COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF
78, RUE JULIEN-LACROIX
F-75020 PARIS
T + 33 1 42 03 05 65
F + 33 1 42 03 05 46
WWW.GALERIEWOLFF.COM

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COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

LA ROUE REVISITED

December 13, 2017 - February 09, 2018

OSMOS Address, New York, USA

A holocaust survivor, Brunschwig has vigorously approached abstraction since the 1950s with striking conviction. Describing the history of abstract art as a kind of mise-en-abyme of compounding reflections and references, her work reaches towards a kind of emptiness found in the collapsed juxtapositions of light and dark, geometry and expressionism, the contained and the broken form. Her paintings and drawings – quiet, slow accumulations of ink and paint on paper – create
arpeggiated architectures influenced equally by the utopian plans of Kazimir Malevich and the interior atmospheres of William Turner.
OSMOS revisits a 1971 exhibition at Galerie La Roue in Paris, for which Brunschwig's works are mounted on scaffolding-like armatures, suspended freely in the air. Brunshwig described her historical moment in an essay from that year as a trajectoire brisee, or broken trajectory within the telos of painting. This solo exhibition is Brunschwig's first in New York.

Colette Brunschwig (b. 1927, Le Havre) studied at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts. One of the rare Jewish women of her generation to succeed in cutting a path into an artistic world dominated by men, Brunschwig exhibited at the historic Collette Allendy since the early 50s, as well as at Galerie Nane Stern and Galerie Clivags, and at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff. Her work is in the collections of the Centre Pompidou and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris, among others.

OSMOS Address is a storefront project space that was once a saloon where, according to Emma Goldman, "radical wr ters and artists … would argue the world's problems far into the night". With OSMOS Magazine, OSMOS Books, and OSMOS exhibitions and collaborations, Cay-Sophie Rabinowitz has established a multivalent international program for the exchange of ideas and images

Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition views: La Roue Revisited, at OSMOS Address, 2017-2018

Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition views: La Roue Revisited, at OSMOS Address, 2017-2018

COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

PAPIERS

February 18 – April 02, 2016

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Press release by Daniel Dobbels

Recourse will now be a constant, enigmatic force: it seems ageless and derives from no mere appearances. It goes… and spreads. It never seems to intercede, yet it sets itself between the fall-outs of time. Our eyes can see no better, they just sense that the recourse swells and that solitude would be incapable of speaking of it without "occasional faults, linear, surficial or volumetric faults" (it is thanks to them that the eye can bear the crystalline power that haunts it and, thus, abandons nothing of the atrocious ideal), experienced, only, so that the work may continue, each point needing to be considered, and the whole needing to be separated from any form of stupefaction.

Colette Brunschwig's extremely recent works stand on this "path"; they reveal what it brings – fine deltas in which reefs and recitals mutually obliterate each other before an idea of nothingness deposits an open voice, allowing for a drift towards effacement's tumour. "(…)The colours proper to life deepen, dance and detach themselves around this Vision in the Making" (Rimbaud, 'Being Beauteous', in Illuminations).

The path on which dread fades away runs beside the Vision, not without seeing it or grasping its attraction, but also excelling it with unsuspected surroundings. There is no ignorance, no denial, no misunderstanding of the Vision's powers, arising from all time like an admirable, constantly restarted mirage, ever deeper, spiralling like an insane interjection: "Oh, the ashen face; the escutcheon of horsehair, the crystal arms!" But the Vision sets a threshold at the heart of the Making, and it thus needs to be multiplied by other levers, backing up the irreducible law of apparently insignificant things, minute tremblings, refrained, legitimate and invisibly transcended fears. The Making is also the space and time of a deafening song, a silence levelled up to it, a home so vast that it is capable of resisting even the most abrasive powers. It is a resistance alien to any adversity: it knows itself to be endless and wipes this word away from the terrain it needs to cross over and discover. It is a deleted end, becoming broader and subscribed.

Colette Brunschwig engraves its instance and insistence, from a point where all ends seem disconcerted: History, though so vital, steps aside before the borderless laws of the instant – in is long version.

The path of recourse is not that of a return (be it eternal); it does not disparage it, it takes it over and coats it in never-seen-before amplitude, like light gravel scattered between heavens and earths, shifting at each footstep or stroke of a hand, inscribing and dis-inscribing, before any telling time, any trace which might have sworn to descend or come to rest there. Colette Brunschwig has that ability to record the pause which impatience drags beyond its own time, but without destroying it. The ever-so-exercised eye finds there its "continuation" (or the set of its resting places). The eye needs to wander and let itself drift, giving itself up to unequal rhythms which are still borne up by constantly rewoven, watchful sails, by a "headiness" untouched by the sun, coursed alongside by lands like constant thoughts, so that it is, once the senses have fled, consenting: this new time is made of space and space opens up when the as-yet-unwritten poem and painting, become a field of utter legibility unto itself, slip together towards this gravity point which is the centre of no constellation, but instead the unhoped-for quality of days yet to come.

Who could describe and name the waning of (destitute or miraculous) signs which, from one moment to the next, provide a recourse or, to be more precise, offer one? "Nobody".

But the time of nobody and their silence, in the end beyond all ends, are so light that they are what matters, when both things and beings fall away. There is a weighing of each paper, each canvas, each drawn or inked line, in every colour, coming from farther off, somewhere more ardent, with a hopeful basis. A weighing that crystal or glass arms have the ability to raise, warned by this mortal surfeit that threatens the human body (there, in a "dark wood" squatting in the folds of the night, where translucent forearms stretch out, spring into view, then let go without a cry). It adds nothing to the weight of what is, just subtracting from it an unacceptable load, which encumbers time and makes it opaque.

"True, the new era is nothing if not harsh.

For I can say that I have gained victory; the gnashing of teeth, the hissing of hellfire, the stinking sighs subside. All my monstrous memories are fading. My last longings depart, - jealousy of beggars, bandits, friends of death, all those that the world passed by. – Damned souls, if I were to take vengeance!
One must be absolutely modern.
Never mind hymns of thanksgiving: hold onto a step once taken. A hard night! Dried blood smokes on my face, and nothing lies behind me but that repulsive little tree!... The battle for the soul is as brutal as the battles of men; but the sight of justice is the pleasure of God alone." Rimbaud, 'Farewell', A Season in Hell.

Let the once-taken step return, let the unregistered hugeness of spaces, it will never cease to cross, reach and stretch out. Then, return from it to work and to the Making in the attempt to see what is unsuspectable (and even above suspicion) about it all. Say to ourselves or each other that, between them, silence never betrays the silence of their pact: free-handed work, an open making, in plain view: not building anything unneeded… –absolute and immemorial modernity stands in their sites, where farewell is the title, though it is alone, far away in a sense, being vigilant that a sentence may not replace extreme severity, which is a (physical not mortal) threshold, state or station of what has, in fact, not been taken (and should not be).
Colette Brunschwig has seen (once and perhaps for all time yet to come) the degree that should not be crossed, or desired as an ascent, and even less enthroned. On a text by Malevich, entitled "Final Progression", she writes this: "(…) Arriving at what he thought to be the end of his painting, he attempted the passage towards the third dimension, that of architecture… the glorious architecture of the future city, around which the surrounding infinity can organise itself, having at its centre an accomplished mankind, reconciled with society. This impatience was soon to give way to the shock of experience: in 1927, Malevich only had time to transfer to the West a part of his work and of his theoretical writings, so that their radiance was to remain long hidden from public view. He was to return to his work place, on which were soon to be placed the seals of silence: his final, sole city, his coffin, that of a solitary man, returned to a solitude whose joints he had for a brief moment thought he could tear apart…".
There is an obsessive rhyme in French formed by these three words: seuil, deuil, cercueil (threshold, mourning, coffin) from which we need release, by breaking or upsetting it, unstitching it, so that our eyes, once more, will have access to a recourse and can break the fascination of the maze, with the meanderings of its unroofed architecture, in which we sink as though into the sifting of quicksand or rarefied air. Colette Brunschwig points out that this wandering should be done alone, "with no Ariadne, nor Minotaur either".
To think that, today, Ariadne might paint? At least she will then have stopped waiting, suspended on a single thread (or rope). She would then have found her strength and decided to pull on other, previously invisible ones, to weave them into filaments (a word so like the firmament, and yet so distant from it) while just being careful that no mortal knot should tighten the fragile passage of their breathing. "'The infinite is constellated with pointless, indecent knots," wrote Reb Sabi." (Edmond Jabès, The Ineffaceable, The Unperceived, Gallimard, p.18)
What is written there smoothes and flattens out nothing. The indecency in question would be that of a life which work had abandoned. But, for Colette Brunschwig, work unshackles; its provisional ends are just there to untie bodies in pain, cramped zones, overly compact bundles. It follows the path we wished for, or thought was closed, which runs on elsewhere and which we sense will come afterwards, once the apotheosis or apocalypse has reached time's dark screen. After that… Let us listen to what Colette Brunschwig writes at the end of her text 'On Claude Monet': "(…) A moment of relief given to the watcher, a moment of stupor before the unleashing. Right now, 'the sun goes down' very fast. The horses have been let loose, the shadow spreads, the movement quickens, and speed, here as elsewhere, overcomes this world like a wave, running away to where space seems to change into time, in an apotheosis of negative light. Claude Monet: 'the light is going down so quickly that I cannot follow it'."
Let us listen with our eyes closed: the apotheosis is letting through a line, a life-line which is immune to its sparkling light, which returns to this tin point where the denuded rush of yearning is drawn out. Such a long undertaking finds in this work of painting a strength that cannot fade: which does not know how to flee but instead floats and engraves the water with a wave that drowns nothing of its emerging characteristics.

Daniel Dobbels (27 January 2016)

Trad. Ian Monk

Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition views: papiers, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016

Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition views: papiers, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016

COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

PEINTURES, DESSINS

June 21 - October 18, 2015

Exhibition at Chateau de Ratilly, Treigny, France

Communiqué de presse:

Sur la proposition et sous la conduite de Jacqueline Cohen, qui dirigea une grande galerie parisienne et maintenant apporte à d'autres son soutien, le Château de Ratilly consacre sa grande exposition d'été à Colette Brunschwig.
Née au Havre en 1927, Colette Brunschwig y a passé son enfance, mais elle sera, « dans le Paris de 1945, confrontée à un monde chaviré auquel l'art va à nouveau essayer de donner forme ». Et c'est aussi dès ce temps-là qu'elle découvre, ainsi que le relève le professeur Steven Shankman, l'art de l'ancienne Chine, dans son lien essentiel avec la notion de vide.
Elle peint depuis 1955. Autour d'elle bien des avant-gardes se sont faites et défaites, cependant que depuis toujours Colette Brunschwig « semble se situer sur une lisière où ses oeuvres témoignent, tout en se taisant ».
Elle reste l'un des peintres les plus significatifs de cette seconde moitié du vingtième siècle pendant laquelle elle s'est vouée à l'abstraction – une abstraction « frémissante », dira Robert Lévy –, y tenant à bien des égards un rôle de pionnière.
Elle n'a jamais peint pour « faire beau » mais pour faire « juste », et ce avec une rigueur qui a fasciné des penseurs et poètes comme René Char, Emmanuel Lévinas ou Jean Bollack, grand spécialiste de Paul Celan.
En dialogue permanent avec la peinture chinoise, entre écriture et image, elle a eu un compagnonnage constant avec des peintres aussi divers et exigeants qu'Arpad Szenes, Pierre Courtin, Pierre Soulages, Charles Maussion, André Marfaing ou Louis Cordesse.
Au long des années, on la retrouve dans les meilleures galeries, notamment, à Paris, Colette Allendy et Nane Stern, à La Roue, chez Clivages, Convergences et Protée. Ses travaux ont été montrés au Japon, aux Etats-Unis, aux Pays-Bas, en Chine, en Israël, en Grande-Bretagne et en Scandinavie.
Son oeuvre est présente dans les collections du Musée d'art moderne de Paris, du Centre Georges-Pompidou ou du Musée des beaux-arts de Caen.
Sa pratique est et demeure double. Dessin et peinture cohabitent. Le support, ainsi pour le dessin tel papier reçu d'un autre artiste, d'un artiste d'un monde différent comme Shafic Abboud ou Etienne Hajdu, devient « cause matérielle », il a l'initiative, dicte ses conditions.
Et on est en présence, aussi, d'un « palimpseste infini », de surfaces comme en attente d'être recouvertes : non seulement l'encre est absorbée par la caséine recouvrant le papier, mais « sans cesse l'artiste reprend ses oeuvres, les transforme, ajoute, enlève, recouvre – répare, serait-on tenté de dire, comme de ce qui est abîmé, ou blessé », écrit Pierre Wat.

Dans les peintures aussi bien, c'est, matière et couleur, ce qui est là dans sa présence unique qui vient faire fond. Un fond dont il s'agira d'extraire sans l'en détacher ce qui s'affirme alors dans sa précarité même, qu'il s'agisse des mots d'un poème imprimé auxquels il faut répondre trait pour trait ou des formes verticales qui appellent le corps à donner sa mesure, à une surrection à partir d'un sol recréé.
Cela en un contrepoint de contraires qui se nourrissent l'un de l'autre : « Force du dessin qui inscrit, précise, limite, et force de la couleur qui envahit, efface les lignes, ouvre l'espace. Force de la matière colorée qui construit le tableau, maçonne la surface, révèle ses aspérités, mais aussi fluidité de l'encre qui fait surgir sur le papier un monde que l'on dirait aquatique ».

Poursuivant le mouvement par lequel chez Monet « l'apparence commence à se défaire », la jeune peintre ressent ensuite avec Malevitch le « sentiment bienheureux de l'inobjectivité libératrice », et se demande cependant comment peindre après la dissolution de l'image dans ce que le même Malevitch nommait « la blanche mer de l'illimité ».

Cependant, en ce temps de détresse, le vide, le néant, l'insondable, et la question de comment peindre après, s'étaient alourdis de la catastrophe de l'histoire occidentale : la Shoah. Dans le désert d'après l'effondrement, il importe « que peindre ne soit jamais un acte de trop ». (Daniel Dobbels)

« Repartir à zéro, comme si la peinture n'avait jamais existé », écrivait à la même époque Barnett Newman, dont Marcel Cohen souligne l'importance pour Colette Brunschwig. Chez les deux peintres et quelques rares autres, le zéro de la table arasée se renverse et se résout à travers le vide plein, le vide engendrant tel que le conçut autrefois la pensée chinoise. On en rapprochera, non sans quelque appréhension, cette « rose de personne » qui marque de son énigme l'oeuvre d'un poète dont Colette Brunschwig fut proche, Paul Celan.

Ce mot, personne, a l'étrange pouvoir de signifier de l'humain aussi bien l'absence que la présence singulière – en personne –, et avec Colette Brunschwig la peinture se révèle autant un « art singulier » qu'un « art du singulier » : « La peinture serait-elle le chant ultime de la solitude de l'individu dans le désert de la multiplicité ? » C'est peut-être ce qui se joue ici d'« inaudible » entre l'espace des dessins, avec leurs gris magnifiques, diaphanes et griffés, et celui des peintures, où la couleur attire en se chargeant de toute la puissance du fond.

Marcel Cohen raconte comment le grand helléniste Jean Bollack venait voir Colette Brunschwig à son atelier, s'asseyait, prenait des notes et parlait un peu comme si son interlocutrice n'avait pas été là. « La seule chose que je peux affirmer avec certitude concernant les étranges visites de Jean Bollack, dit Colette Brunschwig, c'est qu'il semblait respirer à l'atelier mieux que partout ailleurs ».

Jean Planche

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, ca. 1985
acrylic, ink on canvas
191 x 149 cm
Unique
Inv.#CB/P 11

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 2010
acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
132 x 93 cm
Inv.#CB/P 6

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 2010
acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
107 x 117 cm
Inv.#CB/P 7

COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

PIKA DON

WITH: COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG, MIRIAM CAHN, MARC DESGRANDCHAMPS, ON KAWARA, GUILLAUME LEBLON

June 06 - July 28, 2012

Exhibition at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Press release

The exhibition project Pika Don (Flash-Bang in Japanese, expression for the nuclear explosion at Hiroshima and Nagasaki) finds its origins in over twenty years of discussions with Colette Brunschwig, artist who began her career at Galerie Colette
Allendy in the 1950s. Other reflections, brought about following the Fukushima catastrophe, have nurtured this project: discussions with Guillaume Leblon and Miriam Cahn as well as the gallery's collaboration with Erik Verhagen on the origins of conceptual art. At a time when the generation that lived through Hiroshima is about to pass the memory on, it seems important, more than ever, to consider Hiroshima in terms of awareness, realization and prise de conscience, and take a
look at the esthetic upheaval it created and still creates today.
Colette Brunschwig's ink on paper works presented at the gallery stand witness to her investigations on the "third dimension of paper" as well as the possibilities offered by stencil technique. Her work falls into a context marked by existentialism, abstraction, and distinguishes itself by a reflection on the art of Chinese character painters and on the confrontation with the Orient. We can ask ourselves how certain post-war artists sought to formulate an answer to the question of nothingness, which was generated by the entrance into the atomic age.
The feeling of belonging to a generation of survivors and its relationship to the passing time lie at the heart of the work of On Kawara, and in particular, in the "I am still alive" series where the use of the telegram stands witness to the artist's total abandonment of the using of his hand in the work. Miriam Cahn responds to the status of survivor with that of the victim. In going beyond Hiroshima, we are presenting works from the Sarajevo cycle to underscore the existential and universal dimension of the victim. Through their respective mediums, Marc Desgrandchamps and Guillaume Leblon, who both share a fascination for the ruin, reintroduce a vision of a broken up world.

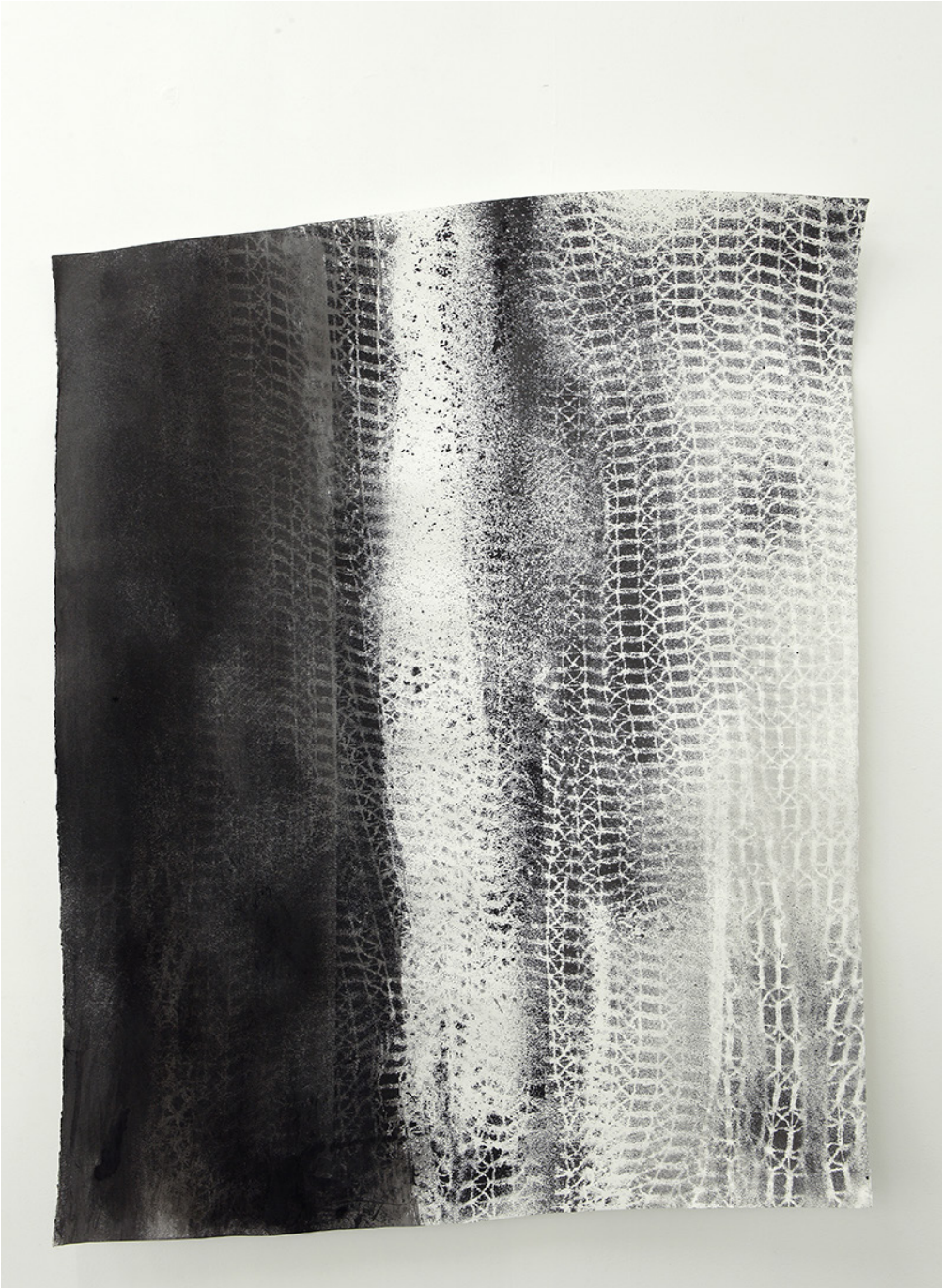
Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition view, Pika don,at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, 2012

Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition view, Pika don,at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, 2012

Colette Brunschwig
Pochoir 1, 2010
indian ink, pencil on paper
149 x 107 cm
Inv.#CB/D 1



Colette Brunschwig
Pochoir 4, 2010
indian ink, pencil on paper
145 x 107 cm
Inv.#CB/D 4

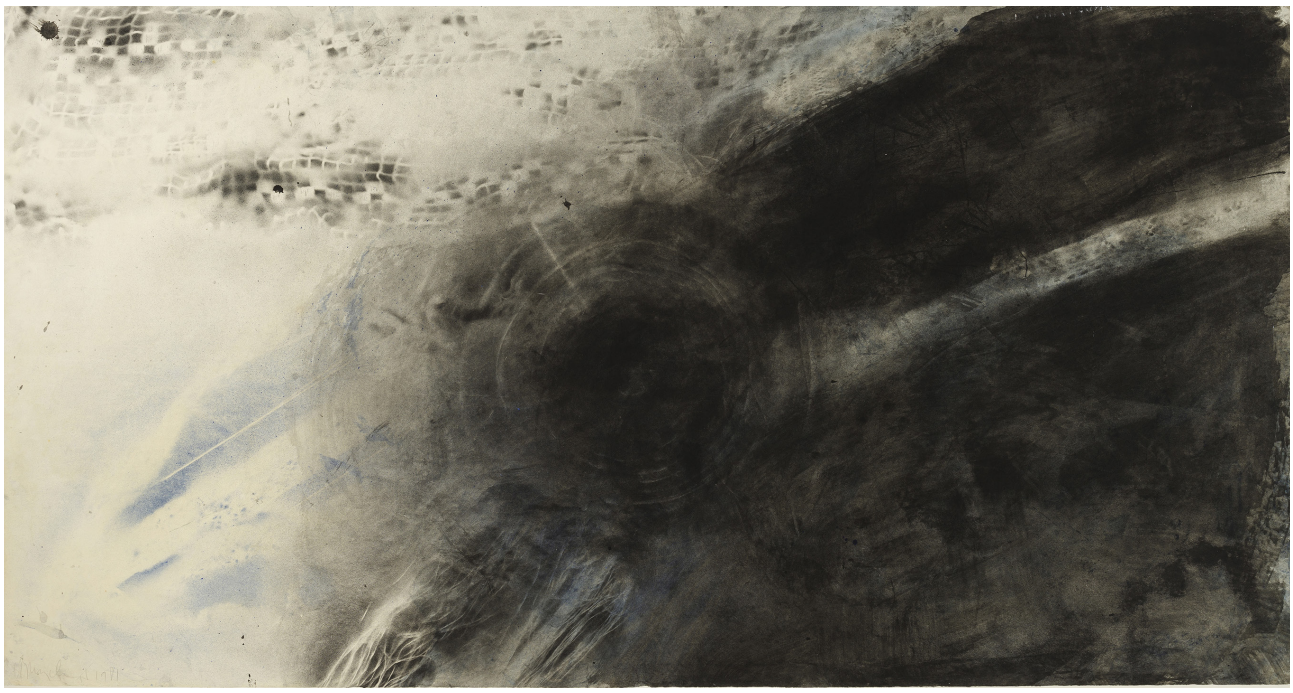
COLETTE BRUNSCHWIG

WORKS SELECTION

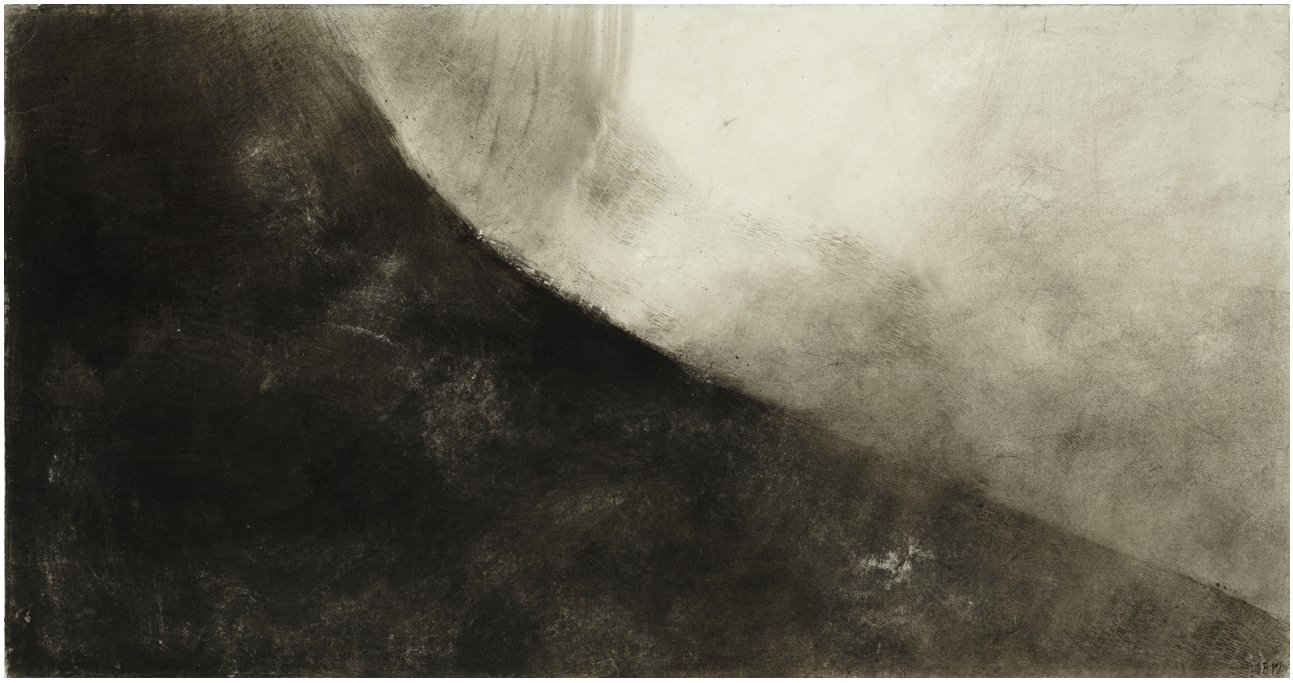
Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 2003
acrylic on canvas
54 x 75 cm
Inv.#CB/P 20

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 2000
acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
75 x 75 cm
Inv.#CB/P 25

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 1970
acrylic on canvas
104 x 84 cm
Inv.#CB/P 26



Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 1981
India ink, blue pigment, paper mounted on canvas
152 x 82 cm
Inv.#CB/D 12



Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 1981
indian ink on paper
75 x 143 cm
Inv.#CB/D 17

Colette Brunschwig
Sans titre, 2015
India ink on paper
106 x 75 cm
Inv.#CB/D 11

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