

Press Release

ART: CONCEPT
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OPENING HOURS
TUESDAY - SATURDAY
11.00 AM > 07.00 PM

JEAN-MICHEL SANEJOUAND / BEYOND COLOR

Mars 10th 2018 - April 7th 2018

Three years after the last solo exhibition of the artist, which inaugurated the new space located at 4, Passage Sainte-Avoye, Art:Concept is happy to present Jean-Michel Sanejouand's new exhibition: *Beyond Color*. As the title suggests, this exhibition only features black and white works. Known, among other things, for his *Charges-Objets* (1962-1967) and his colorful *Espaces-Peintures* (1978-1986), Jean-Michel Sanejouand proposes here a presentation of his work elaborated around the gesture with a particular interest brought to the creative process.

This is not a negation of color, but rather an overtaking of that for a return to the singularity of gesture as root cause of what makes artwork. The sculptural practice of the artist confirms it, since his sculptures are made of assemblages of stones collected during his walks on the roads of Vaulandry, where he settled 25 years ago. Jean-Michel Sanejouand claims them to be "non-sculptures", questioning both the categorization proper to Art History and the status of artwork in itself. It is important to note that the artist initially considered these non-sculptures as models of monumental bronze casts. Thus in 1996 the city of Rennes acquired a 5-meters tall bronze sculpture. In recent years, the artist has continued to transcribe his stones into bronze sculpture but seems to satisfy himself with the more reduced "scale 1", only a few centimeters' height, as shown by the three sculptures presented at the gallery. Some, like *Le Navigateur*, have a figurative dimension referring to the artist's imagination and his ability, through gesture, to give form a narrative power that is not devoid of humor.

In parallel, the gallery presents fifteen small format acrylics on canvas (from *Espaces & Cie*, a series initiated in 2009) realized during the last two years. It is amazing to note the analogy between painting and sculpture in the practice of Sanejouand. In each painting we recognize the mineral and organic forms specific to the assembled sculptures. They appear as marks and traces, as if the artist had transposed the memory of his walks to his paintings. "*Finally I never stopped doing the same thing*," he says. We find precisely the randomness inherent to Sanejouand's walks in the freedom of the abstract gesture that always shows the same, almost obsessive, motivation: the search of form in space. Sometimes stains or wide brushstrokes, these patterns are similar to calligraphy. Here, the gesture is one of spontaneity and the artist does not allow himself any retouching. These are not preparatory drawings for his sculptures but rather variations around the same theme. Jean-Michel Sanejouand strives to restore the density of sculpture in his pictorial practice: "*sculpture becomes the subject of painting or more exactly the material of these sculptures becomes the painting. These sculptures, instead of being made of stone or bronze are made of paint*." He explains.



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In the same way as the sculptures refer to the artist's wanderings through the Angevin countryside, the acrylic paintings representing traces and stacks of stones evoke landscapes where we sometimes encounter characters. From 1986 to 1992, long before tending towards an abstraction linking absence of color and great simplicity of forms, Jean-Michel Sanejouand emphasized, with his *Peintures Noirs et Blanc* series, a more assertive figuration with always this essential principle of non-dissociation between painting and sculpture. The represented figures are nevertheless more face-archetypes than archetypes of individuals, as evidenced by the empty-eyed masks represented in this series. Emblematic signs, these masks seem to float between the linear brushstrokes that structure the white space of the canvas. The painted spaces of Jean-Michel Sanejouand are, so to speak: "landscapes with absent figures"¹ that require no presence except that of the viewer.

*"I have almost never stopped, for years, from returning to these landscapes that are also my abode."*²

Lila Cegarra (translation Frieda Schumann)

1 Philippe Jaccottet, *Paysages avec figures absentes*, Poésie / Gallimard, 1970 (trad. Frieda Schumann)

2 « *Je n'ai presque jamais cessé, depuis des années, de revenir à ces paysages qui sont aussi mon séjour.* » Philippe Jaccottet, *Paysages avec figures absentes*, Poésie / Gallimard, 1970, p.9 (trad. Frieda Schumann)

Born in 1934 in Lyon, Jean-Michel Sanejouand lives and works in Vaulandry. His work is present in prestigious public collections, including the Musée national d'art moderne/Centre Pompidou, the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco and one last recent acquisition by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It is also present in the collections of different Fracs in France and in several private collections in Paris, New York, Mexico and Bogotá. Many personal exhibitions have been devoted to him since the 1960s, among which the *Rétrospective des Charges-Objets aux Espaces-Peintures*, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lyon (1986), *Rétrospective 1963-1995* at the Centre Pompidou (1995), *Rétrospectivement...* at Frac Pays de Loire, Carquefou (2012) and the recent presentation of *Charges-Objets* and *Peintures Noirs et Blanc* at Mamco, Geneva (2015).

