

Communication Department

**PRESS PACK**

**PRIX  
MARCEL DUCHAMP  
2006**

**PHILIPPE MAYAUX  
À MORT L'INFINI**

**10 MAY - 15 AUGUST 07**



**Centre  
Pompidou**

**PRIX MARCEL DUCHAMP 2006  
PHILIPPE MAYAUX – À MORT L'INFINI  
10 MAY – 15 AUGUST 2007  
ESPACE 315, LEVEL 1**

**Centre Pompidou**  
Communication Department  
75191 Paris cedex 04  
France  
director  
**Roya Nasser**  
press officer  
**Dorothee Mireux**  
telephone  
00 33 (0)1 44 78 46 60  
e-mail  
dorothee.mireux@centrepompidou.fr

**Adiaf**  
www.adiaf.com  
press officer  
**Caroline Crabbe**  
telephone  
00 33 (0) 6 10 19 36 31  
e-mail  
carolinecrabbe@adiaf.com  
curator  
**Jean-Pierre Bordaz**  
curator in Musée national d'art  
moderne, contemporary art  
Department

**CONTENTS**

<b>1 - PRESENTATION OF THE ARTIST'S PROJECT</b>	page 3
<b>2 - VIEWS OF THE EXHIBITION</b>	page 5
<b>3 - CATALOGUES</b>	page 6
<b>4 - BIOGRAPHY</b>	page 12
<b>5 - VISUALS AVAILABLE FOR PRESS USE</b>	page 14
<b>6 - THE MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE</b>	page 16

## 1. PRESENTATION OF THE ARTIST'S PROJECT

**«The question of painting shouldn't even be posed any longer, nor the question of beauty come to that. When I hear talk of well painted, badly painted, I feel I'm in some dusty craft exhibition in the company of grey-beards, whinging or otherwise.»**

*Philippe Mayaux* in Philippe Mayaux, Semiose/Loevenbruck, Paris, 2006

From 10 May to 15 August 2003, the Centre Pompidou will be showing *À mort l'Infini*, an exhibition by Philippe Mayaux, sixth winner of the Prix Marcel Duchamp, painter of iconoclastic icons, plaster-caster of the obverse of space, engineer of indecency and geneticist of the grotesque, designer of arsenals and optician of non-being, caterer for cannibals. Often described as kitsch, he only makes jokes in bad taste to vindicate his freedom. Bastard child of the improbable coupling of Magritte and Rose Selavy, nourished on metaphysical painting, Philippe Mayaux today can only feel, as he says, exotic!!!

Invited by the Centre Pompidou, with the financial support of the ADIAF, Mayaux has made novel use of Espace 315 for an exhibition that take us from war to love, from the rational to the chimerical, from science to fiction, an exhibition based on the very painterly idea of the simultaneous contrast engendered by the juxtaposition of contraries. In discussing the artist, Didier Ottinger – author, with Jean-Yves Jouannais and Jean-Pierre Bordaz, of one of the catalogue essays – turns to Schrödinger's famous cat, the guinea-pig of a quantum thought-experiment that implies an animal simultaneously dead and alive. It is into a world of such paradox, engendered by the relativising power of duality, that Mayaux invites his visitors.

They are greeted by a red carpet, stretching from one end of the room to another, that marks out the path through the show. At the near end flutters an allegorical monochrome (*Quickly White*), a white sheet on white suspended from an undulatory mechanism that seems to strain, over and over again, to reanimate or resuscitate an anaemic peace.

In front of it, sardonic as soldiers on parade, are six glass cases (*Angry White*) stuffed with plaster casts recalling innocuous blister packs, forming a guard of horror on either side of the carpet. Four serve to display an extravagant arsenal: heaped up in battlefield disorder are trenches and fortifications, big guns and missiles, antennae and radar screens, aeroplanes and tanks, the delicately constructed elements of a monochromatic and almost burlesque disaster. Here too is oxymoron: the fragility of arms.

The two others are covered by the quasi-decorative geometry of a miniature field of crosses, a sinister cemetery, deathly white, whose grave-monuments could have come straight out of a silicone ice-cube tray.

What fascinates Mayaux in casting as a technique is both the metamorphosis of the material – which starts off as powder to become liquid, and the turns from liquid to solid – and the fact that void becomes solid, revealing its form, as Duchamp demonstrated so well with his «*Objet dard*».

On the right as one enters, pasted onto the very wall, a poster has a pair of chimeras, all unaware of the drama of the vitrines, conversing beside a heap of firewood. Thoughtful, the monkey-donkey asks the donkey-monkey: "You got a light?" Might these be the ancestors of a humanity that now knows the answer?

On the right-hand wall, ranked like trees at the edge of a wood, are thirteen paintings of bark, the bark of thirteen trees, evocatively named: *Aube, Epine, Tremble, Charme, Putier, Pleureur, If, Houx, Bouleau, Sapin, Marronnier, Arbre de Judas*. The name of the species appears on each as if carved into the bark with the point of a knife, but not without transformation. "Houx" (holly) becomes "OU" (or); "bouleau" (birch) becomes BOULOT (work), while "if" (yew) suggests "SI" (if) and "pleureur" (weeping [willow]) LARMES (tears). Through such metaphor nature succeeds in speaking to humankind about vanity and fear of a time that passes too quickly. And might it by such canting secretly hope to survive in its diversity?

At the very centre of the exhibition sits a mirrored construction, a space within a space. On going in, the visitor quits the austerity and belligerence of the opening section to enter into a more sensual, more voluptuous environment. The glittering jewel supports one in the metamorphosis, serving as a mediating lock, or teleporter, as the artist has it. It is a parallelepiped covered in mirror, through whose silver appear from time to time, in characters of light, the letters "JTM" and "TUM." Is it the world of reflection that speaks to us now?

Within, inside a polygon in the form of a solitaire, we witness a curious ritual between:

- the dance of life, a sculpture (part stool, part bicycle wheel) that blushes at the least word, another undulatory mechanism that animates a long dress from whose hem nine tears of Plexiglas hang like pearls, the fabric dancing under the shifting centrifugal force. Yet if, appallingly curious, one were to approach too closely, its vulnerable vitality would be interrupted threatening to destroy it altogether, so delicate is the thing. Only (sound) waves may touch it.

- And around it, almost embracing it, nine moulds of Liars (small electrical appliances), with the faces of grotesques, attempting to gain its attention. In unison, they assault it with a nuptial song, "I will love more than anything all my life, " written by the artist for these wordy objects – a refrain that brings a blush to the belle. But do they not have only bachelor promises to offer her?

On leaving behind this amorous cacophony, relieved, one finds a banquet spread for a possible wedding to Thanatos. Thirteen dishes (*Savoureux de toi*) are already laid out, at the risk of their getting cold. From afar, colourful as desserts and odorous with pheromones, these offerings are enticing, but they inspire a strong sense of disgust on closer inspection. Taken together, the joints offered for our delectation form the whole body of a woman, from head to foot. These are more casts. Mayaux explains: "What interests me about the casting here is that the original, the body, the model for the cast, is a hyper-realist surface onto which I project an interior. So there's this mix between what is real, the naturalistic skin imprinted on the silicone, and what is transformed, the plaster of a completely invented copy. And speaking of this body, Nietzsche asked more or less whether our passion could long survive awareness of the guts and fluids contained in the desired body. And my answer is yes, if I can invent them!" Might we, with hungry passion and gastronomic discrimination, devour the other, leaving only one where once were two?

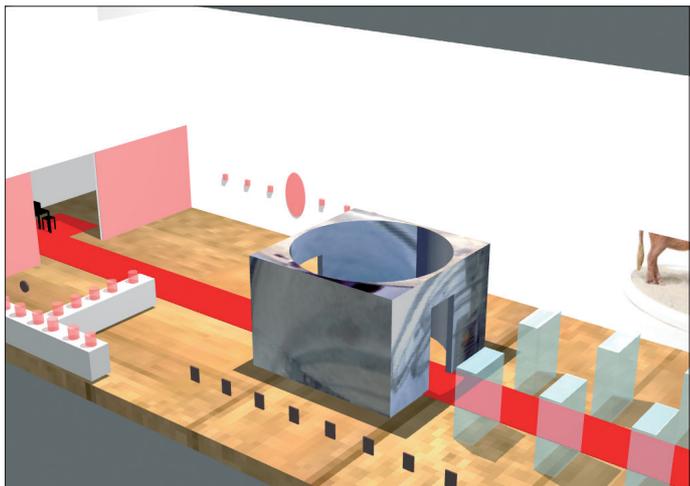
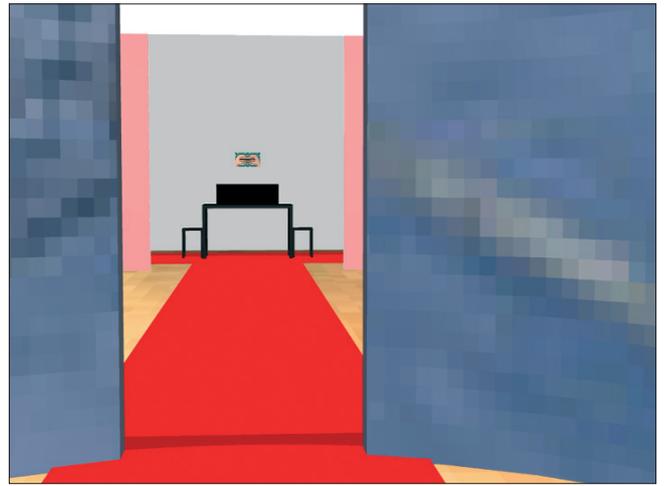
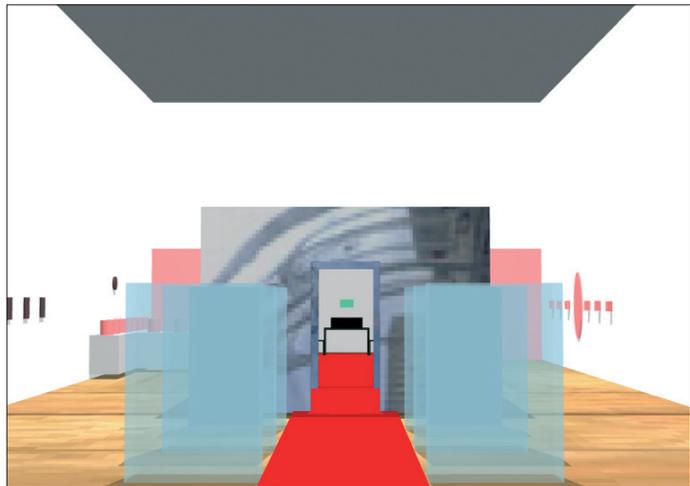
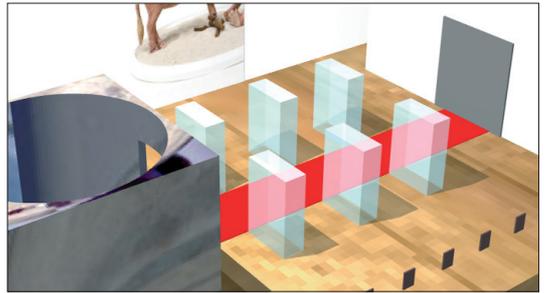
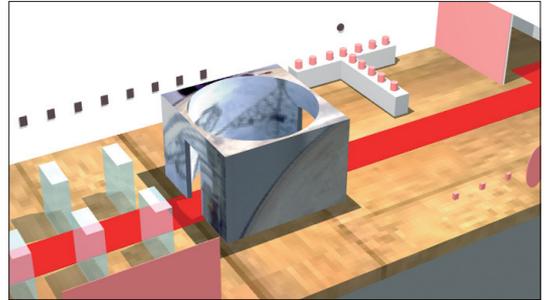
Wedding entertainment is provided by a provocative French Cancan on the wall opposite: six little automata with the air of human figures shake their froufrou skirts for pleasure, angels' wings quivering with a desire rediscovering a sex willingly revealed. At the centre of the ballet, a landscape with waterfall (*Chut, l'Edeb s'écoute*) should do something to cool the torrid atmosphere, but once again, from close up, the view proves deceptive: the landscape hides a nude. Faced with this composition of volume, movement and painting, one is reminded of course of the view of vision in Duchamp's «*Étant donné...*». Is Mayaux too intent on making a voyeur of the visitor?

On either side of the threshold of the last room two other posters of chimeras (*La décloneuse* and *Focbite*), adverts again for illusion, guard the entrance like voluptuous gargoyles. Mayaux says such hybrid figures interest him because they always reappear when mankind is frightened of the world. Is this the case today?

Finally, the exhibition ends with a small, almost empty room in the middle of which stands a disturbing catafalque. On one side is carved the no less disturbing epitaph, «*À mort l'infini*» ("Death to the infinite"), from which the exhibition takes its title. Two stools invite one to sit before a peephole and peer inside. Beyond the recalcitrant mineral (the monument being constructed in a synthetic material in perfect imitation of stone) is thus revealed a vast, transparent space produced by six curved mirrors facing each other. Within it, on the arch of a bridge, a small device fills this micro-universe with light, one bulb being multiplied to infinity in this specular universe, so producing its own Milky Way. But the viewer risks his eye in looking, for the apparatus defends its secret with the point of needle oriented directly in the line of sight. As if, for our peace of mind, we are to be forbidden this perspective on the infinite that reminds us of what we are, star dust in search of spirituality.

## 2. VIEWS OF THE EXHIBITION

Project of the exhibition 01 – 06. Philippe Mayaux, Prix Marcel Duchamp 2006, Project for the Centre Pompidou  
© Philippe Mayaux, 2007. Courtesy Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris



### 3. CATALOGUES

#### ADIAF/PRIX MARCEL DUCHAMP 2006

##### Un-Deux... Quatre ÉDITIONS

Format : 22 x 27 cm, 48 pages,

Bilingual French/English

20 euros

#### PHILIPPE MAYAUX

##### Collection Espace 315

Directed by: Françoise Bertaux and Geneviève Munier

Editions du Centre Pompidou

Format: 17 x 22 cm, 80 pages

Bilingual version French/English

Price: 18 euros

Authors: Jean-Pierre Bordaz, Jean-Yves Jouannais, Didier Ottinger

#### PHILIPPE MAYAUX, THE SMILE OF SCHRÖNINGER'S CAT<sup>1</sup>

DIDIER OTTINGER

If we replaced the antique toga with the Perfecto leather jacket, and the patriarchal beard with the double-blade shave, then Philippe Mayaux could legitimately take the place of Leonardo da Vinci amidst the philosophers in the fresco of *The School of Athens* painted by Raphael for the Vatican Chambers. Like Leonardo (to whom his *Jocondeur*, 1991, was an explicit homage), Mayaux believes in the union of art and science. His own personal *Mona Lisa* remembers Marcel Duchamp. Her name is *Chut l'éden s'écoute* (Shhh, Eden's listening to itself, 1994); her "smile" is vertical.

#### 1 - Zoom in

Philippe Mayaux's early works attest his precocious interest in Surrealism. The first work in his catalogue raisonné (*Trois cheminées rouges* [*Three Red Chimneys*] 1987) is a direct homage to the work of Giorgio De Chirico, and the score of paintings that follow all bear the imprint of that metaphysical painter. Their tottering spaces, their forced perspectives, and their stage-set Roman arcades all transpose De Chirico's universe onto the scale of pretty little pictures. [...]

When, upon reaching the thirtieth work in his catalogue raisonné, Mayaux decided to move away from De Chirico a little, it was in order to move closer to René Magritte. *La politique du pavé (bien heureuse la pierre car elle ne ressent rien)* (*The Politics of Paving Stones* [Happy the Stone for It Feels Nothing], 1988) marks his entrance into the optico-speculative world of the Walloon painter. His most recent paintings, devoted to eloquent barks: *If* [Yew], *Tremble* [Aspen], *Bouleau* [Birch], attest his constant exploration of the uncertain frontiers between images and words.

The "cobblestone" that he painted in 1988 echoed the series of "petrifications" painted by Magritte in the early 1950s. *Grisailles* [*Brouillon de glace* [Rough Ice Cream] from 1988, *L'obstacle, Demeure aux perspectives étranges* [The Obstacle, House with Strange Perspectives], both 1989), a cheese (*Tout un fromage*, 1988), a few direct references to packaging and advertising (*Montagne de la bouteille* [Bottle Mountain], 1989, *Thon véritable de mer*, 1990, *Le meilleur au lait cru à travers l'œil de bœuf* [Real Sea Tuna, Le Meilleur with Unpasteurised Milk through the Bull's Eye], 1990) confirmed this affinity with the painter of pipes that were not. (For a while, Magritte made a living in advertising, [...].)

What Mayaux takes from Magritte is the spirit as much as the letter. From the "letter" (the images) he borrows the spirit, that is, the principle of painting designed to titillate the retina as much as it tickles the understanding. From the "spirit" characteristic of Magritte's art, he takes for his own paintings the use of words, the confusion they generate between what is seen and what is read, between meaning and reason. Mayaux works to make this confusion prosper. He dreams of a co-intelligence of contraries (the expression, this time, is from Duchamp), extrapolates this to the fields of art and science, cultivates the fantasy of their reconciliation. [...]

<sup>1</sup> In 1935 the physicist Erwin Schrödinger devised the "cat paradox" to illustrate the absurdity of apply the laws of quantum physics to the macroscopic world (our scale). On the quantum scale, a cat can be both alive and dead, which in our world makes him as unlikely a creature as the cat that is reduced to his smile in Alice in Wonderland.

## 2- Vertiginous Eros

The phallic forms that “tumesce” throughout Mayaux’s works (it would be tedious to have to count them all, starting with those chimneys sending out plumes of smoke in his first painting) leave no doubt as to the erotic nature of his art. Cupid with his dimpled, chubby little arms, supports the keystone to this edifice. Eros was of course the great inspirer of Surrealist art. With his *Suspended Ball*, Alberto Giacometti created the perfect work, condensing all its charm and power. The first “object functioning symbolically,” the *Suspended Ball* was radically new in that it appealed to the sense of touch. (Mayaux too makes copious use of this “phenomenological augmentation”; many of his paintings suggest haptic perception.) [...]

Sixty-six years after Giacometti, Philippe Mayaux conceived his first “object functioning symbolically.” *La race aérienne* [The Aryan Race] looks like a brothel fantasy, a mechanical substitute for Viagra. At the foot of a bed, the head of which has a mirror, a little train (De Chirico’s?) comes and goes along a bridge which ends in two tunnels, where the machine disappears.

More recently, a new category of objects has appeared. These fill the shelves of a cannibal patisserie selling finger sandwiches, cakes of pricks and fannies and titty puddings. Their meaning extends that of the lubricious machines. The ethnologist and psychologist both recognise the existence of deep links between the tender Eros and the insatiable Bacchus. In his *Three Essays*, Freud points out that, “The history of civilisation shows beyond any doubt that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct. [...] According to some authorities, this aggressive element of the sexual elements is in reality a relic of cannibalistic desires.”<sup>2</sup>

[...] In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud confirms the power of cannibalism to subsume the most fundamental contradictions. He distinguishes three characteristic aspects of the cannibal oral relation.

- Love in the form of the desire to take the loved object into oneself.
- The destruction that accompanies its consumption.
- The conservation and appropriation of the said object’s qualities.

Love and hate, conservation and destruction – cannibalism is indeed the fast track to all forms of synthesis. [...]

## 3 - The Man with Copper Soles

As Mayaux himself would say, Surrealism is the fig leaf that hides the forest of his œuvre. It is the index finger stared at by the imbeciles (hasty exegetes and myopic historians) who fail to notice the moons he is pointing at, in space and in time. The movement founded by André Breton was itself the heir to a long tradition. Back beyond Romanticism, it was rooted in a way of thinking and a time when myth had not been discredited by sovereign reason. This remote past was a time of philosopher-magi, the physiologist-wizards, of poet-mathematicians; the time that witnessed the life of Empedocles of Agrigentum. [...]<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning, taught Empedocles, was the *Sphairos*, a perfect “ball” into which the universe was gathered up, indivisibly joined under the law of Harmony.

[...]

Mayaux has given a new name to this *Sphairos* in which forms and colours fuse together. He calls it “The infinity of painting”; it is a work in progress, a ball into which he is forever mixing the coloured residues of his works.

Empedocles tells how “Hate” follows cyclically in order to break the unity of the *Sphairos*. The name given by modern astronomers to this phase in the life of the Cosmos is the Big Bang.

Mayaux initially doubted this story. In 1991 his scepticism was expressed in a painting that he entitled *Little Bang*. Then he started reading, immersed himself in his favourite magazines (*Science et vie*, *La Recherche*), and finally overcame his doubts, and painted *Le ciel de Cobe* (The Sky from Cobe, 1993). The image is that of a “fossil” radiance that validates the hypothesis of an original explosion. It was transmitted to us in 1992 by a satellite sent on a distant expedition (COBE = Cosmic Background Explorer). With this “BANG,” with the coming of “Hate,” the founding principles of the cosmos regained their autonomy. Mayaux embodies them in the figures of the *Quatre z’éléments* (4 Elementz, 1998) which short-circuit Empedocles and Marvel [I assume he means Marvel comics, not Marvell the metaphysical... if yes, French needs correcting, too] [fire, air, earth and water take some of their characteristics from the “Fantastic Four” cartoon characters].

The next stage in the evolution of the cosmos sees the separated principles give form to a fertile teratology [...]

Modern science has confirmed Empedocles’ intuitions. In 1909 the American palaeontologist Charles Doolittle Walcott discovered in British Columbia the Burgess Shale, fossil remains of the “primeval soup” dating from the Cambrian era when

2 Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Basic Books, 2000, p. 25.

3 Contemporary accounts offer a striking portrait of the philosopher as a man who wore a wreath of laurel in his thick hair and purple robe with a golden belt and sandals. He also wore the holy fillets of Delphi. Thousands of men and women would follow him, eager to discover the path to riches or health.

"limbs were taking form." The biologist Stephen Jay Gould evokes its fertility. [...]

A great fan of the science that opens onto fiction, Mayaux painted a *Soupe primitive* (Primeval Soup, 1991), then assembled a series of Chimeras. [...]

To this teratology, Mayaux has devoted a great number of works. He gave the name *Chimères* (2006) to a composite tribe whose metamorphoses, evoking that time when the cosmos was divided by Love and Hate, are recorded in his *Cibachromes*, metamorphoses characteristic of that time of.

He has devoted two series of vitrines to each of these forces. The first (*Camelote body*, 1999-2006), full of anatomical fragments, generally pink ones, celebrates the powers of "Love" and its messenger Eros. *Angry white* (2006-2007) holds objects that metamorphose into weapons. These vitrines, which are all white, attest the power of "Hate." Eros and Polemos share out Mayaux's work equally between them, as love and hate do the cosmos of Empedocles. [...]

Surrealism was always searching for the Burgess Shale of creation, that rich primeval soup in which forms come together and fall apart in accordance with the laws of "the true reality of life." [...]

Examining the Burgess Shale, Stephen Jay Gould found himself calling into question Darwinian determinism, that law of historical becoming applied to biology. "I fear that *Homo sapiens* is only one 'very little thing' in a vast universe, a highly unlikely event in evolution, belonging entirely to the domain of contingency."<sup>4</sup>

When he in turn stirs the primeval soup, Mayaux is aware that he is calling into question the progressivist, evolutionary model of art taught by his masters. Several of his works refer directly to this Darwinism, which at the time was the model inspiring the teaching in art schools. *Le chaînon manquant* (The Missing Link, 1994) is a mocking refutation of evolutionism. *Moa, ce bel oiseau disparu* (Moa, This Beauteous Extinct Bird, 1990) shows a creature that, like himself – a painter and therefore a creature of another age – is condemned by the iron law of so-called natural selection.

That the theory of modern art transposes Darwinian schemas is obvious, as can easily be seen the arborescent diagrams drawn by Alfred Barr, founder of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and many other historians after him, in order to chart the process of its "evolution." At the end of the 1970s, this Darwinism was the main target of the theoreticians of the "postmodern" nebula.

Mayaux has chosen Empedocles against Darwin. He makes images and portmanteau words, cultivates Freudian slips and nonsense, tells preposterous stories that bring a smile to the faces of the quantum cats, those felines who are simultaneously dead and alive.

## PHILIPPE MAYAUX INTERVIEWED BY JEAN-PIERRE BORDAZ

**Jean-Pierre Bordaz: [...]** How do you situate yourself in relation to today's art, that being the field of the Prix Marcel Duchamp?

Philippe Mayaux: Working as I do at this particular time, there may be a rupture but, essentially, it's very much the opposite of rupture. I belong to a generation that witnessed the death of the avant-garde and of ideologies. [...] The break was made by our fathers. They should have worked with the materials that they invented. I think that maybe I'm a contemporary classic, a modern, but that at the same time I have never got away from this logic of rupture. [...]

JPB. Your work makes frequent references to the avant-garde spirit, formulated in a language that is very much your own, and at the same time it takes a position in relation to today's art.

PM. [...] This has taught me one thing, which is that art, as you were saying, is an alchemy, an alchemy of the optical and the conceptual, a mix of these two elements, which complement each other. [...] I believe you can think with your eyes as well as with the brain. [...] And the use of concepts – they're the real lever of the avant-garde. These concepts taught me what it is to be an artist and what an artwork is. Everything has been dissected, measured, weighed, even the role of the institution. There is a kind of will to go to the end of art. [...]

---

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life*, op. cit.

JPB. That leaves what one could call an art of accompaniment. I'll explain what I mean: you put together a painting, an object, a series of paintings and objects, the beginnings of an installation, and this blurs the issue a bit. When you think of painting, when you lay claim to it, you are at the same time defining the context in which it exists and is inserted. [...]

PM. Yes, [...] I wanted to break with that, to create a kind of alchemy – that word again – between almost incompatible elements, and try to see if it might work to combine them. In the end the signifier of painting comes only from painting and not from something else. It's all there in a single painting, and the rest is a dilution of that idea. Every time, dare I say, there is progress that is technical because technique serves as a support for the concept, but also because each painting is different from the one before, because there's a kind of arithmetical progression.

[...]

JPB: To make the *Chimères*, which are transgressive works, you chose to use photography, a means of multiple reproduction...

PM. That's right, I use only photography to make a *Chimère* because for me painting plus a chimera is a tautology: painting itself is chimerical. In this particular case I prefer the objectivity of the lens because it makes the chimerical vision critical, whereas in painting it remains phantasmagorical. This chimerical vision works away even at the realist system of photographic representation.

JPB. Your work comes across as an ensemble, a totality, as if you were trying to avoid repetition, or forms that are too obviously honed.

PM. When I install an exhibition I try to create an atmosphere, something that relates to the body, in which you go from one event to another, and where this produces a kind of scenario.

Just because I make paintings doesn't mean that I reject everything created by my contemporaries. The only question I ask myself when looking at installations is: is their pictorial representation equivalent to their material construction? Because in the end many installations are simply images in 3D form. And that's why they interest me, when the beholder is immersed in an atmosphere and enters an environment that is a kind of skull. The aim of the exhibition is to create a brain and the paintings, machines and objects are neurones that connect up with each other and form a signifying network. I never considered the artwork itself to be interesting. Ultimately, it's a cast off, but also a concretion of the cure. It's a kind of tumour that crystallises, that brings the ideas into focus, and that needs to be operated on. You're never really satisfied with the result. The most important thing is what comes to you straight afterwards, when you look at it.

That changes the way you think about what follows. I often talk about the notion of interdependent fragments.

JPB. In your installation for Espace 315, isn't there a rejection of uniformity? Work that are gentle, sensuous and even outright erotic cohabit with works that are more lewd and excessive, and go all the way to evocations of war.

PM. Yes, that's the solution I found for countering method. Like in advertising, Warhol gives us a good formula for making a work of art, that is to say, you repeat the same image (if it works), prefer photography, because it is realist and conveys a clearer message, etc. A whole commercial rhetoric of communication is being used here to assert an idea. I prefer to set things in motion. I don't want to impose a form and repeat it ad infinitum like a product. I try to convey thought without formulating it in an idea, and it's not easy to make the beholder simultaneously understand one thing and its contrary.

[...]

JPB. In your exhibition, the body is all over the shop, in a thousand pieces, so that its fingers, mouths and breasts take on an uncanny quality.

PM. I have an anatomical vision of things. The body is an ensemble of linked fragments. It's a bit like that with the social body, too. Everywhere, even nature has the same composition. For me, the flesh is ideal reflexive material.

[...]

JPB. It's not quite right to see your work as a continuation of Surrealism. Some of the themes are similar – the forest (Max Ernst), or mystery (De Chirico), but the pictorial technique is distinctive.

PM. I am a fourth-generation hyper-Surrealist! What I don't like in Surrealism is phantasmagoria, paintings of the fantastic. What I do like, though, are the richer and freer techniques of objective chance and of the random association of elements generating meaning, which I think are better expressed in Surrealist literature.

JPB. Let's talk about the layout of your show at Espace 315.

PM. Because the space is long and narrow, I have used the idea of line to pay out a guiding thread between the apparently scattered elements that constitute my rather heterogeneous practice. It's hard to understand the transition between the *Coucous* (Cuckoos) and the tree paintings, or the war objects and the love machines. There is a kind of chaos in all that. The red line, a carpet running through the space, is a very coherent metaphor: if you draw out the thread between things, they become clearer and resonate together.

JPB. What does it start with?

PM. I divided up the space width-wise. The first part, which is a bit austere, addresses the Vanitas theme. It is taken up by an ensemble of memento moris. That's another old problem in art. I have always been attracted by this genre. Death is to the fore here in several ways, ranging from chimeras to tree bark and from agitated monochromes to knives.

JPB. Why have you made these knives ["armes blanches" in French] deliberately white?

PM. In my work there's a mixture of opposites. White is the colour of neutrality, the colour of peace. This white becomes an anti-expressive colour. It would have been redundant to paint the objects. Visually, these weapons made by casting plaster in simple plastic packaging such as yoghurt pots suggest an atmosphere of fragile peace. As always in my work, I try to use a thing to express its opposite. There is a serenity in these bellicose vitrines, these glass soldiers. The sight of all these weapons displayed and ready for carnage is also very disturbing. Like Thanatos, Eros is systematically to the fore here. The cannon, rocket and missile are erectile. All these metaphors convey a sexuality that is manifestly virile but reduced to higgledy-piggledy domestic knickknacks. Indeed, Eros is contained in the very technique of casting, as Duchamp has shown us. When the empty becomes full, the feminine becomes masculine and conversely, and plaster, an extremely fragile material, does not make objects immutable.

JPB. There are thirteen varieties of tree, is that right?

PM. It's like the edge of a wood made of almost abstract paintings, of paintings of surfaces, of bark – the skin of trees. On this bark, in trompe l'oeil, I have engraved the name of the tree represented, but with a slight phonetic or orthographic deviation. Thus *houx* [holly], becomes *ou* [or], and *bouleau* [birch], *boulot* [work]. And these words speak to men about themselves and about the suffering of time that passes by so quickly, especially for flesh-and-bone mortals. Trees were the origins of modern thought, in that wood gave us the fire with which to protect ourselves against the animal within. Vanities on which our human actions are engraved.

JPB. Isn't there another level of meaning in the exhibition with these monumental *Chimères* stuck on the walls?

PM. I have chosen the format of the advertising poster, as the typical space of virtual events where illusions are still tolerated. I make these *Chimères* into grotesques where the vegetable, the animal and the mineral form a vertiginous mix. In one of the photos a pair of chimeras are chatting around a wood fire that is still cold. They are asking each other for alight, awaiting the arrival of the humanity that will use that flame to destroy them. Another one shows an animal reduced to its bare essence as reproductive genitalia. What intrigues me with chimeras is that they always appear when men are afraid of the world.

JPB. The fact that these works are all juxtaposed means that are lots of different possible interpretations for each one.

PM. First of all, interpretation is the foundation of democracy. All my work is based on interpretation. I don't want the beholder to be treated as a child who is told how to interpret a work. I prefer to make the beholder responsible. What he thinks is his own responsibility; he must show himself for what he is.

JPB. There is an insistence on a kind of aesthetics of bad taste, as in the general use and accentuation of that raw pink for all the human figures...

PM. I use bad taste in order to express my undisciplined freedom regarding what has to be beautiful. The sole function of the artwork is to be seen, not to please. Modernity invented a kind of poetic beauty. Today, it is in deviant, fragile and sickly beauty that we find the most beautiful poetry.

As for the pink, it can be applied to absolutely any object. Its original material will instantly mutate into flesh, a kind of magic formula for embodying what exists. By covering an object with pink you turn it into a fully functioning organ.

#### 4. BIOGRAPHY (sélection)

Born in 1961 in Roubaix, France

Lives and works in Montreuil

The artist is represented by Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris.

#### SOLO SHOW

2006

Hors d'œuvre, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

Fragments solidaires, Villa Tamaris, La Seyne-sur-Mer

2005

Vous êtes ici ! Galerie Matargon, Malaucène

2004

J'T'M' galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

Kimaira, Fondation Mario Prassinos, Saint Remy de Provence, France

À mort l'infini, château de Lauris, Lauris, France

2003

Le désert, CCC, Tours

La fourmi, CCC, Tours

Le Cosmos est brésilien, Sao Paulo, Brésil

2002

Rangements, MAMCO, Genève

Why White ?, Galerie Juliane Wellerdieck, Berlin

#### GROUP SHOWS

2007

De leur temps (2), art contemporain et collections privées en France, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Grenoble, France

2006

Délicieux cadavre exquis, Le Dojo, Nice

Cosa Nostra, Glassbox, Paris

L'Egosystème, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers

Prix Marcel Duchamp (Lauréat), FIAC, Grand Palais, Paris, France

FIAC, galerie Loevenbruck, cour carrée du Louvre, Paris, France

Etranges Mécaniques, Frac Ile-de-France, Parc culturel de Rentilly, Marne-la-Vallée

BIG, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

L'amateur d'estampes, musée des Beaux-Arts de Tourcoing, Tourcoing

Déjà 5 ans seulement, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

Figures and Co, galerie Pictura - Centre culturel, Cesson-Sevigné, France

Est-ce bien de l'Art ? Centre d'Art de Saint Cyprien

Hommage à Sade, galerie Marion Meyer, Paris

Est-ce bien de l'art ? Centre d'art Contemporain, Perpignan

2005

Est-ce bien de l'art ? abbaye de Ronceray, Angers

WA, surface d'autonomie temporaire, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Imago Faber, La Galerie, Cesson Sévigné

Ultra max, Chez nous, Lyon

Art Basel Miami, USA

2004

Amicalement vôtre, commissaire Y. Brochard, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing  
Pas un jour sans une ligne, galerie Loevenbruck, Paris  
Grotesque, Burlesque, Parodie, centre d'art contemporain, Meymac  
Postérieurs, galerie Martagon, com. Guy Scarpetta, Malaucène

2003

Métissage, commissaire Yves Sabourin, Château de Vogié  
Regarde, il neige, Centre National d'Art et de Paysage, Vassivière  
Collection sans frontières, GAM, Torino  
Chimères, commissaire Didier Ottinger, Monaco

2002

French Collection, commissaire C. Bernard, MAMCO, Genève  
La cuite, commissaire G. Scarpetta, galerie Martagon, Malaucène  
Le paysage dans l'art d'aujourd'hui, Maison de la culture, Bourges  
À bas la société spéculaire marchande, espace Gustave Fayet, Sérignan  
Métissage, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, St Brieuc  
Art Wall Sticker, école des Beaux Arts, Metz  
Marchands de souvenirs, Musée de l'Abbaye Saintes-Croix, les Sables d'Olonne  
L'ivresse, Commissaire G. Scarpetta, Maison de la Devinière, Seuilly.  
Les heures claires, commissaire F. Lamy, Villa Savoye, Poissy

2001

Art et Bande Dessinée, commissaire G. Barbier, galerie de la Friche, Marseille  
Fait Maison, Musée international d'art modeste, Sète  
Collection du FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims  
Espace d'Amour, avec Philippe Ramette, galerie J. Wellerdiek, Berlin  
Les abattoirs, commissaire Joël Hubault, Toulouse  
Art Wall Sticker, Espace Paul Ricard, Paris  
Lost in the super market, commissaire J.Y. Jouannais, Espace Paul Ricard, Paris  
Effervescence, galerie Vallois, Paris  
Peintures, galerie du Triangle, Bordeaux

2000

Jour de fête, Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Petits leurres et faux-semblants, Chapelle Saint-Martin du Méjan, Arles  
Objets /Projet, centre d'art Shed im eisenwerk, Frauenfeld, Suisse  
sans titre, La Friche, Marseille  
Big Crunch 2, commissaire R. Leydier, la Boxe, Bourges

## 5. VISUALS AVAILABLE FOR PRESS USE

Any demand for authorisation for the use in whatever form of any visual work should be addressed to [adagp@adagp.fr](mailto:adagp@adagp.fr) or to ADAGP: 11, rue Berryer - 75008 PARIS, France  
tel: 00 33 (0)1 43 59 09 79 fax: 00 33 (0)1 45 63 44 89  
For further information: <http://www.adagp.fr>



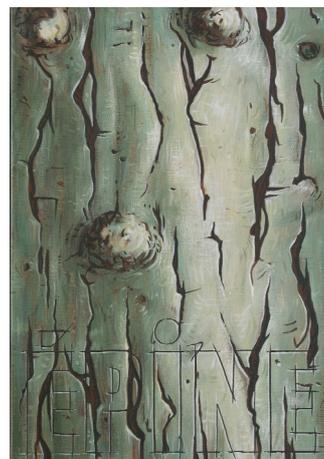
01. « La décloneuse » (chimère), 2006 - cibachrome 75 x 100 cm  
Collection privée, Paris. Courtesy Galerie Lœvenbruck



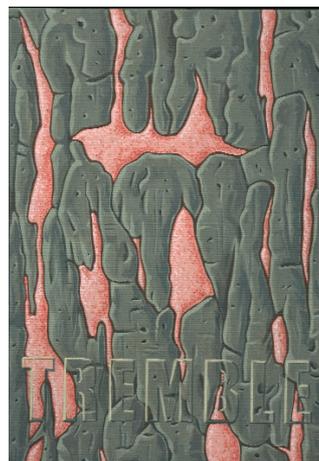
02. « Tas du feu ? » (chimère), 2006 - cibachrome 75 x 100 cm  
Collection privée, Paris. Courtesy Galerie Lœvenbruck



03. « A l'aube », 2006  
tempera on canvas, 35 x 24 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Lœvenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset



04. « Avec l'épine », 2006  
tempera on canvas, 35 x 24 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Lœvenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset



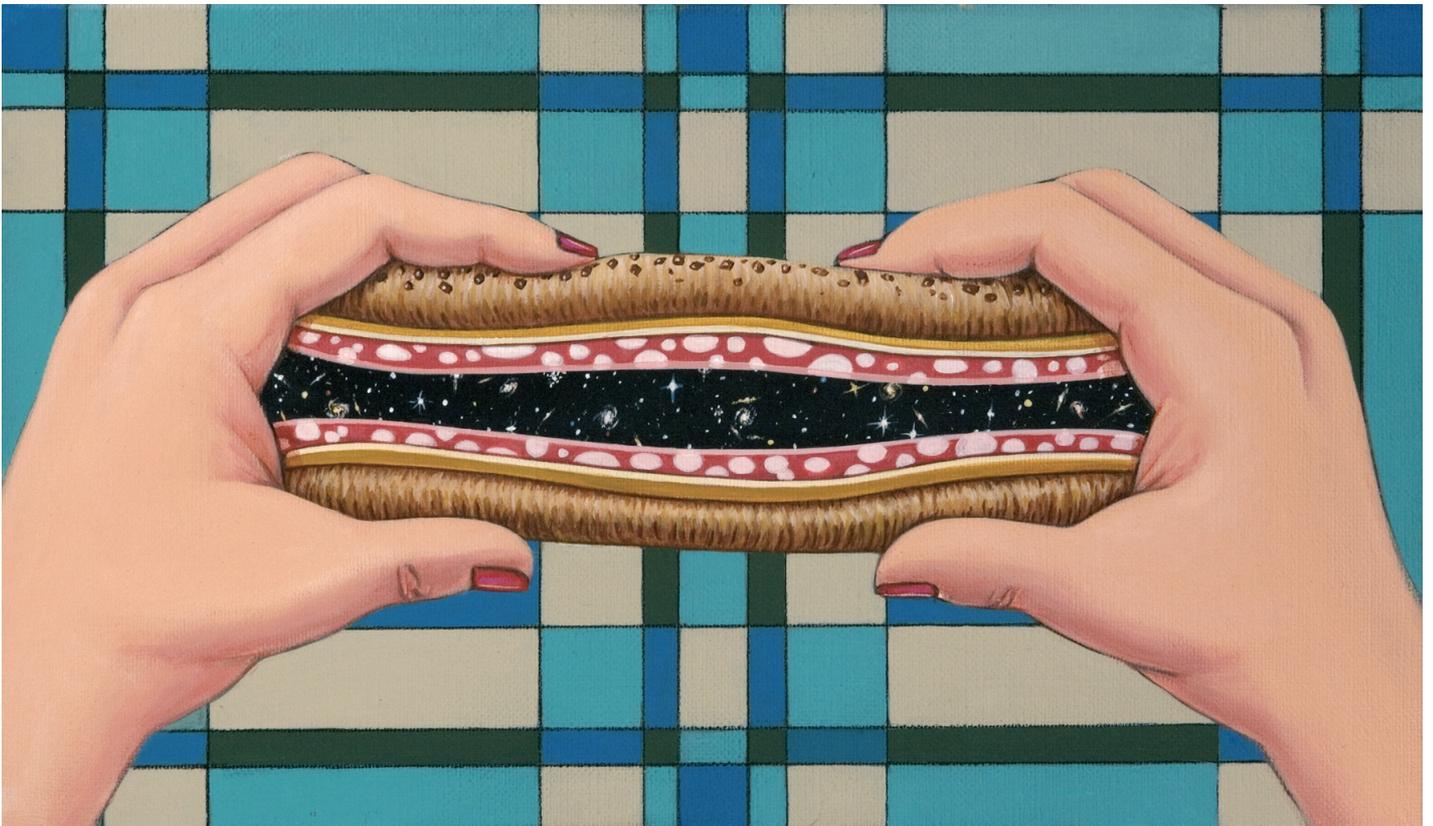
05. « Tremble », 2005  
tempera on canvas, 35 x 24 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Lœvenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset



06. « Savoureux de toi », 2006  
Painted synthetic plaster moulding, porcelain, 10 x 25 x 18 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset



07. « Savoureux de toi », 2006  
Painted synthetic plaster moulding, porcelain, 15 x 20 x 20 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset



08. « Cheddar, mortadella, cosmos », 2005  
tempera on canvas, 24 x 41 cm  
Courtesy Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris  
Photo credit : Fabrice Gousset

## 6. THE MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE

www.adiaf.com

### 2006 EDITION

#### Nominated artists

**Adel Abdessemed**, born in Consantine (Algeria) in 1971, lives and works in Paris  
Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris

**Leandro Erlich**, born in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1973, lives and works in Paris and Buenos Aires  
Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris

**Philippe Mayaux**, born in Roubaix (France) in 1961, lives and works in Montreuil  
Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

**Bruno Peinado**, born in Montpellier (France) in 1970, lives and works in Douarnenez  
Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris

#### Jury for the 2006 Marcel Duchamp Prize

**Dr Robert Fleck**, director of the Deichtorhallen - Hamburg (Germany)

**Gilles Fuchs**, president of the ADIAF (France)

**Fabrice Hergott**, director of the Museums of Strasbourg (France)

**Bernard Massini**, collector (France)

**Jacqueline Matisse-Monnier**, artist (France)

**Alfred Pacquement**, director of the National Museum of Modern Art (France)

**Patricia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**, collector (Italy)

#### Jury for the 2006 Marcel Duchamp Prize

The MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE was created in 2000 by the ADIAF, (Association for the international distribution of French art), the largest group of private and amateur contemporary art collectors in France, as an initiative, amongst others, for promoting French artists internationally. Its aim is to encourage all new art forms that stimulate contemporary creation, and to give recognition to a promising artist living in France and working in the domain of the visual and plastic arts.

This collectors' prize was set up in collaboration with the CENTRE POMPIDOU, the Musée National d'Art Moderne and, since 2005, the FIAC, the International Contemporary Art Fair in Paris.

The artists nominated for the MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE are unusually selected by a committee of collectors and art amateurs selected by the ADIAF. This international jury is composed of experts such as curators, critics and French and international collectors, whose advice is valued highly in the domain of contemporary art.

The MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE is awarded to an artist resident in France.

- It encompasses all means of expression in all the visual arts such as painting, sculpture, installation, photography and video.
- The nominees benefit from a collective exhibition under the aegis of the FIAC.
- The winner is awarded 35,000 euros.
- The winner is then invited by the Musée National d'Art Moderne to create a new work to be exhibited for two months at the Centre Pompidou.
- The ADIAF compiles a catalogue dedicated to the winner and nominees.
- The Centre Pompidou publishes a catalogue dedicated to the winner.

## SUPPORT FROM COMPANIES ENGAGED IN ART SPONSORSHIP

### **LOMBARD ODIER DARIER HENTSCH** - [www.lodh.com](http://www.lodh.com)

Founded in 1796, Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Co. is one of the oldest established private bankers in Geneva, and one of the largest in Switzerland and in Europe. The Group plays a major role in international finance and offers a wide range of advice to a private clientele in matters of heritage, financial products and specialised services.

The associates of Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Co have always been engaged with a number of development projects in the domain of culture, education and social responsibility. Aware of the importance of leaving future generations with a renewed and enriched heritage, they are particularly keen to support the artists of tomorrow. The Marcel Duchamp Prize subscribes to these principles by encouraging creativity amongst the young in France, and offering its talented artists the possibility of recognition on an international scale. And so Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Co is associated with awarding the MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE in Paris, organised jointly since the year 2000 between the ADIAF and the Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne.

### **INLEX IP EXPERTISE** - [www.inlex.com](http://www.inlex.com)

Inlex ip Expertise is one of the main French offices dealing with the protection of intellectual property rights (trademarks, industrial designs, technological innovations, copyright, unfair competition, etc.).

Dynamic and committed, this firm has been engaged, since it was founded twelve years ago, in international and interdisciplinary action aimed at promoting and protecting artistic and creative efforts of enterprises of any size, nationality or field of activity.

Inlex appreciates the genuinely united approach shown by the ADIAF towards the values associated with art to which our team has subscribed.

Hence, for the second consecutive year, we wish to renew our support to the ADIAF and our participation in the Marcel Duchamp Prize.

### **DAY TRADE ASSET MANAGEMENT (DTAM)** - [www.dtam.fr](http://www.dtam.fr)

Founded in 2002 by two bond traders, this Asset Management company has brought to the market a new and innovative strategy : Day Trading in Equities. A pioneer in the French market, it has managed to put together Day Trading and mutual funds. Independent, entrepreneurial, and regulated by the AMF (French Market Authority), DTAM offers dynamic funds, targeted for both individuals and institutions. After 5 years of successful management in Day Trading funds, DTAM has recently launched one of the first "French Hedge Fund": Day Trade Leverage.

In sponsoring young and talented French artists alongside ADIAF, DTAM wants to encourage innovation and contribute to select tomorrows perennial benchmarks....

### **ARTCURIAL**- Briest Le Fur Poulain F.Tajan - [www.artcurial.com](http://www.artcurial.com)

ARTCURIAL Briest Le Fur Poulain F.Tajan is happy to support the Association pour la Diffusion Internationale de l'Art Français in its promotion of French contemporary art, notably through the Prix Marcel Duchamp, intended to raise the profile of young French artists on the international stage. The biggest auction house in France, Artcurial is a major player in the international art market, 70% of its buyers coming from abroad.

The leading house for sales of contemporary art in France over the last decade, in 2006 Artcurial was responsible for the biggest sale of contemporary art ever held in the country. ADIAF's collector members value the exhibitions and sales it organises, featuring the work of both established and emerging artists.

### **AXENSE** -a brand of originality [www.axense.fr](http://www.axense.fr)

The Axense Agency was created from a wish to "communicate differently", and to offer alternative strategies. The whole approach is based on a philosophy of communication and on the principles of company management and societal values. As the company does not only concern itself with matters of economics, it is important to diffuse its values and to move forward in its social involvement with professionals and the general public. Using methods that are poles apart from plugging advertising, Axense proposes a form of communication that focuses on the brand's environment more than on the product itself. It favours an ethical communication that establishes a durable image for its clients in a volatile market. In the course of its development, Axense has become a member, since 2005, of the ADIAF, helping it out with its own promotion such as creating its internet site. A successful partnership thanks to the delicate touch of the agency's management and staff.

**CREATIVTV** - [www.creativtv.net](http://www.creativtv.net)

The MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE is also available on broadband video via the internet with CreativTV, the online television dedicated to the visual arts. CreativTV has been partner of the MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE for many years and proposes the public to meet the winner with a multimedia portrait encompassing a filmed interview, a photo report, articles by critics and documentaries.

## INFORMATIONS PRATIQUES

**Centre Pompidou**  
**75191 Paris cedex 04**  
téléphone  
**00 33 (0)1 44 78 12 33**  
métro  
**Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau**

**Horaires**  
exposition ouverte  
tous les jours,  
sauf les mardis,  
de 11h à 21h

**Tarifs**  
Billet unique  
10 euros, tarif réduit : 8 euros  
Valable le jour même pour le  
Musée national d'art moderne  
et l'ensemble des expositions.  
Imprimable à domicile  
**www.centrepompidou.fr**

Accès gratuit  
pour les adhérents du Centre  
Pompidou (porteurs  
du laissez-passer annuel)  
et les moins de 18 ans  
Renseignements  
**01 44 78 14 63**  
**www.centrepompidou.fr**

## AU MÊME MOMENT AU CENTRE

**SAMUEL BECKETT**  
14 mars – 25 juin 2007  
Attachée de presse  
Dorothee Mireux  
01 44 78 46 60

**AIRS DE PARIS**  
25 avril – 15 août 2007  
Attachée de presse  
Anne-Marie Pereira  
01 44 78 40 69

**ANNETTE MESSENGER**  
6 juin – 17 septembre 2007  
Attachée de presse  
Dorothee Mireux  
01 44 78 46 60

## COMMISSARIAT

commissaire de l'exposition  
**Jean-Pierre Bordaz**  
conservateur au Musée national  
d'art moderne, service des  
collections contemporaines