

centre
de
création
contemporaine
olivier
debré

the exhibition booklet

déborder la toile *overflow the canvas*

white gallery
21st October 2022 - 12th March 2023

curator: Marine Rochard

Gathering around the large canvases by Olivier Debré the contemporary creations of Charlotte Denamur, Ann Veronica Janssens, Renée Levi, Flora Moscovici and Thu Van Tran, the exhibition looks at how the principles and intuitions that shaped the work of the artist are used today. For Debré, the visual elements that form the canvas reflect the sensations experienced during its creation. This quest for expressiveness led him to expand his pictorial gesture and broaden his colour range.

Since the 2000s, painting has experienced new developments within a diverse and liberal art scene, the boundaries of which are more flexible. A whole swathe of painting is today conceived from a perspective that is more influenced by the effects of phenomenology than by the vestiges of modernism and formalism. In the wake of the decomposition of genres and practices, particularly encouraged by the proliferation of installations during the 1990s, painting has no bounds, branching out across media and featuring on a more spatial scale, flirting with the sculptural form as well as with the more immersive form of site-specific installations. Some of these forms revive with plenty of force the notions of gesture and outline provided with more freedom by the monumental format. These new hybrid pictorial paths testify to the permanency of Debré's questions in the contemporary field.

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They remind us of the painter's desire to infuse the canvas with the emotions felt in front of the landscape during the creative process so that the viewer can in turn become imbued with it.

« It quickly became clear to me that it was not so much the object observed but the sensation produced by this object that was important, and this sensation was, ultimately, the reality that had to be painted.⁰¹ »

Charlotte Denamur, Ann Veronica Janssens, Renée Levi, Flora Moscovici and Thu Van Tran also work based on emotion, the place of creation and the light. Their way of dealing with the material reminds us a lot the abstract painter's creative process: successive strokes to form colourful shades that are both radiant and deep. Some of them focus on texture or gesture. The creative process is always fundamental for them. Whether they work with texture or gesture, the very act of painting is always important and fundamental for them. They explore the properties of the material, magnifying it in the visitor's physical experience, while continuing to play on the mysterious, impalpable principle of manifestation.

Like Olivier Debré, the artists gathered here seek to give more freedom to colour by producing large-scale works, works that overflow the canvas, that free themselves from the frame, that spread into the spectator's space.

⁰¹ Olivier Debré answering to Jean Grenier, *Entretiens avec dix-sept peintres non-figuratifs*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1963, pp.75-76

olivier debré and the fields of abstract art

Tackling painting today is no mean feat, as evidenced by the most recent exhibitions and discussions on the subject. There is not just one form of painting, but a diversity of practices based on traditional means. In 1989, Gilles Lipovetski already spoke of a "relaxation of artistic space"⁰². In a period that some people like to call "post-medium", it is sometimes difficult to define what is painting and what is not. With the concepts of genre and movement outdated since at least the early 2000s - and already seriously challenged in the 1980s - painting has liberated itself not only from stylistic conventions but also from the modernist idea of progress or innovation, and even from the stark contrast between abstraction and figuration that dominated not so long ago.

The aim of this exhibition is not to present an overview of the many types of painting that coexist today, and even less to advocate one over the others as if it were a profession of faith. Our purpose is rather to observe one of the branches of painting, that of abstraction, regarding the work of **Olivier Debré**. We wish to look at the reappropriation and diversification of pictorial gestures by certain artists, now done with the long-standing array of influence, and from the critical and ideological discredit from which painting, and gestural painting, has long suffered. This critical attitude stems mainly from the minimalist and conceptual approaches of the 1970s, which condemned gestural abstraction as nothing more than egotistical expression and simultaneously decreed the death of painting. These almost caricatural accusations were more a reaction to the equally caricatured modernist formalism proposed by the art historians **Clement Greenberg** and **Michael Fried**⁰³.

⁰² Gilles Lipovetski, *L'Ère du vide*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p.16

⁰³ **Clement Greenberg (1909-1994)** was one of the most influential American art critics of the 20th century. A defender of analytical critical thinking based solely on the observation of works of art, thought as self-referential, he theorizes *Action Painting* based on Jackson Pollock's work and forges the term *Colorfield Painting*, especially about the works of Mark Rothko.

Michael Fried (1939), participating as Greenberg in the debate on the origins and developments of modern art, analyses minimal art as a break with Modernity. According to him, the work's foray into the viewer's space shatters its self-referentiality and therefore threatens the very existence of art.

In this highly ideological context, the emergence of a form of German neo-expressionism - figurative painting itself appearing in the face of conceptual art and minimalism in the late 1970s and 1980s - was labelled as reactionary; it was even referred to as a return to order⁰⁴ or *bad painting*.

The condemnation of painting not only made it difficult for new pictorial trends to emerge, but also seriously tainted the long-term reception of the abstract and gestural painting that had emerged during the 1940s and 1950s, in a post-war artistic and critical milieu already deeply marked by dissension.

Like several artists of his generation, Debré was trapped in the 1950s - both from the point of view of critical reception and the wider public - even though he pursued extensive pictorial experimentation throughout his career.

However, reviewing Debré's work implies breaking away from the conventional ideas that dominated art criticism in the 1950s and 1960s and that have largely lingered to this day. The French art scene of those years was characterised by a fierce debate between abstraction and figuration, in which it was fashionable to take sides by formulating a clear (not to say exclusive) choice between one and the other. Since his work is very ambivalent in this respect and Debré never clearly claimed to belong to one or other of the many artistic trends that dominated the picture rails and the market after the Second World War, he frequently lacked a proper audience.

The representatives of geometric abstraction - derived from the principles of concrete art in the 1930s - were also opposed to the defenders of a freer, so-called "hot" abstraction, which was more in the tradition of Vassily Kandinsky. Within this latter faction, numerous labels and schools emerged (painters in the so-called "French tradition", New, Young or Second School of Paris, lyrical abstraction, *art autre* - art of another kind), serving as a standard for critics or artists who, during an extremely abundant creative and economic context, wished to make a place for themselves at the forefront of the scene.

⁰⁴ This is particularly the stance of Benjamin Buchloh (1941), an art historian known for the development of his theory of the neo-avant-garde.

We need to reconsider the rigid classifications of abstract art, of a pure abstraction that is exclusively a mental matter and self-referential, in opposition to nature and the landscape. Since painting is a living and constantly evolving practice, its discursive and critical potential challenges this archaic modernist foundation.

Until the 1980s, abstract painting was essentially defined by its counterpart, figuration, which did not allow for any nuances that were more indicative of the diversity of practices. Today, given the diversity of its materials and mediums, one might also ask what painting is, as well as what it is not.

In the 1950s, the main subject of Debré's painting was the *signe personnage* - sign character -, an archetypal figure that is expressed in numerous paintings with mostly subdued, muted and low-contrast colours. The paste is applied in a masonry-like manner that structures the composition and sets the subject in an almost archaic hieratic state. This *signe personnage* is very much in line with its time but does not introduce any major innovation to a pictorial context that had already become academic. From the point of view of the artist's personal practice, this decade seems even hard to understand in view of the pictorial experiments the artist had carried out in the 1940s. The rest of his career is marked by experimental research, which forms the true thread of his work that is altogether little-known and still being researched.

From the 1960s onwards, the way in which he worked, while travelling, in nature, made it possible to combine abstraction and figuration, but above all abstraction and nature. The modernist concept of pure abstraction becomes completely irrelevant when Debré's work is considered. His large canvases of the Loire from the 1980s, which inspired the concept of the exhibition, are not so much direct representations of the river as essentially aesthetic interpretations of its fluidity and liquidity. Above all, the artist is primarily interested in grasping the infinite expanses in the middle of which he paints, giving his canvases such a scale that it is no longer a question of format but of space. Beyond the usual oppositions between nature and abstraction, Olivier Debré's personal experience of landscape, which is purely physical, sensitive and emotional, coexists with something more conceptual and intangible: the painting is highly textural, yet it becomes as elusive as the space that surrounds us.



I wanted that, instead of enjoying a natural landscape, we enjoy a landscape that is a form of thought, quite simply; that the thought is something that is physically experienced. (...) I began to want colour to speak for itself, in its inherent quality; for this blue-grey to act with its power as a blue-grey, for the red to act with its power as a red, to release the inherent power of each colour to the maximum.⁰⁵



Debré expressed this intention in 1975, at a time when it was quite unprecedented to connect the sensory experience and the conceptual scope of the painting in this way, as well as to direct his work on the issues surrounding the making and the physical presence of the painting.

Since the 1990s - since the supposed end of History - a whole section of abstract painting has itself been in constant flux between two types of discourse that overlap at times: the conceptual scope of these works and their expressionist appearance, giving pride of place to the gestures that often extend beyond the canvas in the form of installations. This great liberation of the 1990s reflects *Debré's* own approach to painting, but also overturns the formalist modernist benchmarks. The sensory and perceptual experience of the viewer is valued far beyond its merely optical qualities. The painting inhabits a space and signifies a space that is common to both the artist and the viewer, it creates a world of its own that also has its own temporality.

⁰⁵ Olivier Debré answering to Daniel Abadie in "Entretien avec Olivier Debré", published in Lydia Artias, Bernard Ceysson (dir.), *Olivier Debré*, exhibition catalogue, Saint-Étienne, Musée d'Art et d'Industrie / Maison de la culture et des loisirs, 1976, n.p.

charlotte denamur

born in 1988 in Paris,

lives and works in Paris and Ivry-sur-Seine (France)

www.charlottedenamur.com

« Before painting, I initiate a preliminary tactile approach in the quest for textiles. I don't choose them at random, but for their patterns, their workmanship, their formats, their contours, their tears. (...)

I also seek to transpose the same twists and turns in the exhibition as in the studio and to establish a direct relationship with the dimensions and volumes of the venue. It's not just about making paintings but painting as a physical and sensory experience of colour in space, to the point of seeing the reflections and sound of a pink on a white wall.



quote from the artist's portfolio

The artist creates both abstract and figurative paintings in small formats as well as in monumental works. In both cases, the canvas is never stretched on a frame, so that the painting can be subjected to various movements and reliefs that depend on the weight, density and fluidity of the surface used. For the small formats, she most often uses fabric strips whose primary use is domestic, and therefore pre-dimensioned: pillowcases, for example.

In the case of the larger pieces, it is the architecture, imbued with colour, that plays the role of the frame and gives the work a framework, a framework that is often thwarted or contradicted by the artist.

Whatever the format, the creation of the work always takes place horizontally, on the ground which is protected by tarpaulins. Canvas and fabric are immersed in coloured and translucent paint baths that tint the medium according to its absorption abilities, from which the artist proposes variations by priming or not, which will create, once the work is finished, areas of opacity or transparency. Charlotte Denamur then creates crumpling or rubbing effects, adding materials and shapes to give her composition its main thrust.

The very large paintings evolve into installations suspended in the space of the architecture, where they sometimes create a landscape. This is the case with the new work that Charlotte Denamur has produced specifically for the white gallery. Streaming down from one of the skylights, her piece is illuminated from the inside by natural, zenithal lighting - the artist had already experimented with this type of process, to a lesser extent and with artificial lighting. This feature gives the impression of a clarity that is intrinsic to the painting, bursting forth of its own accord, while at the same time demarcating on the other side of the work a new space in which the viewer can immerse themselves: they enter the very heart of the landscape as if they were entering an unstructured, flowing and changing waterfall.

ann veronica janssens

born in 1956 in Folkestone (United Kingdom)

lives and works in Brussels (Belgium)

the artist is represented by the gallery Kamel Mennour, Paris

« It is also a question of gravity. Some pieces are levitating, for example, others are suspended. Most of them are ephemeral forms; there are very few prehensible things in my work. They are works that exist at a certain point in time - they can be remade but will still be different - that are fragile. (...) »

Challenged by what they see, the viewer is forced to move, to experience the object in all its dimensions. For me, it is also a way of expressing pictoriality, by focusing on the manifestation of colour. »

Ann Veronica Janssens answering to Samantha Deman, « Les perturbations sensorielles d'Ann Veronica Janssens », artshebdomedias.com, 24 avril 2017

Since the 1980s, exploring the great notions of historical abstraction, she has pursued experimental work based on colourful irradiation that pervades, inhabits and structures space through light.

Playing on both optical perceptions and the physical properties of light and colour, she produces works - sometimes monumental - that usually teeter on the tenuous thread that separates the material from the immaterial, the visible from the invisible. The visitor experience is also at the heart of these light sculptures because, by multiplying the perspectives, they encourage mobility and promote immersion.

The notion of pictoriality, although approached in a subtle, almost surreptitious manner, is a prominent feature of Ann Veronica Janssens' work. She often portrays the creative gesture, and even the loss of control that can occur in the creative process.

This is the case with the piece *Pégase (C16 1/64)*, which materialises the painter's gesture through a colourful and glittery expanse spread on the ground. Without any recourse to the traditional materials and tools of painting, this protocol piece suggests both the gesture and its trace. The reactivation process is simple: a certain quantity of glitter placed in a bucket is projected into the air thanks to a sweeping movement. The material that has fallen to the ground forms a work that varies each time, yet always reflects the repetition of the same ritual action symbolic of expressionist and gestural abstraction. This evocation of the physical dimension of the gesture and the tangible dimension of the work is accompanied by a reminder of the principles of pictorial art, since the glitter, with its brilliance and bright colour, radiates into the space thanks to the natural or artificial light which emphasises its reliefs and textures.

renée levi

born in 1960 in Istanbul (Turkey)

lives and works in Nice (France) and Basel (Switzerland)

the artist is represented by the gallery Bernard Jordan, Paris

« Ripples are my personal form of feeling and seeking. They are moments of life, as often as I repeat it. I follow this perpetual movement of rotation and thus appropriate space and time. »

Renée Levi, « Le Moment du dessin », in *Tohu-Bohu*,
Frac éditions Bretagne, 2014

Renée Levi trained as an architect and worked in an architectural firm in the 1980s before attending the Zurich University of the Arts in 1987. In the 1990s, she worked in photography and installation, but painting very quickly became her favourite medium, and she has constantly redefined her practice throughout her career. From the outset, she focused on the written form, the sign and more specifically on the spatialisation of the pictorial gesture.

From the end of the 1990s onwards, she used spray paint, which enabled her to connect the gesture and its movement to the colour, which was often bright, fluorescent and even garish. The repetition of movements forms a kind of cursive writing that sometimes takes the form of a flourish and extends to increasingly large formats, even to the scale of a wall and in installations from the 2000s onwards. Renée Levi thus addresses the limitations of painting which develops fluidly from the floor to the ceiling, sometimes to the point where the boundary between the vertical and horizontal planes disappears.

Immersed in the painting, the viewer discovers the work both visually and physically. With the works in the *Sudoku* series, the spectator adapts their movements to the graphic rhythm imposed by the artist, regular or irregular, made more complex by the unique vibrations of the colours.

Over the years, Renée Levi has diversified her techniques and, above all, her tools, which are tailor-made with brooms and mops, moving through space while painting in an almost choreographed manner. In this way, she enhances the action of painting and at the same time adopts an ambivalent attitude towards the expressiveness of the gesture: it is almost a ritualised expressiveness through its repetition.

flora moscovici

born in 1985 in Paris,
lives and works in Paris (France)
<http://www.floramoscovici.com>

« Observation of the spaces I walk through and attention to certain details, which arouse my emotions or stimulate my imagination, are the starting point of my artistic research. The way light enters a space, the characteristics of the architecture, the traces of the history of the place and of course the colours, the way they are applied and the way they age, are all points that I attempt to unveil while seeking to create other spaces, developing pictorial works alongside the painting trade and being inspired by places under construction, in an in-between area where there is a fine line between beauty and something that is almost nothing, that is somewhat dirty and not very well painted. It is a painter's practice in the broadest sense considering painting in its many forms and using the extremely varied potential of this medium, including in its fringes. Where there is paint, for me it is painting, whether it is present for a utilitarian, artistic or other purpose. And sometimes, where there is no paint, it is also painting using colour in other materials.

quote from the artist's portfolio

Since 2010, Flora Moscovici has been developing pictorial works that are most often site-specific and ephemeral creations. The composition of the work is in this case determined by the place in which it will be installed. During long observations, the artist immerses herself in the architecture, its use and its history. She seeks to create an atmosphere for the viewer that resonates with the emotions and sensations experienced during her initial reflection.

The colours, often very diluted, applied with a brush or sprayed with a gun, are spread in large, graduated layers that give the impression that the colour, secreted from inside the wall, rubs off on the wall, soaking its crevices until it dissolves.

Although the architectural medium has been the most frequent in recent years, the artist explores others, such as clothing, the body, or even objects. In the exhibition, Flora Moscovici does not present a work made *in situ*, but a set of large, loose and very fluid cotton canvases, painted with a brush and a spray gun with textile inks. These *Grisailles*⁰⁶, hung at the top of the wall, at the intersection of the ceiling, extend over the entire surface of the picture rails, flowing down to the floor and forming supple folds. These add a rhythmic progression to the coloured halos, which appear to reverberate in the same way as waves. Covering all the walls, the work creates a hushed and intimate environment that the viewer explores by following the direction inspired by the drapes and the colour chart.

⁰⁶ The four pieces that comprise the *Grisailles* series were initially custom-made for the "Flora Moscovici" exhibition at the Galerie des Multiples in November 2021 (Paris, Galerie des Multiples, 6th November - 11th December 2021 / an exhibition produced with the support of the Centre National des Arts Plastiques).

The viewer is thus immersed in a spectrum of light whose vaporous plastic finish evokes wisps of smoke or water vapour. Taking advantage of the architectural structure while concealing it, the installation forms an autonomous space with its own temporality while suggesting the existence of another space beyond its folds.

thu van tran

born in 1979 in Ho Chi Minh Ville (Viêt Nam)

lives and works in Paris (France)

the artist is represented by the gallery Meessen De Clercq, Brussels

and the gallery Almine Rech, Paris

« This grey that we enter is a grey of colours. The six colours applied one after the other in different time frames cancel each other out, disappear and, for me, leave only something melancholic. (...) The experience of making and looking only depends on an aesthetic experience that is fragile: we don't know what it is, it is a matter of contemplation. In the moments of making, there are moments of celebration, an aura of painting, which means that little by little, layer by layer, temporality by temporality, time by time, a space is created, the space of painting. »

Thu Van Tran answering to Marie Richeux about the *Colors of grey* series, program « Par les temps qui courent », France Culture, 20th December 2018

Thu Van Tran is primarily interested in memory and language, in the way in which language can make history and construct a narrative, or on the contrary, programme its elimination when it is exploited. Each artistic project is developed from a specific technique or material, adapted to the discourse that the artist wishes to convey. Thus, whether she is a painter, a sculptor, a drawer or a ceramicist, the material chosen and worked on is at one with the thematic and semantic focus of the work: it observes or conveys the narrative. The pieces do not rely solely on what they signify or on the chosen material being used in its raw state. For Thu Van Tran, a work of art remains inseparable from the phenomenon of manifestation, an object with a highly symbolic charge that does not only stem from an intellectual perception, but, at least equally, from a physical, emotional feeling.

In the exhibition, she presents two very different types of pieces that have common references: the colonial stratification inextricably linked to the history of Viêt Nam, her country of birth. The artist is interested in the way in which domination is constructed and the very diverse repercussions it entails.

Pénétrable is an installation *in situ* that the artist has been reviving on a regular basis in recent years; it takes the form of a monumental painting that does not use traditional painting materials. Its raw material is rubber - combined with chemical pigments - which suggests the cultivation of rubber trees in Indochina by Michelin from the 1920s onwards, symbolic of both the colonial exploitation of resources and of the population ⁰⁷.

The works in the *Colors of Grey* series recall the use of "rainbow herbicides" by the United States during the Việt Nam War ⁰⁸. These chemicals, which polluted the soil for a long time, were identified by various colours that the artist applied layer by layer, wash by wash, to obtain a grey surface. Each painting thus reveals a new shade of grey, while at the same time constituting the archive of her own creative process: the side or edge of the canvas always bears the trace of each successive colour used.

In both cases, semantics and history are very much in evidence, but they do not overshadow the painter's craft, gesture and techniques, which all contribute to the creation of an autonomous work, different each time thanks to the variations in the material and the depth suggested by the overlapping of the washes. It is just as much a matter of physicality, be it in *Pénétrable*, which one can penetrate (without necessarily being aware of it and which operates in the mode of an apparition) or in *Colors of grey*, facing a grey wall as sterile as the Vietnamese soil.

⁰⁷ The rubber tree is a tree that secretes latex from tapping the bark; the latex is then transformed into rubber, which enabled Michelin to produce its tyres. French colonisation of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam) lasted from 1887 to 1954. The exploitation of resources during this period contributed to France's commercial success on a global scale, and of course to the impoverishment of the colonised territories.

⁰⁸ In Việt Nam, as the last French troops left the region for good in 1955, after a decolonisation process initiated ten years earlier thanks to the support of Hồ Chi Minh by Communist China, a civil war, opposing the North and the South of the country, broke out and lasted until 1975. The United States, providing military support to the South against the communists of the North, intervened massively from 1962 with the "ranch hand" operation. Among all the weapons used by the US army, one of them was biological: the so-called "rainbow herbicides",

defoliants that destroyed the flora, enabling the destruction of the forest areas where the Việt Cong fighters were hiding, but also their food supply. Each type of defoliant was stored in drums identified by specific colours (agent orange - the most used -, white, pink, green, blue, purple) from which the expression "rainbow herbicides" comes. Millions of litres were spilled, considerably and permanently depleting the soil, but also causing numerous cancers, including among US soldiers.

olivier debré and the CCCOD

Since 2016, the CCCOD ensures the conservation and dissemination of a Debré Donation. The art center does not permanently show this collection, but values the works of Olivier Debré through regularly scheduled temporary exhibitions (in and out of the walls; personal or collective). The research on the artist is constantly developing as the CCCOD is working on the elaboration of the catalogue raisonné of his paintings.

It was on the occasion of the Debré Donation in 2008 that the new project of the eponymous contemporary creation center was born. It was then a question of bringing together in one place the funds of a historical artist and the experimental mission that the art center had been conducting since 1985. Olivier Debré's heirs donated part of the works of their father to Tours Métropole Val de Loire, owner of the CCCOD building. This Donation consists of five monumental paintings (400 x 915 cm) and a graphic set of one hundred and fifty-five pieces.

olivier debré (1920-1999) in a few dates

1920

Olivier Debré was born in Paris into a family of doctors and artists. He painted and drew from childhood, then turned to an architect career. In 1938, he entered the School of Fine Arts in Paris in the architecture section. However, he decided to devote himself to painting in the early 1940s. His pictorial expression, inspired by Impressionism, evolved into more uncluttered compositions with wide coloured areas, making Debré one of the representatives of gestural abstraction. Despite many trips around the world, he often came back to paint along the Loire banks, in Vernou-sur-Brenne, near Tours, in the property of "Les Madères", where he had set up one of his studios.

1941

Debré presented a few paintings for the first time in the Paris gallery of Georges Aubry. He painted in a figurative vein derived from Impressionism, which nevertheless attracted the attention of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). The two artists became acquainted with each other and met several times thereafter. In the 1940s, the young artist took a more structured approach to painting: his constructed, angular and rhythmic compositions evolved away from a fully realistic expression towards abstraction, as evidenced by his first solo exhibition at the Bing Gallery in June 1949. Like many artists of his generation, he introduced symbols - or 'signs' - into his painting, a reference to the shock of the discovery of the concentration camps.

1950

Debré frequently exhibited at the Parisian art fairs. He developed an increasingly thick and regular quadrangular brushstroke, arranged in the form of vertical stacks. These create an architectural composition and give the painting a monumental presence. The symbol of the human figure becomes recurrent in the *signes personnages*- signs characters. These evocative silhouettes, which are increasingly abstract, are most often executed on rectangular formats stretched to the highest point, in which dark, muted colours dominate. This subject - restricted pictorially to his works of the 1950s - remained a recurring theme in his production of prints and drawings until the 1990s.

1959

The artist presented his first solo exhibition in New York at the Knoedler Gallery. It consisted largely of very dense abstract compositions with a built-up surface. Debré had recently begun experimenting with different ways of lightening his palette and thinning the paint layer. During his trip to the United States, he had an opportunity to meet Mark Rothko (1903-1970), an artist who worked with colourful lights radiating from large formats. It is impossible to know whether this encounter was decisive for the French painter. The fact remains that in contact with nature, on his travels, in his garden in Cachan (Val-de-Marne) or even in the "Les Madères" (Touraine), his gestures developed in a more versatile way through formats that were initially square, then increasingly large and stretched in width.

1966

In 1966, the artist was offered his first retrospective in a French institution. "Olivier Debré. Peintures 1943-1966", presented at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Le Havre, enabling his artistic career to be retraced and to see that his use of materials shifted towards greater fluidity. It is also the first time that some of his drawings were exhibited. Following this initial step towards public recognition, Debré was increasingly called upon to create monumental compositions and large architectural settings. In 1967, for example, he participated in the creation of the French Pavilion at the Montreal International Exhibition ("Expo 67. Terre des hommes"). In the hall of the building designed by the architect Jean Fauteron, he created a monumental painting that he called *Signe d'homme* (250 x 500 cm).

1979

Debré was appointed head of the mural art studio at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he taught until 1985. He had already produced several decorative paintings integrated into architectural programmes, for example at the Lycée Rabelais in Chinon (1975). He even had an opportunity to create monumental ceramics, as was the case at the European Pavilion of the Osaka International Exhibition in Japan (1970). At the same time, during the 1970s and 1980s, his gestures became freer, and he used increasingly large formats: canvases between five and six metres wide became frequent throughout his artistic production. The very fluid material provided a play of coloured transparencies, made possible by the "washes" that the artist allowed to flow freely over the surface of the canvas in succession.

1987

Thanks to a public commission initiated in 1985 by Jack Lang, then Minister of Culture, the artist created the new stage curtain for the Comédie-Française (1000 x 1300 cm). To fulfil this commission, Debré needed a floor space of 500 m² to paint, which he found at Le Bourget, in a hangar lent to him for two months by an airline company. With the help of three assistants, the artist had to extend his gestures beyond the limits of his own body, an unprecedented experience for him. The photographs of this period show Debré surrounded by colour and walking through his own creation, armed with the long brooms that enabled him to paint. In 1989 and 1998, he created the stage curtains for the Hong Kong (1500 x 1900 cm) and Shanghai (1400 x 2200 cm) opera houses.

1991

More actively present in Touraine for several years, Debré established a relationship with the Centre de création contemporaine (CCC, Tours). In 1990, the art centre commissioned him to create four canvases designed to fit the four walls of the centre (400 x 915 cm) for an exhibition that was to take place in the summer of 1991. Six large paintings were created by the artist; four of them were chosen to be exhibited, thus replacing the walls of the art centre for a few months. Today, five of these monumental paintings, the largest oil paintings ever produced by the artist, are kept at the CCCOD, the last one belonging to the European Investment Bank (Luxembourg). In 2018, this series was presented for the first time in its entirety at the CCCOD, in the exhibition "Les Nymphéas d'Olivier Debré".

related events

the singular visits

Once a month, Quentin Shigo, mediator-speaker and Marine Rochard, curator, present in dialogue a focus on some works of the exhibition.

9€ full rate | 6€ reduced fare
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Olivier Debré & Ann Veronica Janssens
on Saturday 29th October 2022 at 4.30pm

Olivier Debré & Renée Levi
on Saturday 19th November 2022 at 4.30pm

Olivier Debré & Thu Van Tran
on Saturday 17th December 2022 at 4.30pm

Olivier Debré & Flora Moscovici
on Saturday 21st January 2023 at 4.30pm

Olivier Debré & Charlotte Denamur
on Saturday 18th February 2023 at 4.30pm

conference

followed with a visit of the exhibition

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crises et rebonds de la peinture abstraite

histoire et historiographie de l'abstraction à travers l'exemple d'Olivier Debré
by Marine Rochard

on Thursday 2nd March 2023 at 6.30pm

the CCC OD wishes to thank:

for being so collaborative :

the artists, Olivier Debré's beneficiaries ; Marcel Schmid ; Andrei Panibratchenko, MAC VAL, Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sur-Seine ; Bernard Jordan gallery, Paris ; Meessen De Clercq gallery, Bruxelles ; Gilles Drouault galerie/multiples, Paris ; Almine Rech gallery, Paris.

for their material and financial support :

Jocelyne and Jean-Pierre Sallé, l'Atelier Marc Philippe, Fondettes, Au fil de l'eau, Vouvray, Berthault, Tours, Cadres et Couleurs, Chambray-les-Tours, Estivin, Tours, Réma Centre, Orléans.

screening of artists'films

a proposal by Sans Canal Fixe

From the exhibition, and to go well beyond the issues it raises, Sans Canal Fixe offers a narrative dive in color, light and landscape. After the screenings, Jean-Baptiste Giuliani (Sans Canal Fixe) and Marine Rochard (CCC OD) will discuss the stakes of these films during a discussion with the audience.

gratuitous

Ismail Bahri, *Foyer*, 2016

32 min, Spectre productions

Laura Henno, *Djo*, 2018

13 min, Spectre productions

on Thursday 19th January 2023 at 6.30pm

more information www.CCCOD.fr