

Parallel Worlds

New exhibition in the contemporary collections

From 14 April 2023

In cosmology, a parallel world is defined as a universe with its own measures of space and time. If such worlds existed, they would logically have to be separate from our own and governed by different laws, thus overturning fundamental principles we have considered absolute and unchangeable.

Drawing on works being acquired or that have recently entered the museum's collections, this exhibition has been conceived as a series of monographic presentations of artists whose works are strikingly singular and thus constitute autonomous universes. Although they have each created a very personal world, the seven artists gathered here – Marie Bourget, Helmut Federle, Hélène Garache, Hubert Kiecol, Charlotte Rampling, Anne-Marie Schneider and Pierre Weiss are all equally uncompromising in their relationship to reality and to their art, and some of them have rarely, if ever, been exposed. Through their creations, these artists invite us to broaden our usual modes of perception, generally anchored in the visible world, in order to transport us into a poetic and emotional, parallel universe. To achieve this, they rely on very different approaches : some play on the variety of forms and signifiers with multiple variations; others have established precise rituals in order to connect with invisible forces.

Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Julia Garimorth
Fanny Schulmann
assisted by Sylvie Moreau-Soteras

Follow MAM



mam.paris.fr

Visitor information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tel. 01 53 67 40 00
www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm

Open late Thursdays, until 9:30pm

Free entrance

Press officer

Maud Ohana
maud.ohana@paris.fr
Tel. 01 53 67 40 51

Helmut Federle



Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Julia Garimorth

Helmut Federle

Für die Vögel P

(For the Birds P)

2000

60 × 50 cm

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

Helmut Federle was born in 1944 in Solothurn in Switzerland, growing up in modest circumstances before relocating to Basel where he began to study art. The year he spent in Tunis, followed by a period at the Cité des Arts in Paris turned out to be crucial in his artistic development. During the 1970s, he travelled across the USA before settling in New York, where he remained until 1983.

Inspired by the legacy of abstract impressionism, Federle developed a body of work situated at the crossroads between painterly gesture and poetic inspiration. The landscape themes of his first compositions gradually gave way to an increasingly abstract language, finally leading to the definitive eradication of all references to reality. He now employs a reduced two-dimensional vocabulary organised around symbols, ideograms, letters and geometric elements that lend his works a powerful and contrasting rhythm. Some of his paintings feature a pronounced graphic structure that plays on the opposition of horizontal and vertical lines, while others, with their more ample expanses of colour alternate between background and figure, shadow and light, movement and immobility.

Federle imbues his works with a spiritual and intellectual dimension that goes far beyond the abstract forms they portray. Influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilistic thought, Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and Japanese Shintoism, he was also drawn to the ideals of the Beat Generation (Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg) and to the writings of Albert Camus. Long periods of travel in East Asia, India and the Middle East (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan) exposed him to other ways of life, different religious beliefs and aesthetic conceptions.

Driven by doubts and contradictions since an early age, he situates himself as a rebel in his position as an artist and believes that art should reflect the experience of the constant search for oneself in order to fulfil certain existential demands and the quest for truth. This stance has given rise to a radicality, which in association with his quest for spirituality, constitutes one of the major sources of his artistic approach.

Thanks to a recent acquisition and a donation proposed by the artist, the museum's collection now features two works from the series *Für die Vögel* [For the Birds].

Helmut Federle's exhibition has benefited from the generous support of Otrants.

Hélène Garache



Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Fanny Schulmann

Hélène Garache
View of the exhibition *Parallel
Worlds*
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
© Pierre Antoine

Hélène Garache was born in Paris in 1928. She studied drawing and classical French sculpture under Robert Coutin before, at the age of thirty, choosing to work exclusively with clay, this being the only material that she could use to directly model her subjects.

From this moment onwards, she devoted herself to sculpting the great landscapes and natural elements of the regions she visited with family and friends: the Dordogne, Normandy, the Haut-Var, the French Alps and the Engadin valley in Switzerland. It was in situ that she sought to lend form to the sea, the trees and mountains, as she saw them under different skies and in varying light conditions. The landscapes she tackled had names, their own contours and particular qualities she enjoyed identifying with great precision. Her interest in topography and toponymy reflected a pronounced taste for scientific documentation, which was also extremely useful in the pursuit of her work in her town studio. Hélène Garache treated her subjects as beings whose portraits she modelled – an approach motivated by a form of affection, by the need to depict a reality that was beyond her grasp, and bespoke of a desire to “capture moments of her personal relationship to that which she loves” as the poet Yves Bonnefoy wrote.

Her renderings of Mont Blanc, the Aiguille Verte, the white oaks of the Vérignon forest near Aups or the Val Fex waterfall in the upper Engadin valley, were accompanied by studio work, which she named *L'Œuvre de la maison* because it was inspired by the 18th century country house in the Haut-Var, where she spent her summers. These works displayed a distinct anthropomorphic dimension. The houses she sculpted, such as *L'Assomption de la Maison d'Hélène*, were all representations of her body as she perceived it: the stable is her belly, the bedroom her torso, the dovecote her head and the loft from which the birds fly provides continuity between the upper part of her body and the Milky Way.

Both spontaneous and deliberate, this work, sometimes bordering on singular art, poetically follows a pathway of self-awareness with mystical overtones. Through her relentless work, Hélène Garache maintained the hope of “finally becoming the being I am” and of “belonging to the world”, as she put it herself.

This is her first ever personal exhibition.

Hubert Kiecol



Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Julia Garimorth

Hubert Kiecol
Sieben Häuser (Seven houses)
1982
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

Since the 1980s, Hubert Kiecol (b.1950 in Bremen, Germany) has developed a body of work characterised by a formal vocabulary that is both rigorous and varied, with links to both architecture and minimal art. His sculptures, like his drawings, are based on architectural forms – houses, archways, stairs, windows – which he transposes into scaled-down models, often arranged in series, or into extensive installations.

Through his modification of the proportions of the objects he represents, by multiplying them or mounting them on pedestals, Kiecol releases them from their original context and liberates them from their intended functions. In this way, he enables these objects to reach “the other side of the everyday” (Siegfried Gohr). The feeling of alienation his works provoke in the viewer highlights the hidden, almost mythical meaning of the ways in which they are represented and lends them a poetic dimension. Thus, his sculptures trigger personal or collective associations that go far beyond their architectural references.

In his early practice, Kiecol’s preferred medium was concrete, a modern and ubiquitous construction material. In order to lend his sculptures, often characterised by a certain austerity, a sense of greater lightness and transparency, he gradually replaced it with glass and metal. Many of his installations – particularly those that use the window as a recurring motif – play on the tension between weight and lightness, opening and closing, seriality and uniqueness. These formal considerations also echo his graphic work.

In 2000, Hubert Kiecol was awarded the prestigious Wolfgang Hahn Prize by the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst of the Ludwig Museum in Cologne and is one of the most influential German artists of his generation. As a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf, he was particularly committed to the integration of visual arts and architecture into the school’s curriculum.

Charlotte Rampling



Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Fanny Schulmann

Charlotte Rampling
45 × 50 cm
© Marc Damage

The works of Charlotte Rampling, born in 1946 in the United Kingdom, form an ensemble that is striking in both its coherence and its intensity. For more than thirty years and without ever having exhibited them publicly, she has been creating painted reliefs, whenever her career as an actress allowed her to work on them. She spontaneously became involved with artistic creation while living with Jean-Michel Jarre, who, in addition to his musical activities, also practiced painting, with a specific interest in abstract and informal art. Like an unfinished and secret quest, each work in Rampling's artistic output takes the form of a renewed ritual.

For each work, the process she follows is identical: the artist applies mortar to a Masonite board (engineered wood) and models it into a form. The work is then coated with a mixture of pigments, often sienna, which lends it a dark hue. Variations appear from one relief to another; the board can be more or less textured; the relief is often lighter in colour than the background, or may have been sanded down until it is almost erased; the addition of sand is sometimes used to modify the relief's appearance. Yet the same intent permeates each work, resembling the invocation of a spirit, which in the half-light, causes a fleeting and furtive silhouette to appear. Occasionally, the viewer might recognise a human figure, a grimacing skull, or perhaps a cell as seen under a microscope.

Through the technique she employs, Charlotte Rampling has entered a lineage of matterist painters following on from the works developed by Jean Fautrier in the 1940s, made from layers of plaster coloured with pigments. The same feeling of anxiety catches the eye, when observing the forms that are generated by this systematic process. The serial dimension of her works, made even more evident by their almost identical size, brings to the fore the intimate and recurrent fears that bind us to our childhood world as much as to that of death.

Pierre Weiss



Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Curator

Julia Garimorth

Fanny Schulmann

Pierre Weiss

Orte die sich ähnlich sind

(Places that are similar)

1989 - 1990

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

© Pierre Antoine

Pierre Weiss is a visual artist and filmmaker. He was born in Brussels in 1950 and grew up in Vienna, where he studied philology and art, before moving to Paris in the 1970s. At the beginning of his career, he painted large format canvases in which the human figure, very present and recognizable, was sketched out in sharp and nervous lines. These figures gradually disappeared over time, in favour of massive architectural structures that confronted human beings, even threatening to merge with them.

This change of vocabulary clearly translated the artist's growing interest in the particularities of our social space and the living conditions that they impose on us. Pierre Weiss sees them as an existential constraint and devotes his work to the search for the means to extract ourselves from them.

His works often evoke cages or industrial frameworks that generate a feeling of confinement. The artist plays on the ambivalence of our perception through the almost obsessive repetition of the rectilinear motif that makes up the barriers behind which we are imprisoned (or imprison ourselves), as well as on the ambiguity of the materials or registers in his images. He strives to make us aware of the violence, which the social space inflicts on our bodies, whose wanderings are constantly assailed by oppressive passages, alienation and forced detours.

Pierre Weiss has never restricted himself to one particular medium or technique. With great freedom, he uses and combines any materials according to their evocative power. All of his artistic creations refer, in a direct or indirect way, to the same constant: his own body. The powerful, physical presence of the artist which is never dissimulated, confers to his work an affirmed autobiographical dimension.