroyo**, an anti-Franco activist who took refuge in France, painted *El Caballero español in 1970* (oil on canvas, 162 x 130.5 cm, Center Pompidou), a portrait ridiculing a macho representative of the reactionary Spanish bourgeoisie, accompanied by a high-heeled feminine shoe parodying an image from 1937 by **Miró**, a painter challenged because he had not left Franco's Spain. These three examples alone help us understand why the most important thinkers of the twentieth century took a keen interest in the painters of Narrative Figuration, and why many seminal texts were written on work of the artists over time: **Jacques Derrida** on **Adami**, **Jean-François Lyotard** on **Monory**, **Pierre Bourdieu** on **Rancillac**, **Michel Foucault** and **Gilles Deleuze** on **Fromanger** etc...

Returning to the historical facts: it all started with **Bernard Rancillac** who, in 1962, was disgusted by twenty years of domination of various abstractions in galleries and cultural institutions around the world. At this very moment, **Hervé Télémaque** arrived in Paris, from Haiti via New York, where he had refused the hold of abstraction on young painters, while observing with interest the early works of pop artists **Lichtenstein** and **Rosenquist**. **Rancillac** and **Télémaque** met at the first Latin American Salon in Paris in which the Haitian **Télémaque** participated, but his paintings had nothing to do with "Latin art", which **Rancillac** immediately noticed: the two young artists sympathized and gathered around them artists and critics who, like them, did not want to bend to the dominating fashion or trends and incorporated in their work in one way or another, a critical vision of everyday life. Among them: **Jacques Monory**, **Eduardo Arroyo**, **Peter Saul**, critics **Alain Jouffroy** and **Gérald Gassiot-Talabot**. The first, a friend of **Rauschenberg**, supported a "new history painting" which he saw appearing in Paris, and the second would soon give his name to Narrative Figuration and theorize it. For various reasons, **Erró**, **Valerio Adami**, **Gérard Fromanger** and **Cybèle Varela** would not join the movement until later.

Interested in Pop art, **Rancillac** and his friends were not fooled for long by what it represented: *"We were present at all of Ileana Sonnabend's vernissages," Rancillac told me. "We also thought maybe we would exhibit there someday, which is where we were sorely mistaken. Sonnabend thought we were nice, but for her, what was done in New York was so much better than what we were doing!"* It would naturally be necessary to qualify this statement by other testimonies, in particular that of **Monory** (memory which I collected in 2004): *"At the time, I believe that the idea of 'resisting' Pop art was not formulated at all. The Narrative Figuration artists were formally influenced by Pop art, but not only them. In Cuba, the revolutionary artists painted very militant, very anti-American things, but in a style perfectly in keeping with Pop."* The influence of Pop art from a formal point of view was certainly real, but not from a substantive point of view, the rupture increasing with the explosion of 1968. Very active in the context of the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, a few Narrative Figuration artists accompanied by **Gérard Fromanger** created the "Atelier Populaire des Beaux-Arts". Every night for a month, they produced the famous serigraphy posters and pasted them on the walls of the Latin Quarter in the early morning. These political works didn't last long: in 1968 the young artists notably referenced **Herbert Marcuse**: *"The more a work is explicitly political,"* he wrote, *"the more it loses its power of decentering and radicality, the transcendence of its goals of change."* This was exactly what **Fromanger, Arroyo** and their friends thought: their role model would now be Rimbaud, not Jdanov. They all despised socialist realism and its epigones.

In fact, the artists of Narrative Figuration have never formed a real group. Critic **Pierre Gaudibert** observed in 1992 that it was only *"a simple arbitrary regrouping of those who wanted to restore painting to a politically active function."*

These artists have therefore led essentially individual careers and as a result, over the years, the opportunities to get together have been rare. The exhibition at the Richard Taittinger Gallery is thus exceptional, and it is therefore appropriate to contextualize each of the nine artists gathered today, some of whom have unfortunately disappeared.

Valerio Adami, born in Bologna in 1935, developed work essentially built on classical drawings (referring to eighteenth century theorist **Raphaël Mengs**). He captured scenes from everyday life in the 1960s and 1970s, notably after a long stay at the Chelsea Hotel in New York, where, for example, *Figura in casa* (1970-71) comes from, characterized by an icy eroticism. **Adami** has since settled in Montmartre, Paris. Observer of international news in the 2000s (*Changing frontier Israel*, 2002), today he explores the mysteries of the unconscious, always drawing with both unexpected and impeccable contours, as well as his systematic use of large flat planes of color. Of the line that made **Adami's** reputation, Jacques Derrida wrote that it is *"an arbitrary cut-break-separation, not justified by the painter to whom it imposes itself, but instead a fascination with the border"*, the very one near which Walter Benjamin, much admired by **Adami**, committed suicide.

Eduardo Arroyo, born and died in Madrid, 1937-2018, was first an anti-Franco activist journalist. Forced to take refuge in France in 1958, he moved to Paris, joined the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, and largely contributed to its radical politicization. In 1965, he produced with **Gilles Aillaud** and **Antonio Recalcati** a series of eight paintings denouncing the role of Marcel Duchamp, who is presented as a hostage in the service of capitalism. *Vivre et laisser mourir ou la fin tragique de Marcel Duchamp* created a shock. The work is now installed in the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. It was loaned in 2002 to the British

critic Sarah Wilson for her exhibition Paris, capital of the arts 1900-1968, at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. *Vivre et laisser mourir...* conceived by **Arroyo** alone and produced with six hands is in fact considered to be an emblematic work of Narrative Figuration. Another very famous painting, presented at the New York exhibition, *Six laitues, un couteau et trois épluchures* (1965) insidiously attacks the image of Napoleon Bonaparte, a character obviously hated by the revolutionary Spaniard **Eduardo Arroyo**.

Erró, born in 1932 in Ólafsvík (Iceland), moved to Paris in 1958. At first close to the surrealists (he befriended **Jean-Jacques Lebel**), his bulimia of oversaturated images quickly led to his involvement in the Narrative Figuration movement, of which he became a major figure. He gained an international reputation for his political paintings, but were also erotic, for example by employing with irony a theme commonly utilized in Japanese prints: *Tank-Part* (1974). He never left figuration and inoculates his work with a good dose of sarcasm inspired by the evolution of the world. He imagines with delight the Red Guards of Mao ready to invade an "American interior", he ridicules **Margaret Thatcher** and **Ronald Reagan**, he denounces the strategies of the "majors" of oil without forgetting to draw on his own fantasies with which he oversaturates his universe, a universe both delirious and terribly close to the daily life of his contemporaries.

Gérard Fromanger, born in Pontchartrain in 1939, is a flamboyant personality who revealed himself in 1968 at the Atelier Populaire des Beaux-Arts and at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. He was already the author, in 1965, of one of the most emblematic paintings of Narrative Figuration (*Le Prince de Hombourg*, musée national d'Art et d'Histoire du Grand Duché de Luxembourg). This work was part of the Pétrifiés series, of which *La conquête de l'impossible* (1964) offers another remarkable example: the players appear frozen in their intense effort to catch an elusive ball, a possible metaphor for the tragedy of the human condition. **Fromanger** has since developed works by series, some of which have given rise to important texts written by **Jacques Prévert**, **Gilles Deleuze**, **Michel Foucault** and **Serge July** who devoted a monograph to it in 2004. The common point of these series is a certain chromatic fury that offers a passionate contradiction to the grayness and mediocrity of the world. **Fromanger's** painting is not there to send out particular messages, but to contradict globally what, in history, is not acceptable. This contradiction is without provocation: "*By nature, I can neither live nor paint against painting, painters or the world. I try to paint in order to love better, to understand better, to live better, to be up to the tragic and beautiful mysteries that take us between our birth and our death...*"

Jacques Monory was born and died in Paris (1924-2018). He was a professional graphic designer for ten years before devoting himself exclusively to painting in 1962. **Monory** defined himself as an "emotional narrative painter". He often directed himself, dressed like the heroes of the films that marked his childhood, especially **Humphrey Bogart**. Passionate about cinema, we owe several short films to him. Obsessed with the theme of death, **Monory** has built one of the most unique pictorial ensembles of his time. **Jean-François Lyotard** saw in him a "spontaneous philosopher": his work is a question, he specified, this question being the most common: what is the meaning of life? **Monory** will have asked this question with an inimitable accent since the 1960s. A painting of this time, *Jamais plus les fleurs* (1969) is exemplary. Are these flowers symbolic? For the artist, the symbolic is an act of exchange that puts an end to the real and, therefore, removes the opposition between the real and the imaginary. Here, we see how **Monory** denounces the pseudo-objectivity of nature. This objectivity actually comes from the arbitrary separation of man from nature, hence the inimitable ambiguity of any painting by **Jacques Monory**.

Bernard Rancillac, born in Paris in 1931, began exhibiting in 1956 and became one of the pillars of the Mathias Fels Gallery with **Hervé Télémaque**. He paints his vision of international news from photographs taken from newspapers and magazines or bought from news agencies. Thus *Fin tragique d'un apôtre de l'Apartheid* (1966) echoes a current South African event from a press cliché. The subject was hardly "Pop" but the way it was treated showed the artist's support for the processes implemented by **Andy Warhol** and **David Hockney**. This photographic transfer technique allowed him to remain faithful to the testimony of his feelings regarding current events. For example, in 1979, concerning the imprisonment in Germany of **Ulrike Meinhof**, the muse of the "Bande à Baader", in a cell totally isolated from the outside world, soundless, and intensely white as a result of it being permanently lit, which **Rancillac** associated with cars being launched at high speed on racetracks, their colors fading into the white of the spectrum, as **Ulrike** had eventually faded into the white of death. Even when he tackles apparently neutral themes such as sport or jazz, **Rancillac** more or less visibly loads them with political messages.

Peter Saul, born in 1934 in San Francisco, began in 1958 an imagery that he himself describes as insane. Violently expressionist, even pornographic, **Peter Saul** tirelessly denounces the social violence of his time (*Donald Duck et les nazis*, 1991) using harsh colors and shapes that are above all, deformations. He was part of the Narrative Figuration adventure as early as 1964, as evidenced by *Killroy* (1966), a fierce image aimed explicitly at American society.

Hervé Télémaque, born in 1937 in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) studied in New York before settling in Paris in 1961. He was one of the founders of Narrative Figuration, organizing with **Rancillac** the *Mythologies Quotidiennes* exhibition in 1964. Since then, he has evolved and likes to define himself as a "fictional painter". His very elaborate works are deliberately difficult to read, done with impeccably precise skill, they isolate objects that the artist associates and arranges in mysterious puzzles. *Contamination Verte* (1970) is a particularly significant picture of this often austere approach.

Cybèle Varela, born in 1943 in Petropolis (State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) adopted early on an approach close to both Pop art and Narrative Figuration. **Varela** participated in the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1967, and her work was withdrawn by the authorities, who deemed it offensive to the government. She stayed in Paris in the 1970s where her pictorial reflection on a society that is no longer open to nature was noticed. On the contrary, it is nature that comes to play in interiors as an "atmosphere", which she translates into a skillful play of reflections and large colored areas. In a painting like *Vase* (1974), it is not the vase with its Japanese motif that primarily interests the artist, but the luminous reflection visible at the top of the yellow wall. We cannot see the origin of this reflection (window? Glass roof?). We only know that nature is close, out of view, never seen by the inhabitants.

Together, these nine artists perfectly represent the originality, diversity and power of European painting which was embodied in the 1960s and 1970s in Paris in the Narrative Figuration movement. Other important painters such as **Peter Klasen**, **Vladimir Velickovic**, **Aillaud** or **Recalcati** were also involved at the time, who could of course be the subject of a second exhibition. Each of the nine artists mentioned above has their own style and it would be pointless to try to specify hypothetical affinities between them. However, their personal discoveries added together created a state of mind and opened up fruitful avenues that are being explored today by many young artists. The successful initiative of this exhibition makes it possible for the New York public today to appreciate this movement, thanks to the Richard Taittinger Gallery.

Jean-Luc Chalumeau

Born April 7, 1939 (age 81 years), Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

Art critic **Jean-Luc Chalumeau** is founder of the online journal VERSO (in 1995) and editor of the site www.visuelimage.com. Previously, he was director of the OPUS International review, created in 1967 to support Narrative Figuration.

He has published upwards of forty books, translated into nine languages, including *FIGURATION NARRATIVE*, Cercle d'art editions, 2005, *LES EXPOSITIONS CAPITALES qui ont révélé l'art moderne de 1900 à nos jours* (Klincksieck editions, 2013) and *Procès de l'art contemporain, accusation et défense* (UPPR éditions, 2018).

Curator of numerous exhibitions, including *L'Art au présent en France* (KDW, Berlin, 1986), *L'art et la ville* (Orangerie du Senate, 2005), *La Figuration Narrative* (Musée des Beaux Arts d'Orléans, 2006) and *Velickovic, le grand style et le tragique* (Fonds Lelerc pour la culture, December 2019-April 2020).

Also an academic, **Chalumeau** taught art literature at PARIS-VIII University and was a lecturer at SCIENCE PO. He is a knight of the Legion of Honor and a Commander in the Order of Arts and Letters.

LIST OF WORKS

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Valerio Adami, *Figura in Casa*, 1970 1971, Acrylic on canvas, 31.8 x 25.5 in. (81 x 65 cm.)

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Valerio Adami, *Club Privato "Momento" Piccola Gimnastica da Camera*, 1970 1971, Acrylic on canvas, 77.9 x 57.8 in. (198 x 147 cm.)

3

Eduardo Arroyo, *Six laitues, un couteau et trois épluchures*, 1965, Acrylic on canvas, 78.7 x 78.7 in. (200 x 200 cm.)

4

Eduardo Arroyo, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1965, Oil on canvas, 39.3 x 31.8 in. (100 x 81 cm.)

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Eduardo Arroyo, *Les derniers jours de Pompéi Madrid*, 1969, Oil on canvas, 78.7 x 55.9 in. (200 x 142 cm.)

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Peter Saul, *Killroy*, 1966, Oil on canvas, 53.9 x 68.8 in. (137 x 175 cm.)

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Cybele Varela, *Maison du Brésil*, 1973, Industrial paint on wood, 24.4 x 35.4 in. (62 x 90 cm.)

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Cybele Varela, *10 heures*, 1973, Industrial paint on wood, 25.6 x 39.4 in. (65 x 100 cm.)

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Cybele Varela, *Pantanal*, 1974, Industrial paint on wood, 55.12 x 49.21 in (140 x 125 cm)

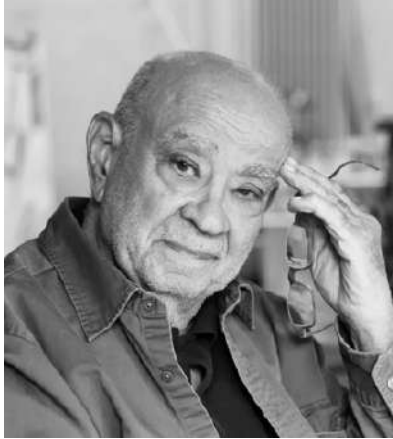
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Cybele Varela, *Vase*, 1974, Industrial paint on wood, 35.8 x 24 in. (91 x 61 cm.)

Narrative Figuration 60s-70s

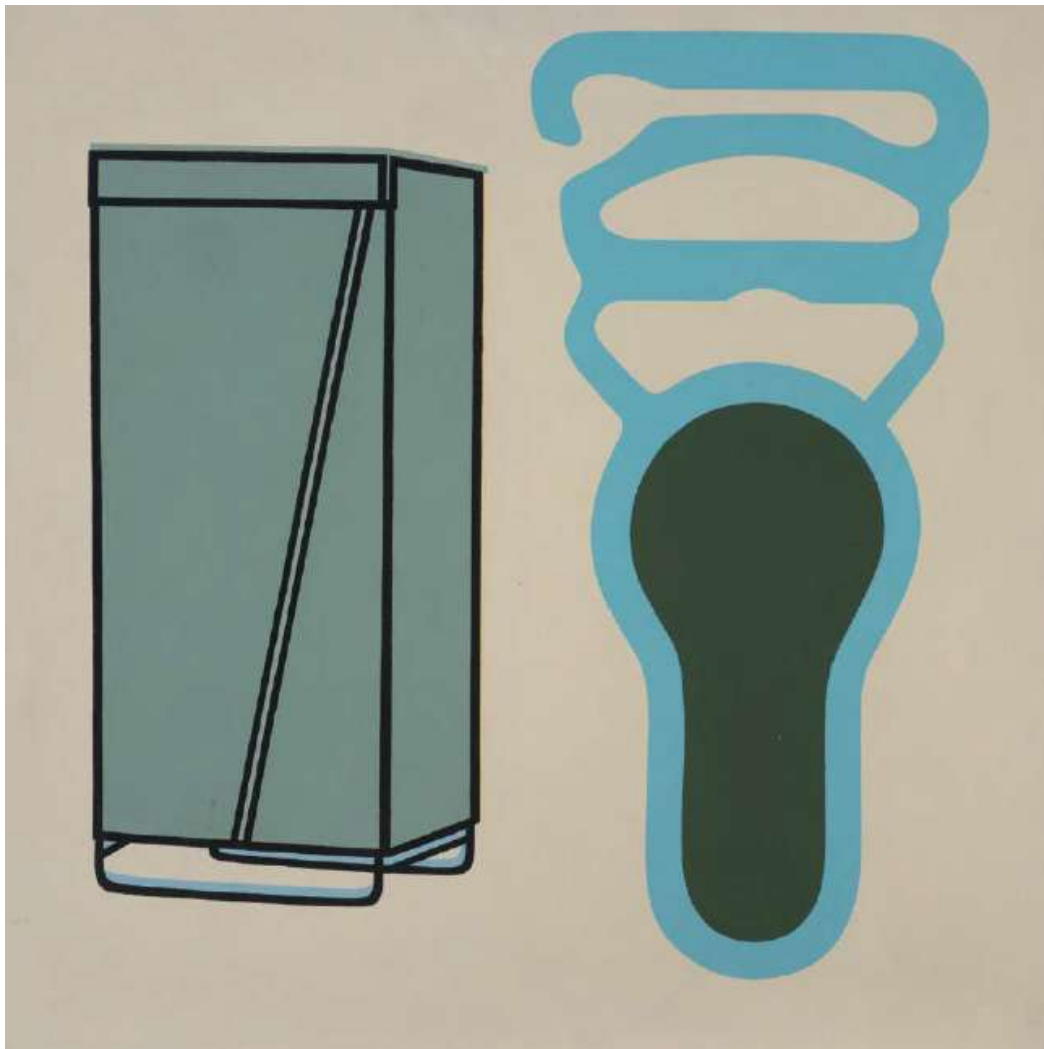
March 13 - May 16 2021
Curated by Yoyo Maeght and Richard F. Toitinger





HERVÉ TÉLÉMAQUE

(b. 1937, Port-au-Prince, Haiti) lives and works in Paris



Herve Telemaque
Contamination verte
1970
Acrylic on canvas
23 5/8 x 23 5/8 in. (60 x 60 cm.)



BERNARD RANCILLAC

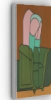
(b.1931, Paris, France) lives and works in Paris



Bernard Rancillac
Fin tragique d'un apotro de l'Apartheid
1966
Acrylic on canvas
28.7 x 36.2 in. (73 x 92 cm.)



Bernard Rancillac
James Brown morceau N°2
1974
Oil on canvas
39.3 x 28.7 in. (100 x 73 cm.)





Valerio Adami
Figura in Casa
1970 1971
Acrylic on canvas
31.8 × 25.5 in. (81 x 65 cm.)

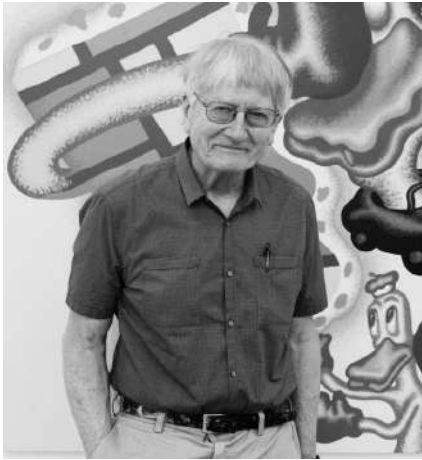


VALERIO ADAMI

(b. 1935, Bologna, Italy)



Valerio Adami
Club Privato "Momento" Piccola Gimnastica da Camera
1970 1971
Acrylic on canvas
77.9 x 57.8 in. (198 x 147 cm.)

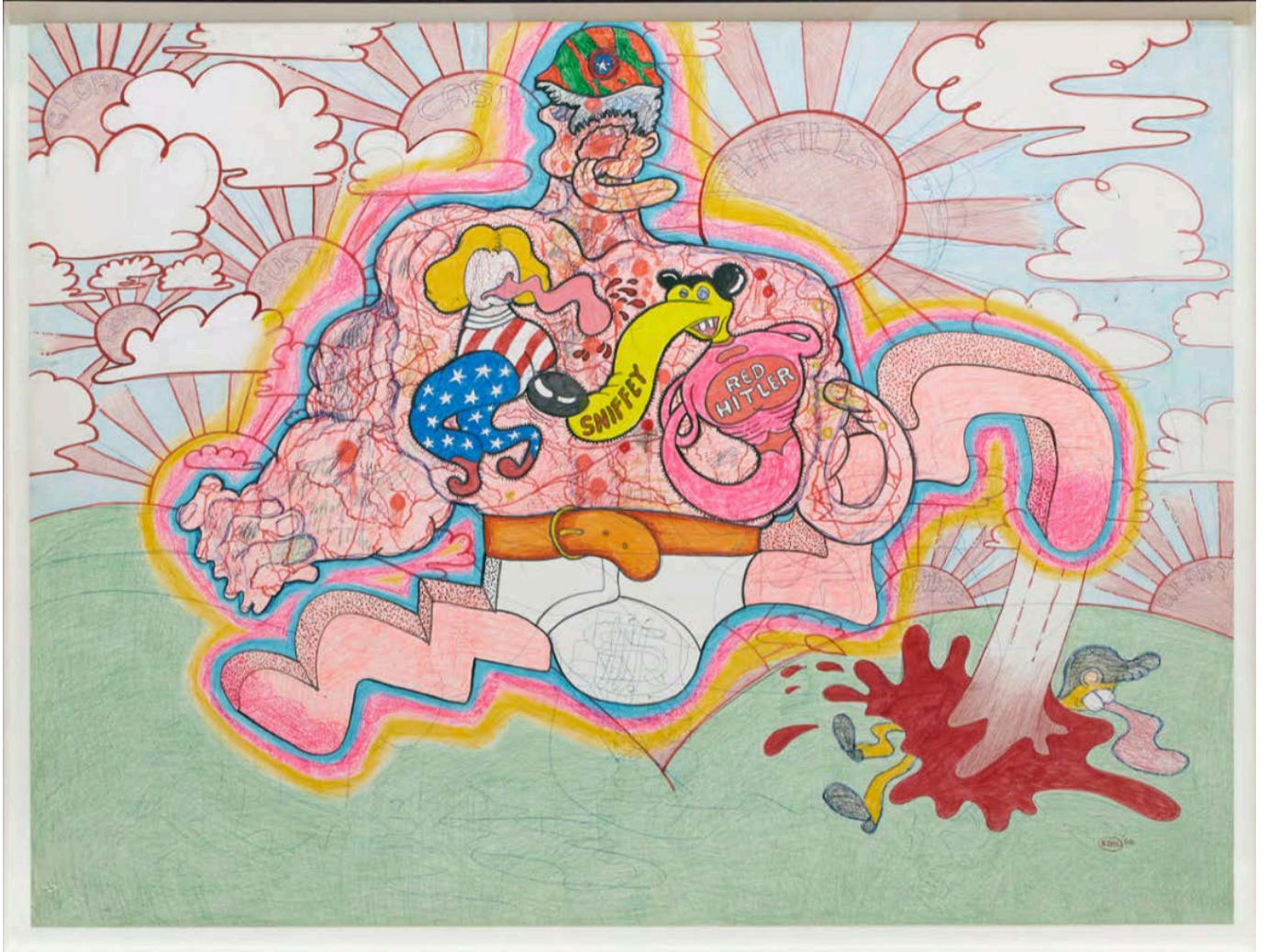


PETER SAUL

(b. 1934, San Francisco, CA) lives and works between New York



Peter Saul
Killroy
1966
Oil on canvas
53.9 x 68.8 in. (137 x 175 cm.)



Peter Saul

Red Hitler, 1966

Ballpoint pen, colored pencil, crayon, marker, and pencil on board

41 x 54 in (104.1 x 137.2 cm)





ERRÓ

(b. 1932, Iceland) lives in France and Spain



ERRO

Going to Play Tennis

1974

Alkyd paint on canvas

65 3/4 × 39 3/8 in. (167 × 100 cm.)



ERRO

Tank-Part

1974

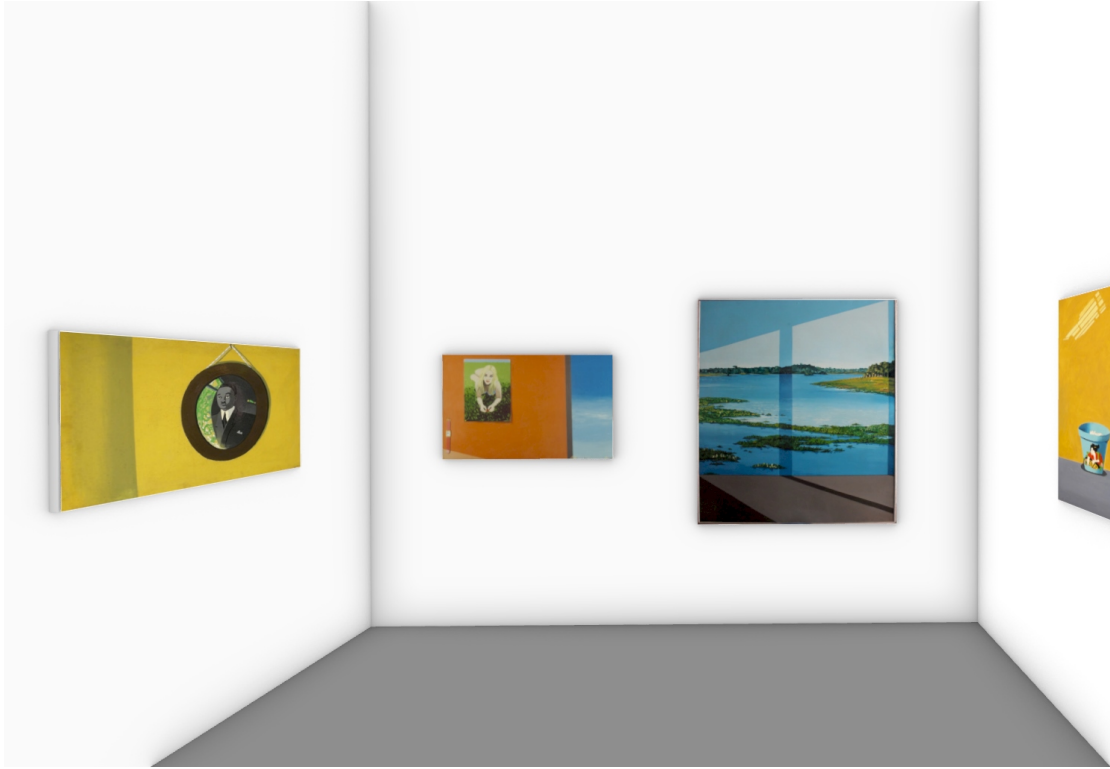
Alkyd paint on canvas

63 3/4 × 38 3/16 in. (162 × 97 cm.)



ERRO
La Bombe
1977

Alkyd paint on canvas
45 11/16 × 64 3/8 in. (116 × 163.5 cm.)





CYBÈLE VARELA

(b. 1943, Brazil) works and lives in Brazil



Cybele Varela
Portrait
1972
Industrial paint on wood
24.4 x 35.8 in. (62 x 91 cm.)



Cybele Varela
10 heures
1973
Industrial paint on wood
25.6 x 39.4 in. (65 x 100 cm.)



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Pantanal
1974
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Maison du Brésil
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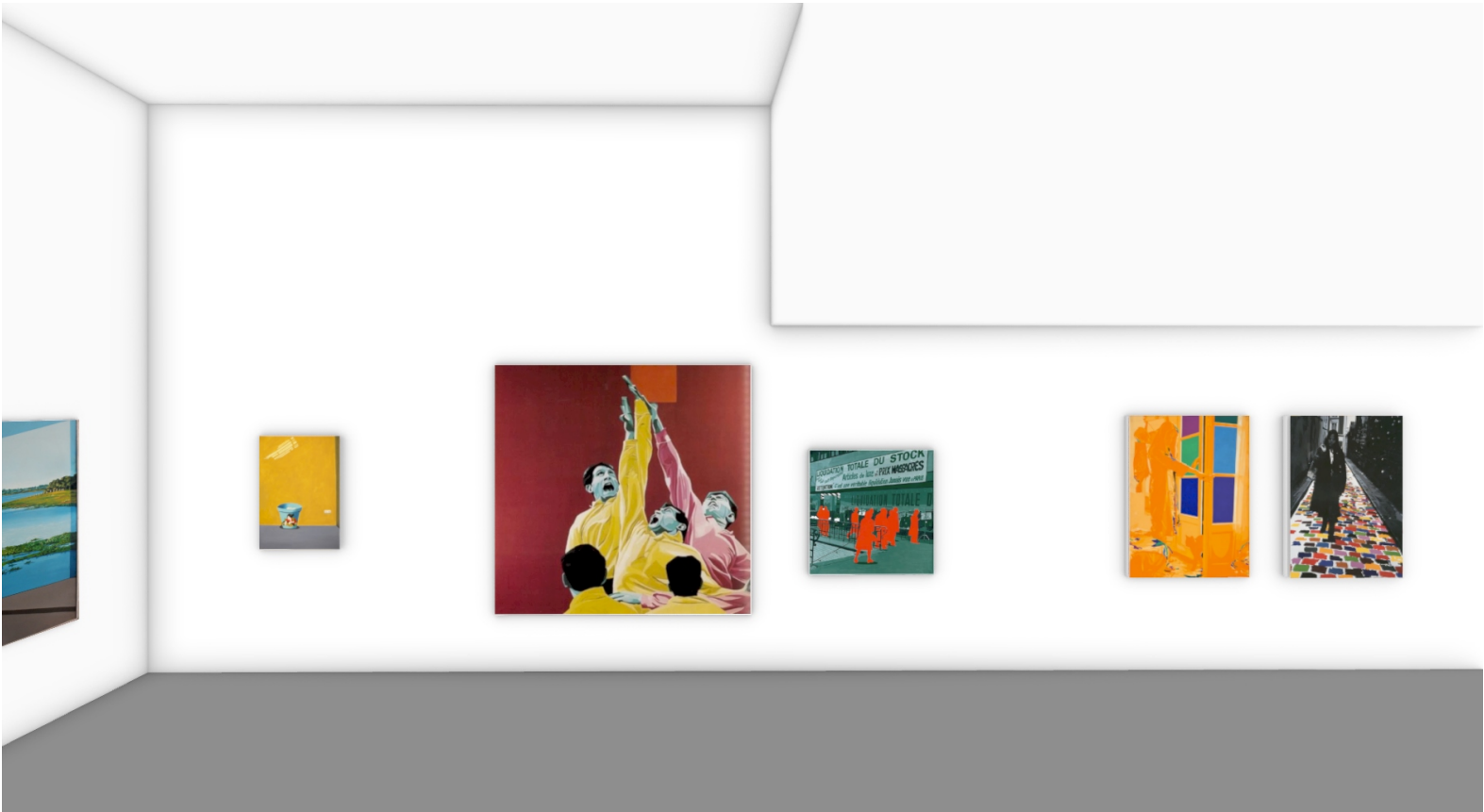
Cybele Varela

Vase

1974

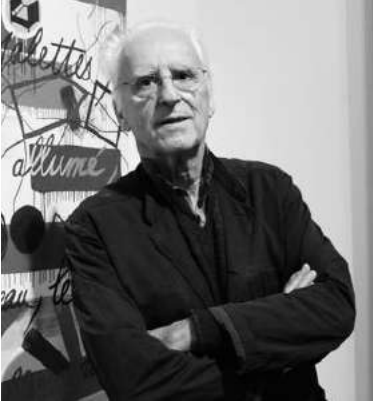
Industrial paint on wood

35.8 x 24 in. (91 x 61 cm.)



GÉRARD FROMANGER

(b. 1939, France) lives and works in Paris and Italy



Gerard Fromanger
La Conquête de l'impossible
1964
Oil on canvas
78.7 x 78.7 in. (200 x 200 cm.)



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Tout doit disparaître, série « Boulevard des Italiens »
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JACQUES MONORY

(1924 -2018, France)



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Technicolor N° 23
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Oil on canvas
59 x 59 in. (150 x 150 cm.)



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EDUARDO ARROYO

(1937 - 2018, Spain)



Eduardo Arroyo
Les derniers jours de Pompéi Madrid
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Acrylic on canvas
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Eduardo Arroyo Robinson Crusoe
1965
Oil on canvas
39.3 x 31.8 in. (100 x 81 cm.)



BIOS

Valerio Adami

b. 1935, Bologna, Italy

Lives and works between Paris, Monaco, and Meina

Valerio Adami learned drawing at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan, studying ancient and neoclassical models. His early work was rooted in expressionism, but developed into strongly stylized graphic paintings, with flat planes and shapes that are both figurative and abstract, bordered by a thick black line, preceded by precise drawings. During the '70s, Adami's work became heavily politicized and imbued history, philosophy, and mythology in his paintings.

There were four retrospective exhibits of Adami's work between 1985 and 1998 at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Centre Julio-Gonzalez de Valence in Spain, Tel Aviv, and Buenos Aires. In 2010, the Boca Raton Museum of Art devoted a special exhibit to Adami's paintings and drawings.

Cybèle Varela

b. 1943, Brazil

Works and lives in Madrid, Spain

Cybèle Varela began painting at a young age, completed her formal art studies at the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art and received the Young Contemporary Art Award of the São Paulo Contemporary Art Museum. Beginning her career in the mid to late 1960's during Brazil's heightened political climate, Varela became a prominent figure in the Tropicalismo and Brazilian Pop Art movements, creating work that critically reflected on Brazilian society, the political state and gender relations. Throughout her career, Varela's work has focused on representation of society and human's relationship to nature and urban environments. Leaving Brazil in 1968, she arrived in Paris and became involved in the Narrative Figuration movement during the mid 1970s, exhibiting alongside Jacques Monory and in many group exhibitions and spending long periods of time in Geneva, Madrid, Rome and Paris, her commitment to Brazilian culture, and the political, social and cultural history of Latin America has never waned. Each respective city and culture had a huge impact on her work, incorporating the language and influence of Paris's "intellectual atmosphere", and Rome's "dialogue with Old Masters" into the core of her work, her memories of colour and people in Brazil.

ERRÓ

b. 1932, Ólafsvík, Iceland

Lives between Paris, Bangkok and Formentera

Erró has gained international recognition as a leader of Narrative Figuration and a pioneer of painted collage, which he compares to automatic writing. Originally close to the surrealist circle in Paris, he radically renounced his own imaginary representations following his discovery of American mass consumer culture during a trip to New York in 1963–64, making collage the exclusive matrix of his flamboyant oeuvre. His technique consists in painting strictly after preliminary montages of ready-made images such as comics, advertisements, postcards, and reproductions of masterpieces, which he thoroughly archives from all over the world to fuel his serial work. Politicians, celebrities, superheroes, aliens, and warriors stand among the recurrent motifs of Erró's often monumental, kaleidoscopic accumulations, in which different civilizations and ideologies deliriously collide to capture the absurdity of our contemporary propagandas, from current affairs to popular fantasies.

Eduardo Arroyo

1937 - 2018

Madrid, Spain

Born in Madrid in 1937 during the civil war, Eduardo Arroyo's original intention to become a journalist was taken over by his strong fascination with painting. His work, using flattened pictorial spaces and caricature-like figures, addresses political issues with humor, sarcasm, and "childish expressionism". In 1958, Eduardo Arroyo left Franco's Spain to settle in Paris, and as was the case for T el emaque, it was only in Paris that he "became aware of the social reality, of the reality of the oppressed and (that he) politicized himself". He ran in circles with the young Spanish surrealist painters and old republicans he came across in Montparnasse.

Throughout his career his work sought to trigger a reaction from government bodies, deeply criticizing political regimes. His work questions the role of the artist in society and painting as a militant weapon. He participated in the project "The Red Room for Vietnam" in 1969, and realized numerous political works in his travels to Cuba in 1968 and 69. After his participation in the events of May 1968 printing posters at the Atelier Populaire des Beaux-Arts, he turned obsessively to the Spanish reality: "the struggles, the trial of Burgos, Franco, the dictatorship, the Church, finally the whole spectrum of what Spain will be like until Franco's death ". The Last days of Madrid Pompei, a work produced during this period is the uncompromising portrait of the end of Franco's regime.

After General Franco's death in 1977, the artist could return to Spain. Feeling like an outsider at home after a long period away prompted him to create the series Reflections on Exile (Karl Flinker Gallery, Paris, 1978). Arroyo was granted the Grand Prix National de la Peinture in Spain in 1983, and a retrospective dedicated to his work was exhibited at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1982.

Gerard Fromanger

b. 1939, Pontchartrain, France

Lives and works in Paris and Siena

Born in France, Gerard Fromanger received his formal art studies from the  cole Nationale Sup erieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Running in circles with C esar, Michel Foucault and Alberto Giacometti, his work began to champion the return of figuration in the late 1950s, and gradually evolved into one of the pioneers of the Narrative Figuration movement, exhibiting in the Salon de Mai in 1964, the Mythologies Quotidiennes exhibition of the same year, and the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. Like the other artists of the movement, he was influenced by colour, film, photography and his work was highly politicized, created as a reaction or a commentary to social and political events of the time. Fromanger's technique involved projecting a photographic work onto the canvas upon which he painted. His paintings are organized in cycles, both stylistically and thematically. Tools such as superimpositions, montages of repetitive figurative elements, distorted silhouettes and strong colour are utilized in his work, and are consistent throughout his series.

Fromanger was a co-founder of the Atelier populaire de l' cole des beaux Arts, and he created his most controversial work, Album the Red of 1968 alongside the student protests in Paris, consisting of 21 serigraphs, the first of which depicted the French flag dripping in blood. Though rejected by the Atelier, he created 20 further serigraphs of communists and capitalists nations flags, with other imagery of protests and his signature silhouettes of figures in red, which appeared again in future works.

Between 1983 and 1985, four retrospectives were dedicated to his work: at the Palazzo Pubblico/Magazini del sale in Siena, at the Musee des Beaux-Arts of Caen, at the Kunsthalle of Lund and at the Fuji Television Gallery of Tokyo. A retrospective dedicated to his work took place at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 2016.

Jacques Monory
1924- 2018, Paris, France

Jacques Monory was a French painter and filmmaker whose work, highly influenced by photography and cinema, is an allegory of the contemporary world with a focus on the violence of everyday reality. His canvases evoke a heavy atmosphere, pulling subject matter from modern civilization through the lens of his signature monochrome color blue.

Monory was first exhibited at the Drouant-David Gallery in Paris in 1952. During the 1960s, he became one of the leading figures of the Narrative Figuration movement, claiming the French rebuttal "has developed in France has moved away from American Pop Art, we have expressed a critical narrative of society while the Americans have almost always, in my opinion, embraced their system. This is a fundamental difference."

In 1968, he directed the influential film *Ex-* and painted the series *Les Meurtres* (Murders), putting in place the elements that would characterize his work: the division into sequences, the distancing by the use of the blue color, the dream, the illusion, but also a critical look at society.

In 1986, he exhibited at the 42nd Venice Biennale, and in 1992, he was the featured artist of the French Pavilion at the World Expo in Seville. In 2008, Jacques Monory was highlighted in the retrospective exhibition *Figuration Narrative*, at the Grand Palais in Paris.

Bernard Rancillac
b.1931, Paris, France
Lives and works in Malakoff, (Haut-de-Seine)

After winning the painting prize at Biennale de Paris in 1961, Bernard Rancillac stopped painting in the informel and abstract style and introduced colour and figuration to his painting. Together with Herve Telemaque and French critic Gérald Gassiot-Talabot, he co-organised the seminal exhibition "Mythologies Quotidiennes" at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1964, as both reaction and rebuttal to American Pop Art, signifying the beginning of the Narrative Figuration movement.

Rancillac used an episcopo to transfer images from televisions, film and magazines onto canvas, and he used this technique for a series of 18 canvases displayed at the Blumenthal-Mommaton, providing social commentary on the political and significant events of the year 1966, which included the Vietnam War, Apartheid in South Africa, and the fight for contraception. During the events of May 1968, Rancillac participated in the production of politically charged prints at the Atelier Populaire.

During the 1970s, Rancillac distanced himself from radical activism, and began to paint a jazz series, painting prominent figures of the jazz music scene such as James Brown, Charlie Parker and numerous jazz quartets. In 1985, he began the *Cinémonde* series, twenty-five canvases inspired by magazine covers where he represented the stars of the cinema: Vivien Leigh, Rita Hayworth, Jean Harlow, and Michele Morgan.

Rancillac was highlighted in the 'La Figuration Narrative au Grand Palais' in Paris in 2008, and featured in a retrospective in the Museum of Modern Art in Saint Etienne in 2003.

Peter Saul

b. 1934, San Francisco, CA

Lives and works in Chappaqua New York

Peter Saul received a BFA from the School of Fine Arts at Washington University in St. Louis in 1956, and worked between the Netherlands, England, France and Italy from 1956 to 1964 and was trained in Arshile Gorky's school of abstract realism. Though sometimes labelled as the father of pop art, Saul's work throughout his career has subscribed to no particular movement or artistic style, but has employed artistic tools from surrealism, pop art and abstract expressionism, and incorporated imagery and text from comics, consumer products, popular magazines and graffiti, rendering his work unclassifiable. His work often depicts known figures from popular culture in violent and vulgar scenes to criticize consumer society and the violence of American culture.

Saul's works were featured in the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and at the Denise Breteau Gallery in Paris in 1962 and 1963, and these works had profound influence on young French artists Eduardo Arroyo, Bernard Rancillac, and Herve Telemaque, three of the pioneers of the Narrative Figuration movement. His works were featured alongside these artists' in the genesis of the movement, at the 1964 Mythologies Quotidienne exhibition at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Peter Saul had work featured in group exhibition "Les années Pop, 1956–1968," at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris in 2001, the Whitney Biennial in New York in 1995, and he most recently had a retrospective at the New Museum, New York in 2020.

Herve Telemaque

b. 1937, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Lives and works in Villejuif (Val-de-Marne)

Hervé Télémaque was born in 1937 in Port-au-Prince in Haiti. Eager to become a painter, he studied art in Julian Levi's studio at the Art Students' League in New York from 1957 to 1960, where he discovered the work of Arshile Gorky and abstract expressionism. Experiencing severe racism in New York, he decided to leave and has settled in Paris since 1961.

Running in Surrealist circles but never officially joining the group, Telemaque creates assemblages of drawings, paintings, glued papers, and recovered or invented objects, which are influenced by his daily life and memories evocative of Haiti, with socio-political undercurrents. His works render the viewer responsible to connect and invent a narrative between the sometimes contradictory imagery or objects obtained from the press or catalogues.

As a reaction to American pop art, in 1964 Telemaque, together with Bernard Rancillac and French critic Gerald Gassiot Talabot curated the Mythologies Quotidiennes exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. His first solo exhibitions were held in the same year at Mathias Fels in Paris and at the Hanover Gallery in London. Herve Telemaque participated in major exhibitions such as "Documenta 3" 1964 in Kassel, "La Figuration Narrative dans l'art contemporain" 1965, and his work was the subject of a retrospective at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 2015.

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