

« Colette Brunschwig & Claude Monet in conversation »

Curated by Marjorie Micucci

Solo show by Colette Brunschwig

Exhibition from 9 January to 12 February 2022

Opening on Sunday 9 January, 2 - 6 pm

Open Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm

Colette Brunschwig remembers. She was 20 years old in post-war Paris. She wanted to be a painter. She was a painter. In a devastated, uncertain, and confused pictorial landscape, she frequented the studios which were opening up again, with the same names as before: André Lhote, Fernand Léger, Jean Souberbie. It was necessary to restitch Cézanne's Cubist teachings, then those of Braque, to try to recapture the lost thread of a fragmentation, of a formal splitting which was the revolution of the avant-garde at the beginning of the twentieth century, to recapture the dissolved and ambiguous thread with Impressionism, that of Claude Monet in particular.

Colette Brunschwig thus invented a rigorous but brief apprenticeship with André Lhote, as Aurelie Nemours did before her, as Pierrette Bloch did at the same time, amongst others. A quest for the form. A calling into question of representation in a conquered or deconstructed, fragmented and multiplied world, of the relationship with nature (this "after nature" which had become problematic), of capturing reality. Colette Brunschwig remembers: "[André Lhote] was one of the first to show and explain that painting was not simply a reproduction of reality, that painting was something real. He opened up another possibility. No longer thinking that painting was used to reproduce reality. ... This led us to believe that there was another way to paint than to reproduce reality. It referred to the question of abstraction. (1)»

1. Interview with Colette Brunschwig, June 8th, 2017, in Marjorie Micucci, "Approches de Colette Brunschwig," «Colette Brunschwig, Peindre l'ultime espace», Tome 2, Paris, Manuella éditions, p. 11.

For Colette Brunschwig, this "lesson" opened up an infinite pictorial space, a pictorial cosmos where a metaphysics played out between East and West, opened up new forms, geometries that were as unexpected as they were enigmatic and suspended in incompleteness, that liberated her from a reality which she knew was impossible to recount: what to paint after the human disaster, how to paint after the destruction of the total war that she had just experienced. If there can be no image, or if any image can only meet its own disappearance, there is painting, which by its very matter, by the chromatic tensions and gradations and the saturated overlaps that it allows, by the eruptions of light and the sudden flashes of colour that it squirts on a canvas, on a page, on a piece of plywood, is made real, tactile, palpable for the immersed eye.

Colette Brunschwig remembers: "That's when I started studying Monet. I think the first time I went to Giverny was during that time when I was with André Lhote. In Giverny, I saw something extraordinary. I saw the end of painting and the extent to which Monet was an avant-garde painter. Monet created reality from the painting he did. The reality came from the painting. (2)»

Colette Brunschwig held on to «her» recovered thread: Claude Monet... with whom she would dialogue for the rest of her life. The conversation of a painter's life, interspersed by a critical text written in 1960 and published in November 1999 in the journal *Lignes*: «Sur Claude Monet (3)».

This new exhibition devoted to the work of Colette Brunschwig, organised by the Jocelyn Wolff gallery, revolves around the writing of this text and the artist's perspective on the work of the Impressionist painter, especially his last works, the «Nymphéas». From one war to another, a revolution of space under the inexorable pressure of a shortening of time, of a disconcerting speed and a condensation of hours, of serial forms, the attempt at light, even "negative" light, to use the painter's words, against the black of darkness and the white of nothingness.

2. Ibidem

3. The article "Sur Claude Monet" is reproduced in Tome 2 of the monograph «Colette Brunschwig, Peindre l'ultime espace», ibidem, pp. 99-130.

Works in pastel, watercolour, ballpoint pen and ink on paper, so-called "telephone" drawings made by the immediate gesture of the hand taken in an instant and intermediate moment - between the social and private life of the conversation and the pursuit of the work in the slightest available moment - large-format oil on canvas paintings redefine and spatially reweave this dialogue with Monet and Colette Brunschwig's continuous reflection about painting, its intimate connections to dissolution and starting over, and the visual power of painting in all its material forms and formats. From the shadows or the inextricable commotion of an energetic, fragile, arabesque-like line, from a saturation of scratches, writings and overlaid notations, from a compulsive choreography of the hand to the stripy covering of the torn white of a sketchbook page, from the eruption of colours from the luminous spectrum, from the infinity of greys - dense, milky, dirty, supple, brownish, scattered, contemplative, not at all neutral - tearing, expelling, piercing the black, letting the thin daytime light shine through, like a sketch of a resistant, diffuse, and vital clarity.

Most of the works in the exhibition have never or rarely been shown. The 130 small format "telephone drawings," traced with pencil, but especially with black, blue, red or green ballpoint pen, will be displayed as a series in a grid, forming a wall of geometric shapes and curves, suspended lines and nets of a rejected ending, Rimbaudian colours (4) and transparent lights, recomposing a "space [seeming] to transform into time." (5) Colette Brunschwig captures and maintains "an angle" (6) of light between the lines, (re)travelling the solar cycle - and the terrestrial cycle - from sunrise to sunset... and the possibility of starting over.

Marjorie Micucci

Saint-Denis - Romainville, 4 January, 2022.

4. Colette Brunschwig very often quoted Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Voyelles" (1871) in her reflections on colours and values.

5. Colette Brunschwig, "Sur Claude Monet," op. cit., p. 117.

6. In reference to Emily Dickinson's poem - which Colette Brunschwig repeatedly read - whose first verses run: "The Angle of a Landscape-That every time I wake-Between my Curtain and the Wall/Upon an ample Crack-Like a Venetian-waiting-Accosts my open eye-" Thomas H. Johnson (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Canada, Little, Brown & Company, p. 179.