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Christian Bonnefoi: Double Take

Curated by Sylvie Turpin
November 14th, 2016 – February 28th, 2017

Jean-Paul Najar Foundation
45 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, UAE
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“Mais comment parvenir [...] à voir du premier coup les choses pour la seconde fois?”
“But how can we manage [...] to see things at first glance for the second time?”
Jean Paulhan

The Jean-Paul Najar Foundation is honoured to host acclaimed French artist Christian Bonnefoi for a solo exhibition of seminal works from the collection as well as recent paintings. The artist's first exhibition in the Middle East will feature a commissioned installation for the museum, which opened its doors this March in Dubai’s Alserkal Avenue.

A long time friend and protégé of Najar, Bonnefoi’s exhibition at the JPNF will include paintings made at the start of his career in the 1970s. It will then demonstrate his creative evolution and growth over the decades. In the early years, Bonnefoi was interested in exploring the impact and creative implications of American art: abstract expressionism and minimalism. He was as equally interested in pursuing painterly practice, as theoretical reflection. It is from this time that he defined what was to become the method he follows to this day: to accompany each pictorial period by publications surveying the conceptual process and its evolution through the history of art.

From the start of the 1980s he embarked on a reconsideration of pre-war art with a particular focus on Picasso and Matisse. He inherited from both these artists a pronounced taste for the technique of collage. His recent works titled “Composition” show how he was able to develop and innovate this technique.

For the first time, the “Diagramme” a complex organisational chart of his works, will be displayed, and illustrate scientifically the evolution of his practice through the decades, as he travels through time revisiting each series of work.

Double Take is curated by Sylvie Turpin who has worked on more than 20 shows with the artist, and has explored the relationship between the patron-collector Jean-Paul Najar and the artist: “When we realized that the museum’s
archives were so rich it became evident we needed to juxtapose them with the paintings.” Turpin continues, “The
documents narrate four decades, drawings, letters, polaroids, notes and are an invaluable history of Bonnefoi’s work,
and the richness of his relationship with Najar.”

“It is important to remember that for years, painters and musicians would meet every night, until the early hours,
around the table at Jean-Paul’s residence: endless conversations, exclusively on art and philosophy, would take place.”
Recalls Bonnefoi. “The guests would make commentary on each other’s paintings as they hung on the walls.” The
artist’s testimony narrates that theses evenings, beyond the friendly and entertaining nature, were an essential part in
the development of his research.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive public and educational program, core to the JPNF’s mission
to engage the community.

Christian Bonnefoi Biography

Christian Bonnefoi was born in Salindres, France in 1948. He has degrees from both the Ecole Pratique des Hautes
Etudes, as well as the Université de Paris—Sorbonne, where he completed a PhD in Art History. He has had both
solo and group shows around the world including at P.S. 1, the Wexner Center for the Arts in Ohio, the Ginza Maison
Hermès, Tokyo, and Pompidou where he was given a retrospective in 2008. His latest solo show took place in May
at Thea Westreich in New York, in collaboration with Campoli Presti of London. The artist’s work can be found in such
permanent collections around France as the Centre Pompidou or the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris, and at the
Museum of Contemporary Art in Guangzhou, China, or the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Beijing. Bonnefoi
continues to both make art—mostly paintings and collages—as well as to write critical and theoretical essays about it
for a variety of publications. He splits his time between Paris and his studio farmhouse near Montargis.

About the JPNF

The JPNF is an ICOM registered museum of contemporary art that is home to a collection of European and
American abstract art from the 1960s through today. It is a non-commercial space, that exhibits works from within
the collection but also from other institutions and collections, and is also the custodian of a remarkable archive
tracing forty years of artist-collector exchanges. The JPNF presents three curated exhibitions a year, and has, since
opening in March 2016 welcomed more than 12,000 visitors. The JPNF continues to acquire and commission works
and offers an inspiring calendar of educational and public programs. The museum is located in Alserkal Avenue and
was designed by Mario Jossa, of Marcel Breuer & Associates.