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Figures 1-59

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A

ECOLE DE NICE, 1956-1971

by

Rosemary O'Neill

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

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7/29/03
Date

Rose Paul Waldman Long
Chair of Examining Committee

8/18/03
Date

[Signature]
Executive Officer

Professor Mona Hadler

Professor Katherine Manthorne

Professor Lewis Kachur
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract**ECOLE DE NICE, 1956-1971****by****Rosemary O'Neill****Advisor: Professor Rose-Carol Washton-Long**

The Ecole de Nice of the 1960s has been broadly defined to include artists associated with three distinct artistic tendencies –Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, and Supports/Surfaces. The focus of this study is the five most significant artists of the Ecole de Nice – Yves Klein, Arman, Martial Raysse, Ben Vautier, and Claude Viallat. Despite their stylistic diversity and affiliations, the conceptual affinities shared by these artists and their sense of cultural autonomy have not been examined. Consequently, the Ecole de Nice, though given some credibility as the result of museum exhibitions, has largely remained ill-defined and historically neglected.

This dissertation will demonstrate that the Ecole de Nice is an important historical phenomenon inseparable from the Riviera, but also a gauge of the broader changes impacting France in the 1960s. Even more so than Paris, the Ecole de Nice called attention to the implications of Americanization (consumerism, mass culture, and tourism), and they epitomized the national

emphasis on rejuvenation associated with a younger demographic, and the Mediterranean region. Beyond direct or metaphoric reference to the locale, all five artists created a visual language meant to engage the public with the experience of their new reality by predicating their work on direct perception and sensations, and rejecting intellectualization and introverted subjectivity. All five artists devised theatrical modes of presentation based on the strategy of appropriation and the use of readymade objects and spaces to counter the dominance of painting as a vehicle of formalist innovation, the basis of the Ecole de Paris.

The Ecole de Nice promoted artistic pluralism. These artists drew from the array of modernist trends, but this study will emphasize the clear links these artists made to the classical and modern traditions associated with the Riviera, and the new reality of consumerism and tourism, which characterized the region's postwar development. I suggest that the emergence of the Ecole de Nice internally eroded the dominance of Parisian culture as the national standard, and provided a new model of French pluralism that remains distinct yet comparable to international trends of the 1960s.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
List of Illustrations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter	
1. Postwar Nice: Riviera Dreaming	43
2. Pierre Restany: Defining the New	77
3. Yves Klein: Imagining the Unseen	112
4. Arman: Reconnaissance of the Already Seen	164
5. Martial Raysse: Hygienic Surfaces	201
6. Ben Vautier: Total Art	242
7. Claude Viallat: Focal Dispersion	282
Conclusion	319
Illustrations	325
Selected bibliography	384

Illustrations

Fig. 1 "Ecole de Nice?" catalogue cover, Alexandre de la Salle Gallery, Vence, 1967.

Fig. 2 "A Propos de Nice" catalogue cover, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977.

Fig. 3 "Festival du Nouveau Réalisme." poster, Galerie Muratore, Nice, July 1961.

Fig. 4 Raoul Dufy, Nice, La Baie des Anges oil on canvas, 1938.

Fig. 5 Lisette Model, Promenade des Anglais, Nice, photograph, 1934.

Fig. 6 Jacques-Henri Lartigue, photography, 1932.

Fig. 7 Matisse, "Nice Travail & Joie," poster, lithograph on paper, 1949.

Fig. 8 Exhibition, *Anthropometries of the Blue Period*, Galerie Internationale d'Art Contemporain, Paris, March 9, 1960.

Fig. 9 Yves Klein, Architecture of the Air (ANT 102), pigment in synthetic resin and charcoal on paper on fabric, 1961.

Fig. 10 Yves Klein, Store poème (ANT SU 15), March 1, 1962.

Fig. 11 Yves Klein, Yves Peinture, printed portfolio (Madrid: Fernando Franco de Sarabis, November 18, 1954).

Fig. 12 Exhibition, Yves Klein, *The specialization of sensitivity in the site of prime matter as stabilized pictorial sensitivity*, referred to as Le Vide, Galerie Iris Clert, April 28, 1958.

Fig. 13 Exhibition, Yves Klein, Vision in Motion, Hessenhuis, Antwerp in March 1959.

Fig. 14 Le peinture de l'espace se jette dans le vide!, fabricated by Klein and photographers Shunk and Kender

Fig. 15 Yves Klein, Portrait-Reliefs, February, 1962.

Fig. 16 Yves Klein, Nike of Samothrace, dry pigment and synthetic resin on plaster with stone base, 1962.

Fig. 17 Arman, Le Plein, installation of refuse at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, October 1960.

Fig. 18 Exhibition announcement, Arman, Le Plein, "Ouvrir avant Le 25 octobre, 1960."

Fig. 19 Arman, Cachet, ink on printed fabric, dated 23 décembre 1954.

Fig. 20 Arman, Untitled Cachet, ink on paper mounted on canvas, 1955.

Fig. 21 Arman, Priorité A, cachet, ink on paper, 1957.

Fig. 22 photograph of Arman, 1956.

Fig. 23 Arman, Petits déchets bourgeois, household refuse in glass box, 1959.

Fig. 24 Arman, Ainsi Font Font (Patty Cake), dolls hands in wooden box, 1960.

Fig. 25 Arman, Gay Gas Masks, gas masks in a wooden box, 1960.

Fig. 26 Arman, Fetish of the Theophagite Sect, crucifixes, photo-reproductions in wooden box, 1960.

Fig. 27 Arman, Allures #252 and #254, ink on paper, 1959.

Fig. 28 Arman, Yves L'Épingle (ERA #234), ink on paper, n.d.

Fig. 29 Arman, Allure d'Objet #2, ink on paper, 1959.

Fig. 30 Arman, X-ray images, x-ray film, n.d.

Fig. 31 Martial Raysse, Raysse Beach, installation with plastic objects, mannequins, photographs, space heater, neon, jukebox, 1962.

Fig. 32 Martial Raysse, Supermaket (Hygiène de la vision), 1961

Fig. 33 Martial Raysse, Prisunic, Hygiène of Vision No. 1, mixed media assemblage, 1961.

Fig. 34 Martial Raysse, Hygiène of Vision No. 7, mixed media assemblage, 1960.

Fig. 35 Martial Raysee, Miroir au Houpettes, mixed media assemblage, 1962.

Fig. 36 Exhibition, Martial Raysse. "Mirrors and Portraits," Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, January 1963.

Fig. 37 Martial Raysse. Rose, mixed media, 1962.

Fig. 38 Martial Raysse, Souviens-toi de Tahiti, mixed media tableau, 1963.

Fig. 39 Martial Raysse. Nude, Yellow and Calm, 1962

Fig. 40 Martial Raysse. Tableau Turk et Invasembable, Made in Japan, 1963.

Fig. 41 Martial Raysse. Nice-Venice, mixed media, 1966.

Fig. 42 Martial Raysse. Identité, maintenant vous êtes un Martial Raysse, mixed media with television projection, 1966.

Fig. 43 Festival Mondial Fluxus et Art Total, July-August, 1963.

Fig. 44 Total Art and Fluxus Festival, Ben swimming the port of Nice, 1963.

Fig. 45 Total Art and Fluxus Festival. "mystery food." Café Provence, July 26, 1963.

Fig. 46 Ben Vautier. Mort à l'oppression [sic], paint on board, 1958.

Fig. 47 Ben Vautier. j'espère que cette toile ne vivra jamais une guerre atomique [sic], paint on board, 1960.

Fig. 48 Ben Vautier. "Regardez-moi, cela suffit". performance event. Nice, 1962.

Fig. 49 Ben Vautier, photograph of Laboratoire 32.

Fig. 50 Ben Vautier, installation Ben's Window and 15-day performance titled Living Sculpture," Gallery One, London, October 1962.

Fig. 51 Claude Viallat, Untitled, canvas with color using a single pre-determined form, 1966.

Fig. 52 Exhibition. "Supports/Surfaces." Central Nationale d'Art Dramatique in Nice, April-May 1971.

Fig. 53 Claude Viallat, Untitled, "impregnation" of the surface by the saturated sponge also produced splashes and drips of color.

Fig. 54 Viallat and Jacques Lepage organized "Impact I" at the Musée de Céret, July 15-September 25, 1966.

Fig. 55 Claude Viallat, installation, the town of Coaraze, 40 kilometers north of Nice, 1969.

Fig. 56 Claude Viallat, works on industrial burlap, military tents, and parasols.

Fig. 57 Claude Viallat, drawings of works are nailed onto the wall by a corner of the support allowing the work to fold over; an arrangement that altered the strict patterned surface.

Fig. 58 Claude Viallat, Thirteen forms applied by chance, pigment on canvas, 1966.

Fig. 59 Claude Viallat, paint, imprinted shirt.

Introduction

There have been few studies on the topic of the Ecole de Nice. In 1986, Robert Pincus-Witten referred to the subject as a “missing book.”¹ In a second article published in 1988, he described the Ecole de Nice as a “school torn from its intellectual moorings.”² However, within a year, this Niçois School gained currency as the result of two exhibitions held in the Miami and Taipei,³ a prelude to the inauguration of the Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain de Nice in 1991. Internationalism is one of the Ecole de Nice’s signatures, so it is fitting that the latter two exhibitions were mounted on such far-flung locales. Sam Hunter distinguished Nice in the Taipei show as “one of the few isolated centers of genuine innovation in a European art world dominated by ‘lyrical abstraction’ and art informel.”⁴ Miami curator, Laurence Ruggiero, characterized Nice as the “centerpiece of ‘Euro-kitsch’” in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵ According to Edouard Valdman, who interviewed the artists in 1991, “Nice became a place of communication, an international route, with the possibility of direct exchange with Milan or New York, without passing through Paris.”⁶ Museums have sanctioned the Ecole de Nice as a movement, but its historical significance remains largely neglected. The term provided a convenient frame for many artists linked primarily by geography, but my study will demonstrate that there is a difference between the Ecole de Nice as an umbrella term and the historical

significance of its major artists. Their work is related on conceptual, ideological, and aesthetic – not just geographic – grounds.

My dissertation focuses on five artists of the Ecole de Nice – Yves Klein, Armand Fernandez (known as Arman), Martial Raysse, Ben Vautier (known as Ben), and Claude Viallat – who enabled the Mediterranean city of Nice to emerge as an alternative to a Parisian-centered avant-garde in the 1960s. These artists are generally discussed in relation to three distinct artistic tendencies – Nouveau Réalisme (Klein, Arman, and Raysse), Fluxus (Ben), and Supports/Surfaces (Viallat). Although some critics have referred to these artists as the Ecole de Nice, their conceptual links still remain ill defined. This dissertation will demonstrate that the Ecole de Nice is an historical phenomenon inseparable from the Riviera. Despite their stylistic diversity, the five artists in my study, the most important of those associated with the Ecole de Nice, are linked by conceptual affinities, an interest in theatrical modes of presentation, and geography. All five considered the visual arts a form of social engagement that emphasized perception over intellectualization and action over expressive subjectivity. They promoted artistic pluralism and resisted Parisian cultural norms.

Of course, the Ecole de Nice parallels broader trends in 1960s France, especially the Americanization of France and the revolutionary thinking that erupted during the era of 1968. These movements created a historical frame for French postwar art. I will trace the impact of this substantial change in French society, particularly the effect of increasing consumerism and tourism, the alteration of traditional patterns of daily life in private and public spaces, and the appreciable

development of the Riviera that influenced the Ecole de Nice artists. The Ecole de Nice artists were discontented with national culture. This is particularly evident in their response to production and consumerism that characterized 1960s France and in their resistance to artistic norms of the immediate past.

Though the term was not used until 1960, painting and mixed media works by Klein and Arman dating to 1956 provided a foundation for works that soon followed by Raysse, Ben, and Viallat throughout the 1960s. The inaugural exhibition at the Galerie de la Salle in Vence (March 18 –April 18, 1967)⁷ helped “institutionalized” the Ecole de Nice. The dealer, de la Salle, explained that he expected the successes of Klein, Arman, and Raysse, whom he called the Nouveaux Réalistes Niçois, to continue a trend.⁸ According to de la Salle:

...For the first time in France, a movement outside of Paris had sustained itself. The artists of the Ecole de Nice were very subtle, not reducible to a manner of painting, or a choice of materials. They all tried to be original, to use novel methods...all had the desire to seek out the most advanced experiences in contemporary art, their point of departure was “modernity.”⁹

This was the first exhibition to include all five artists, along with others associated with Neo-dada, Fluxus, abstract painting, and poetry.¹⁰ The exhibition catalogue featured a blue monochrome cover, an homage to Klein’s emblematic blue monochrome paintings, with a prominent question mark superimposed on the exhibition title, “Ecole de Nice” (Fig. 1). This cover illustrated the skepticism that vexed artists associated with the Ecole de Nice seven years after the critic Claude Rivière first used the term in a 1960 article published in the Parisian newspaper Combat.¹¹ Their sense of doubt had a basis. The coherence of the initial Ecole de Nice was compromised by the early death of Klein in June 1962.

Arman and Raysse cultivated independent reputations while continuing to exhibit with the others from the Paris-based Nouveau Réalisme beyond its formal end in 1963.¹² Nice critic Jacques Lepage, an early proponent of the Ecole de Nice, once described the early years of the group as the “belle époque of 1960.”¹³ but the absence of its key figures weakened this concept.

Pierre Restany, who co-founded Nouveau Réalisme with Klein on October 28, 1960 in Paris, wrote the catalogue introduction in which he stressed Klein’s importance as the bridge connecting Nice and Paris. Restany felt that the work Klein produced in Paris was “against Paris.” He noted that Klein rejected the decadence of the Ecole de Paris, and even more advanced trends in abstraction based on personal expression. For Restany, Nice was the “the Eden of the artistic New Wave,” and Klein, Arman, and Raysse were “authentically Niçois” artists who posed a challenge to postwar Parisian art. However, Restany was reluctant to support completely the idea of an Ecole de Nice. He even disclosed that he had not even heard of some artists, including Viallat, prior to his involvement with the exhibition. Restany did acknowledge their sense of cultural independence, but he hesitated to validate their work as anything more than a regional art with a Mediterranean spirit.

Nonetheless, the 1967 Galerie de la Salle exhibition attempted to broaden the scope of the Ecole de Nice by including lesser-known, younger artists. Shortly after, the Galerie des Ponchettes, the area’s first museum of modern art, originally founded to showcase Matisse and younger contemporary artists, organized an exhibition focused on the works of Klein, Arman, and Raysse titled

“Trois Artistes de l’Ecole de Nice.” The contrast between these two exhibitions highlighted two perspectives on the group: in the cultural establishment, the emphasis was on the three internationally known artists – Klein, Arman, and Raysse – but commercially and among the artists themselves, it was a much larger group, most with regional reputations.

In the catalogue introduction to “Trois Artistes de l’Ecole de Nice” (1967-1968), Lepage stressed the success achieved by Klein, Arman, and Raysse as a “symbol of a coming decentralization.”¹⁴ He credited them with succeeding without Paris. This point was hardly substantiated in the monographic sections to follow. Parisian critics – Restany (Klein), Alain Jouffroy (Arman) and Otto Hahn (Raysse) – wrote the catalogue essays on the individual artists: Jouffroy even described Arman’s work as a continuation of the Ecole de Paris.

Ben Vautier was ignored in the Galerie des Ponchette exhibition even though he had also achieved international recognition as a member of Fluxus, and director of publications for Fluxus since 1963, and he criticized the exhibition as exclusionary. From the inception of the term Ecole de Nice in 1960, Ben wanted to join the Niçois school because he believed that Klein and Arman exemplified the “spirit of the new” that is the defining feature of the Ecole de Nice. He felt this spirit was manifest in their “appropriation of the world, the introduction of reality, that is to say, the readymade, into art.”¹⁵ Ben maintained the position that what constituted the new in art was not the readymade as object but the readymade reality of existence that generated concepts and behaviors. For example, in his 1969 exhibition Non-Art, Verité Art, Anti-Art, sub-titled “how to change art and

mankind.” he inventoried “actions, gestures and ideas.” Ben chose artists such as Arman, Viallat, and Fluxus representatives Robert Filliou and George Brecht because they “seemed to have always valued ideas and attitudes more than physical or commercial esthetic objects.”¹⁶

Ben was later given the opportunity to expand on the activities of the Ecole de Nice in 1977. He published the first annotated chronology of the visual arts produced in Nice for the exhibition, “A Propos de Nice,” organized for the inauguration of the Centre Georges Pompidou.¹⁷ Ben was the first to articulate the rapport among artists generally discussed in relation to the three independent groups that comprised the Ecole de Nice. He deserves credit for arguing that what was important about Nouveau Réalisme in Nice was the conceptual and performance aspects of the work rather than the emphasis on the readymade object, the basis of Restany’s conception of the group. His argument substantiated the connections between artists in Nouveau Réalisme with Fluxus activity and the installations of Claude Viallat and others associated with Supports/Surfaces.

Ben also emphasized the internationalism of Nice, a spirit that distinguished the area from a more insular, if not moribund, Paris in the 1950s and early 1960s. He reinforced the importance of geography by designing the catalogue cover with a map of the Côte d’Azur inscribed with the names of the artists and where they resided along the Riviera (Fig. 2). His detailed chronology is marked by two dates, 1956 and 1972, the first monochrome by Klein and the

aftermath of the last exhibition of the group Supports/Surfaces, which then split into the Niçois group and the Paris group.

My study is informed by the position Ben took on the Ecole de Nice. Like him, I emphasize the conceptual and performance aspects of these five artists' works, their spirit of internationalism, and their allegiance to this Southern province. My objective is to elaborate on these ideas, but more importantly, to demonstrate that the Ecole de Nice paralleled broader trends in 1960s France, especially Americanization, and the French emphasis on national rejuvenation associated with the Mediterranean and a younger demographic.

Ben's approach was inclusive. He believed that the sheer number of artists associated with the area warranted recognition. By contrast, I focus on the works of the five artists I consider defining figures in the Ecole de Nice. I am using this case study approach to demonstrate their conceptual parallels while also highlighting their diverse bodies of work. My chronology approximates the benchmark years that Ben established, ending less than a year earlier, in 1971, when Supports/Surfaces held their last exhibition at the Théâtre de Nice. On this occasion, artists from Nice and Paris split over the role of painting. Viallat described the split along geographic lines. He referred to the Parisians as "theoreticians," emphasizing the fact that those from Nice "retained an interest in the practice of painting."¹⁸ In Paris, Supports Surfaces artists Louis Cane and Marc Devade prioritized theory over fabrication and in 1972 founded the journal Peinture, cahiers théoriques, to support "a new practice of painting, in correlation with other disciplines (linguistics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, philosophy)."¹⁹ That same year, the Paris artists took

legal title to the name Supports/Surfaces and disparaged the Nice artists as “regional.” Viallat and the Nice group maintained their emphasis on the material practice of painting itself and the continued interrogation of its constituent elements as a means to formulate a theory/practice basis for their painting. This split marked the end of the historical chapter of the Ecole de Nice. The crucial balance between internationalism and regionalism that characterized the historical beginnings of the Ecole de Nice failed to sustain itself in the aftermath of the era of 1968.

A stalwart proponent of the Ecole de Nice from the beginning, Ben remained so throughout his career. In Arman’s words,

Without Ben, therefore, that which is called the Ecole de Nice would never have existed. He was the professor, teaching and explaining to younger artists what was going on in the entire world.²⁰

Ben was particularly active in New York Fluxus events between 1964 and 1966. But even prior to the middle 1960s, he was the conduit for international trends, avidly reading and collecting magazines and catalogues in several languages, especially English, his first language. Laboratoire 32, Ben’s second-hand record shop and exhibition space was the primary venue for young artists in Nice beginning in 1958, later operated under the name “Ben doute de tout.” After co-organizing an important Fluxus Festival in 1963, with Fluxus founder George Macuinas, he became director of Fluxus South, one of several international publishing venues coordinated from New York. Ben promoted situation-based events indebted to Dada, Klein, and Fluxus called “Art Total.”

The Ecole de Nice was an idea generated by the artists and aided by critics – both continued to define, support, or reject the group throughout the decade of the

1960s. Klein's central position in the Ecole de Nice and Nouveau Réalisme makes distinguishing between these two groups problematic, especially since they were within months of each other in 1960, and the basis of each group was a return to realism. Restany described Nouveau Réalisme as a "new perceptive approach to the real."²¹ He described the artists' work in relation to an urban reality conceived with a sociological detachment and employing a common strategy of appropriation. Restany was particularly successful in shifting the association of realism away from its traditional connection with the political left, and closer to the consumer sensibility of the 1960s.²² As a result, the reception of Nouveau Réalisme in Paris was complicated by larger political overtones.²³ According to Arman, there was little agreement on what constituted Nouveau Réalisme, and so it remained ill-defined, like the Ecole de Nice.²⁴

Klein defined the Ecole de Nice as a "realism of today."²⁵ But Klein was interested in "grand nature," emphasizing incomprehensible aspects of existence: infinity of space, the matrix of individual sensations and emotions, and imagination. Klein's use of the term realism was much broader than Restany's urban/consumer orientation. Klein's work, on which Restany based Nouveau Réalisme, was least characteristic of his working definition for the group, and most distinctive from the readymade orientation of the other Nouveaux Réalistes.²⁶ Klein's approach represented the conceptual aspect of Nouveau Réalisme. What distinguished Klein was his desire to make art socially and spiritually relevant, to synthesize the conceptual with a refined sense of materiality, but without reliance on the readymade.²⁷

Nouveau Réalisme was formalized three months *after* Claude Rivière's initial mention of an Ecole de Nice in the Combat article, which appeared in the newspaper in August 1960. Both Rivière and Restany had known Klein for several years and both critics were involved with his first Paris show at Colette Allendy Gallery in 1956.²⁸ Restany was directly involved with organizing Klein's exhibitions and Rivière supported him in the press.²⁹

Rivière posed the question, "Why not an Ecole de Nice?" in her article. "La Charge Solaire de l'Artiste: y-a-t'il un Ecole de Nice?"³⁰ Combat was an outlet for the French Resistance in 1940, and by the 1960s was associated with Parisian intellectuals and artists. Rivière was the first to suggest that there was a burgeoning group of artists from Nice with a distinctive body of work that evinced a particular locale and spirit.³¹ She described Klein as "emblazoned" in Cagnes-sur-Mer, having conquered the public with his sensuous body prints, the Anthropometry series. She observed that Martial Raysse produced works that reflected a multi-faceted Nice, simultaneously following a "Greek model" and emerging as a place of Mallarméan dreams. With this description, she paired classical idealism with the symbolist poetic of color and abstract sensibilities to formulate a basis for the work produced in Nice. In the same article, she listed other artists whose work was conceptually and geographically linked to the Mediterranean, including Armand Fernandez (Arman), Rene Laubiès, the musician Jean-Pierre Mirouze, and the journalist and filmmaker Sasha Sosnovsky (Sosno). With the exception of the abstract painter Laubiès (a friend of Restany), Rivière defined the group associated with the Ecole de Nice in 1960.

Rivière was the first to propose a French alternative to the Ecole de Paris, even though as early as 1954. Claude-Hélène Sibert described Paris as suffering from malaise and struggling to maintain its cultural force.³² Studies of this period tend to characterize the erosion of Parisian cultural dominance in the visual arts as a result of American cultural strategies. In How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art (1984), for example, Serge Guilbaut argued that abstract expressionism succeeded internationally because of its ideological parallel with postwar American society and politics, not exclusively because of its aesthetic superiority, as formalist critics posited.³³ A decade later, Kathryn Anne Boyer expanded upon Guilbaut's premise by examining institutional and commercial support for contemporary art in France and the United States from 1955 to 1968.³⁴ She demonstrated that the French failed to support and promote young artists such as Klein and Arman institutionally and commercially. Meanwhile, American counterparts (The Museum of Modern Art, for example) were already promoting contemporary artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, both of whom had challenged New York abstraction by the mid-1950s.

Restany's strategy was to align Nouveau Réalisme with the cultural and sociological shifts apparent in French culture, a subject that will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter two of this study. He actively promoted Nouveau Réalisme internationally – in Milan, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, and New York – but centered the group in Paris. Rather than reject Paris, Restany conceived of his group as an increasingly Americanized Paris vanguard.

In contrast, influential curators such as Bernard Dorival, Conservator of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, championed the postwar artists of the Ecole de Paris.³⁵ Dorival promoted the postwar avant-garde as an extension of the pre-war masters, and he maintained that artistic continuity was not breached by the traumas of World War II. Dorival maintained that Paris had successfully revived its leadership of the avant-garde in the postwar period, which had been briefly "dropped" as the result of French Occupation. In Dorival's words, "nothing could halt the triumphant progress of French art, which had regained the bold spirit natural to it."³⁶ He considered modernism in France a fluid unfolding of formal innovations in pictorial structure and color that persisted into the 1960s. Dorival accounted for postwar French abstraction by situating its roots in earlier historical French and international styles. He contrasted the French schools of light and color – Impressionism, Post-impressionism, and Fauvism – with cubism, where "foreigners were legion."³⁷ Dorival credited the Delaunays with formulating abstraction based on the French and Russian traditions of color, and thus he was able to locate a place for French postwar abstraction within this scheme.³⁸ Based on this argument, he was able to ignore the challenge presented by postwar American abstract painters, who were not even mentioned at all.

Dorival characterized the "spirit" of Paris as one of freedom and independence, a milieu that supported formal innovation. The Ecole de Nice artists used the same language, but in the spirit of freedom and independence *from* Paris. I want to suggest that the emergence of Nice as an alternative to Paris internally eroded the dominance of Paris culture as the contemporary standard.

The Ecole de Nice mirrored the demise of the Ecole de Paris, signaled by attempts by Dorival and Galerie Charpentier, for example, to assert continuity despite a changed cultural landscape.³⁹

In October 1961, Rivière published a second article on the artists from Nice in Sud-Communication: Arts et Spectacles sur la Côte d'Azur, a journal launched in 1961 by Sosno and published in Nice.⁴⁰ In "Language and Communication," Rivière emphasized the role of the artist as a "visionary of fabulous voyages in space." She argued that a return to nature and the materiality of the physical world was evidence of a new realism, and artists who worked with pure matter (Klein) or objects (Arman, Raysse) had already succeeded in fusing the real with the metaphysical. The spirit and geography of Nice was an integral component of the ethos and visual sensibility. Nice had found its voice.⁴¹

Rivière admitted that the works by these Niçois artists reflected a moment of accelerated consumerism, but observed that they were not simply affirming consumerism. Rather, they were creating a language in order to engage the public directly and immediately. She pointed out that Arman freed common objects by means of repetition and that Klein rediscovered painting by returning to the "folkloric rhythms" of the body evident in the Anthropometry series.⁴² Rivière concluded that these artists formulated a language, based in realism, which attempted to deal with the anxiety produced by the lack of absolutes at a moment of historical and social flux in French culture and society. In these first articles, Rivière established the first descriptions of the Ecole de Nice. Most important was her view that the Ecole de Nice merged imagination with the new everyday reality. The

artists associated with the movement succeeded in formulating a new language capable of multi-leveled communication ranging from the visionary to the banal. She also argued that the sensibility evident in the work could only be produced in Nice, a locale that supported both the mundane and the visionary.

In addition to Rivière, Sosno was also influential in the public definition of the movement. Pincus-Witten described Sosno as a “key to the Ecole de Nice.”⁴³ Sosno interviewed Klein, Arman, and Raysse in 1960, and published three articles on the Ecole de Nice in 1961,⁴⁴ in which he urged the three artists to collectively define the Ecole de Nice. Klein explained that he wanted to create an art of “health.” Klein further described the Ecole de Nice as a product of artists living on “permanent vacation.” Arman added that the Ecole de Nice was not just a geographic designation but a certain spirit – “without complexity.” Klein and Arman were distinguishing themselves from the more intellectual orientation of older Parisian artists associated with postwar existentialism.⁴⁵ They rejected the idea that art was a form of productive work geared to the fabrication of objects. Instead, their concepts were related to art as an imaginative activity that intersected with the environment.

While the Ecole de Nice found its inspiration as a group locally, it communicated on an international scale. Klein, for example, exhibited in Italy, Germany, and the United States. His exhibitions at the Galeria Apollinaire brought him in contact with two generations of important Italian artists – Lucio Fontana and the Nuclear Group and the younger Piero Manzoni.⁴⁶ In Germany, the Zero Artists in Düsseldorf were influenced by Klein’s concept of the void, and

they published Klein's writing (and Arman's) in their journal, Zero.⁴⁷ Lepage described Klein (and Arman) as "the first to leave the torpor, the old English ladies, and the sun."⁴⁸ He was not simply describing the locale. Klein and Arman managed to succeed outside of Nice, a locale that offered little support for contemporary art. Lepage also clarified that Klein and Arman had not left Nice for Paris, a city they viewed much like Milan, New York, Düsseldorf, or London.

The international aims of the Ecole de Nice were complicated by the problematic relationship between the French and the Americans, despite the welcome atmosphere enjoyed by Americans in some Paris galleries. According to Pincus-Witten:

...it was across [sic] Klein, whose parents were painters of the existential generation, that the Nice group gained entry into Paris. The enemy was not the United States or the artists who more or less were going to be associated with Leo Castelli or Ileana Sonnabend who had opened on the Quai des Grands Augustins at the time – Johns or Rauschenberg, et al. The enemy was the Ecole de Paris of exemplary vulgarity...⁴⁹

César, a member of the Nouveaux Réalistes, described this period in Paris as pro-American: "The Nouveaux Réalistes saw themselves as parallel to these American tendencies, because they were of the same generation."⁵⁰ However, exhibitions in New York made clear the uneasy atmosphere French artists experienced across the Atlantic. Klein's April 1961 exhibition at Leo Castelli was a personal defeat and a strategic debacle.⁵¹ The October 1962 Sidney Janis exhibition, "The New Realists,"⁵² which included Ecole de Nice artists Klein, Arman, and Raysse, rallied critical support in New York exclusively for the Americans and resulted in a polarization between the Americans and the French. American critics characterized

the Nouveaux Réalistes as tradition-bound or outright ineffectual, while Americans exemplified a fresh perspective.⁵³ Restany attempted to clarify the difference by suggesting that the Nouveaux Réalistes used the object as a means of calling attention to a transformed social reality, unlike the Americans who fetishized the object itself.⁵⁴ By December 1962, aided by critics and The Museum of Modern Art, the Americans were no longer “New Realists.” They were an American (neither French nor British) phenomenon – Pop Art.⁵⁵ This diminished the reputation of the French, and no distinction was made between the Parisians and those from Nice.

Prior to this breach between the Americans and the French, Virginia Dwan recalled in a 1984 interview that Klein suggested moving the entire Ecole de Nice to California in 1961, an environment he likened to grand-scale Nice where they would find a “much more healthy reception.”⁵⁶ His exhibition in Los Angeles was more successful than his show at Castelli – more representative of his work than the New York show, which included only his blue monochromes from 1957. On Klein’s urging, Dwan also scheduled exhibitions for Arman and Raysse despite resentment from American artists over their French nationality.⁵⁷

In 1965, the Ecole de Nice enjoyed a revival of sorts. Arman, who re-located to New York in 1963, was most significant in establishing a “Nouvelle Ecole de Nice.”⁵⁸ His well-photographed return to the area for summer vacation was parodied as a public coronation in 1965, organized by Raysse, Ben, and the younger artist Bernar Venet.⁵⁹ Photographs show Arman ushered through the streets in an armchair mounted on Ben’s “Art Total” truck. This street performance was

coincident with an important article published by the critic Otto Hahn, titled "Spécial Midi: L'Ecole de Nice." in the August 1965 issue of the popular magazine L'Express.⁶⁰ He characterized the Ecole de Nice as having ushered in a new form of realism based on an "exterior model." Hahn described the importance of Klein's charismatic imagination in establishing an Ecole de Nice, but it was Arman, a Surrealist in spirit, who became the lead artist.

In September 1965, Marcel Alocco, a local publisher, poet and later visual artist, devoted an issue of his contemporary art and poetry journal Identités to the topic of the Ecole de Nice.⁶¹ He asked the Ecole de Nice artists to describe themselves as a school and to identify its characteristics. Five years after the Sosno interview, Alocco solicited descriptions of the Ecole de Nice from artists residing in the area. Arman, Raysse, and Ben stressed the independent courses their careers had taken. Arman believed the label Ecole de Nice was useful in establishing the careers of younger artists, especially given the lack of support provided them in the area. Raysse downplayed the relationship of his work to the Côte d'Azur, even though his submission to the Venice Biennial that year – as France's representative and Grand Prize winner – was a post-card-inspired installation with tourist images connecting Nice and Venice. Ben described the Ecole de Nice as an extension of the "Ecole de Klein," or any artist who was either directly or indirectly influenced by Klein and/or lived in Nice. These responses indicate a degree of change in definition since 1960. Arman and Raysse conveyed a sense of detachment from Nice. Ben's notion of the Ecole de Nice was open-ended, with wide parameters. He distinguished between

appropriation of the object that characterized the Nouveaux Réalistes and the tendency of the Ecole de Nice to become aware of all that is possible in art, and to call into question art itself.⁶² In his 1977 annotated chronology of the Ecole de Nice, Ben was critical of artists who relied on the readymade, which he considered to have lost its critical possibilities.⁶³

Viallat's stay in Nice from 1964-1967 was brief but seminal. He developed the basis of his signature work in Nice, and he organized several important exhibitions with artists the Nouveaux Réalistes, Fluxus, BMPT, and Supports/Surfaces group. Among the exhibitions were the "Impact" at the Musée de Céret in 1967, the outdoor installation in the hill town at Coaraze in 1969, and the last Supports/Surface exhibition the Théâtre de Nice in 1971. Viallat was close to the critics Jacques Lepage, Gérard Gassiot-Talabot, and artist Daniel Buren. Lepage supported the Ecole de Nice since its inception. Gassiot-Talabot was critical of Restany's formulation of Nouveau Réalisme, but he did support Raysse and the French-American Niki de St. Phalle. Buren was antagonistic to Nouveau Réalisme and Ben, a situation that alienated him from Viallat. In Viallat's words, "I had to make a choice and I chose Nice."⁶⁴

In Combat, where Rivière first mentioned the Ecole de Nice in 1960, critics François Pluchart and Jacques Martinez were loath to support the idea of a Niçois school by the middle of the decade. Pluchart, arts editor at Combat, published an article in 1966 that portrayed the Ecole de Nice as a "Niçois salad."⁶⁵ His metaphor refers to the distinct indigenous flavor of the mix of artwork produced there. He credited Klein and Arman for disrupting the city's

cultural status quo, and in doing so, shifting the perception of Nice, previously associated with famous artists “rekindling the past.” Pluchart believed that Klein and Arman’s international ambitions had attracted the younger Raysse and assaulted Parisian art. Nonetheless they maintained their connections with Nice, and it seemed inevitable to this critic that more local artists, “dressing at the bottom of the plate,” would emerge given the status of Klein, Arman, and Raysse.⁶⁶ However, Pluchart singled out Ben and credited him for first introducing Happenings in France.⁶⁷

Martinez, in response to the 1968 Galerie des Ponchettes exhibition “Trois Artistes de l’Ecole de Nice,” described Lepage’s view that the artists achieved recognition without Paris as “base flattery.” Martinez wrote that Klein, Arman, and Raysse had exhibited only once in Nice in 1961, but Paris had already given them a name.⁶⁸ Martinez was referring to the July 1961 “Festival du Nouveau Réalisme” held at the Nice’s Galerie Muratore.⁶⁹ The exhibition was accompanied by two evenings of performances by the artists in attendance, hosted by Klein’s Paris dealer Jean Larcade at his estate L’Abbaye de Roseland. The poster featured a Klein Anthropometry with a listing of the artists, including two newer additions to Nouveau Réalisme – French-American Niki de Saint-Phalle and the Italian Mimmo Rotella (Fig. 3). In addition to the artists from Nice, Jean Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns were participants in the performance works.

Just weeks before, Sosno had prepared the local public for the festival in an article, “Tendances du Nouveau Réalisme Niçois.”⁷⁰ Sosno stressed that the

artists' allowed objects to "descend to earth." Rather than transform readymade objects, they relied on the strategy of appropriation. Sosno believed that this approach to art would enable the consumer to become a producer of art, once the beauty of the quotidian was recognized. He supported this view with Raysse's words, "the theory of the Ecole de Nice is that life is most beautiful of all."⁷¹

Martinez pointed out that this exhibition was the first and last time the three artists work was seen in a major show in Nice prior to the Galerie des Ponchettes exhibition. The Galerie de la Salle show was not even mentioned. Martinez was not critical of the artists' works, but rather the "insolence" of Lepage's suggestion that Nice had anything to do with their success. He was also critical of the indifference of the local public.

Another well-regarded critic, Jean-Jacques Lévêque, defended the spirit of the Ecole de Nice as the "adolescence of art actuel."⁷² He described the Ecole de Nice as maintaining an ideology that matched the actuality of existence in Nice – that is, the sea, the sun, the bars, the cover-girls, etc. There was a modern sensibility evident in this unity of ideology/experience that he described as "Hollywood on the Mediterranean."⁷³ In Lévêque's words, "Yes, Nice is our pasteurized, tranquil paradise."⁷⁴ He concluded that Nice defined "marvelous modernity."

The critical reception was mixed although none of the critics disputed the importance of Klein, Arman, and Raysse. For the most part, critics in Paris, except Rivière, were critical of this regional school. They viewed it as opportunistic and without foundation. In Nice, Lepage, Sosno, and Ben worked

actively to define the Ecole de Nice in relation to concepts and strategies, in particular, the integration of art (readymade objects and experiences) into life by means of direct or conceptual appropriation.

Broader factors also seem to have interfered with the critical reception of the Ecole de Nice. The artists rejected Paris during the period when the French perceived their culture as under siege by the Americans. They rejected the primacy of painting as a vehicle of formalist innovation, the basis of the Ecole de Paris. Their affiliations were generation-based, with artists of several nationalities, including, if not especially, Americans. And paradoxically, the Ecole de Nice represented the success of French cultural policy that supported decentralization and cultural growth in this tourist destination. The success of Nice signaled a threat to the cultural stronghold of Paris. Attempts to disseminate Parisian culture failed to recognize the allure of the Mediterranean, with its growing public and private collections of modern masters, and its vibrant popular and mass culture.

A focused study on the conceptual rapport of the Ecole de Nice artists, initiated by Ben, has been complicated because of the artists' disparate group affiliations – including Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, and Supports/Surfaces. Their diverse output drew from the spectrum of modernist sources, such individual masters as Matisse and Picasso, movements including Suprematism, Constructivism, the Bauhaus, Dada, Surrealism, pre-war and postwar abstraction, Happenings, Neo-dada, and late modern visual culture that included kitsch, regional, and mass culture. Furthermore, each group, if not the individual artist, was perceived to embrace different (or changed) social and political ideologies. As a result, the artists in my

study have been more easily discussed in relation to their group affiliation, or in monographic studies. Either approach tends to emphasize group predilection or continuities within their individual oeuvre. While I recognize their distinct visual trajectories, my larger aim is to also elaborate on their conceptual affinities and the importance of the region as a catalyst for their sense of mutual independence.

Several recent studies have addressed the social changes that provide a context for my thesis. Richard F. Kuisel's Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization (1993)⁵ and Kristen Ross' Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonialization and the Reordering of French Culture (1995)⁶ examine the Americanization of France from two vantages. Kuisel details the American strategies to inculcate France with consumer items and, aided by these conveniences, American ideology. In the Cold War battle for the French, American business and advertising succeeded in cultivating markets for American goods and lifestyle, especially once the realities of Stalin's Soviet Union became public. Ross analyzes the social changes that resulted from the dual impact of Americanization and the French-Algerian War in the decade prior to 1968. She argues that specific consumer items, such as cars and refrigerators, precipitated changes in personal relations. A new sense of mobility and hygiene changed the very concept of the home. In the public space, new notions of man were theorized to fit private and public structures such as corporations, government administration, and the university. Ross emphasizes the importance of the "new man" in the 1950s and 1960s. This construction of "male subjectivity was proclaimed from all sides, celebrated, analyzed, and debated."⁷ Klein, Arman.

and Raysse were self-conscious of their status as artists chronicling and even catalyzing a new social milieu. All three dealt with themes addressed by Ross. For example, Klein claimed his artistic mission to become the “new man for the new world.” Arman found his artistic direction by making accumulations with inked business stamps imprinted on paper, the large scale pieces called “administrative cachets.” Raysse called his artistic theory “hygiene of vision.” His aim was to create work conveying the “serenity of a refrigerator.”

The social shifts in France during this period included, of course, an emphasis on leisure and travel. The Ecole de Nice was founded on the premise that it reflected a new, youthful sensibility, in contrast to a more adult Paris. The importance of the Côte d’Azur as a postwar tourist destination has not been fully considered in relation to the development of the Ecole de Nice, the first regional group of artists to have any impact nationally – and for a time, internationally. Kenneth E. Silver provides a foundation for this approach in his book Making Paradise (2001) in which he chronicles the art of the region from the late-nineteenth century to the postwar period. Silver believes that the Côte d’Azur has been neglected as an important site of twentieth century art because of its associations with hedonism and tourism. He suggests that the area has only begun to acquire a cultural profile as a result of recent cultural studies of tourism and exhibitions based on that theme.⁷⁸ Silver’s discussion of the Ecole de Nice is limited. He does discuss Klein, Arman, and Raysse, whom he described as having a “powerful sense of their own local identity,” a “strong sense of ‘modernist’ privilege,” and “a demystified sense of artistic celebrity” that

contributed to their self-assertiveness.⁷⁹ Silver emphasizes the iconoclasm of the Ecole de Nice in relation to the unique mix of high (“the living icons in their midst”), and low art (“mass-culture icons and symbols that surrounded them on the coast”) that existed in the area.⁸⁰ Silver’s incisive remarks are important, but he does not discuss their work in any detail aside from acknowledging their historical place as the first group of artists to emerge from Nice.

In the 1950s, tourism and cultural venues were developed simultaneously as the key elements that would draw more French and continue to attract international visitors. The enormous success of the distinctly modern postwar Riviera made it a model for numerous other tourist/culture destinations. Dean MacCannell’s Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (1992) has informed my views on the role of tourism and the cultural experience as it flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. He argues that “tourism is the primary ground for new cultural forms on a global basis.” In contrast to critics of tourism who consider this activity a threat to genuine culture,⁸¹ MacCannell considers tourism as a viable cultural experience that has within it the makings of a genuine international culture.⁸² John Urry’s The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies (1990) focuses on the tourist experience as a relationship constructed through difference and contrast.⁸³ He observed that tourism is the defining feature of being modern and successful tourist locations are those that are “outside normal places of residence and work.”⁸⁴ John Frow pointed out that tourism “represents a quest for an authentic domain of being.”⁸⁵ Frow cited Eric Cohen who wrote: “It [tourism] is thus a marker of the spiritual self-reflexivity of

modernity and directly parallel to the self-consciousness of intellectuals about their own alienation."⁸⁶

The Ecole de Nice celebrated the idea of tourism as a productive form of internationalism, and MacCannell's broad study of tourism and the cultural experience parallels views expressed by critics and curators who have organized exhibitions on the Ecole de Nice in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Claude Fournet, director of the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Nice, considered tourism and leisure an important contribution to the artistic inclination of Nice in the twentieth century⁸⁷ – a model of pluralistic tendencies that includes combinations of high and low. Sam Hunter pointed out that the social life of the artist in Nice differed from that of cities such as Paris or New York – rather than centered in galleries and studios, the emphasis was on recreation and the city's bistros.⁸⁸

The emphasis on tourist culture in Ecole de Nice art is directly tied to the incorporation of mass culture and kitsch – which had, of course, an increasing presence in French culture generally. The Ecole de Nice aimed to close the gap between art and mass culture, and this was a major source of economic success for the artists involved. Restany ascribed the phenomenon of the Ecole de Nice to "the degradation of the city as elitist due to mass tourism and mass culture."⁸⁹ Pincus-Witten wrote that the Ecole de Nice "wanted to conquer bad taste on its own turf."⁹⁰ He also observed that popular culture dominated in this area, and Paris chose to ignore this growing trend in its own culture.⁹¹ This broader view of

culture in Nice was a vivid contrast to Paris, where the fine arts were viewed almost exclusively in relation to prewar models.

Herman Lebovics book, Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture (1999), provides a rich background on the French effort to establish Parisian culture as the "norm and model of contemporary cultural production." Lebovics' study not only details this long history beginning with the French Revolution, but also makes clear the real sense of urgency felt by government officials in reaffirming Paris culture in post-Occupation France. He points out that André Malraux's decentralization effort "was in effect multiplying the culture and sophistication of Paris in all urban areas of France."⁹² The Ecole de Nice rejected Parisian culture, but did not relinquish ties to early modern masters such as Matisse and Picasso, whose legacy dominated in the area.

The Ecole de Nice manifested a real sense of cultural pluralism, which included popular culture. In Brian Rigby's study Popular Culture in Modern France: A Study of Cultural Discourse (1991), he observes that the popular culture movement provided a foundation in support for artistic pluralism and cultural autonomy efforts. These dual trends – support for national culture and the drive for cultural pluralism – parallel each other from 1946 through the 1960s, a period he describes as "the highpoint of intellectual and political debate about such issues as popular culture, mass culture and State intervention in culture."⁹³ The Ecole de Nice was a voice in this debate challenging Parisian culture and using popular culture and mass culture to assault Parisian hegemony.

The rise of sociology in postwar France was another powerful instrument of cultural transformation. Diana Orvieto Pinto demonstrated in her dissertation "Sociology as a Cultural Phenomenon in France and Italy: 1950-1972" that the French embrace of sociology eroded the impact of philosophy and the status of intellectuals in 1950s Paris.⁹⁴ It also provided a mechanism for the French self-examination of their postwar society. Restany contended that sociology had come to the aid of intellect (artists associated with Existentialism) and chance (Surrealism) as conceptual alternatives. In Klein's writings, especially excerpts from the "Monochrome Adventure," he recognized the importance of public response as a means of gauging his own success. In an effort to communicate more directly with his audience, he constructed situations where action and appraisal were prioritized over the realization of static objects. "the ashes of my art."⁹⁵ According to Restany's biographer Henry Périer, Restany considered the mediating role of objects in redefining social space and relationships a hallmark of Alain Robbe-Grillet's theory of the *nouveau roman* and a component of Nouvelle Vague film, which he viewed as parallel to Nouveau Réalisme.⁹⁶

During the 1980s and 1990s, monographs on these five artists attested to their individual successes, whereas it is apparent that the significance of the Ecole de Nice waned until exhibitions were organized in Miami and Taipei, in preparation for the inauguration of the new museum in Nice in 1991. On the 20th anniversary of Klein's death, for example, exhibitions were planned in the U.S. and in Paris. The Americans Nan Rosenthal and Thomas McEvilley contributed essays to the catalogue published by the Institute of Arts at Rice University.⁹⁷

Rosenthal's essay, "Assisted Levitation considered the ways Klein exploited his audiences in support of his myth-making agenda. McEvilley's "Conquistador of the Void" delved into Klein's sources in metaphysics. At the same time in France, the critic Catherine Millet stressed Klein's capacity to synthesize Suprematism and Constructivism (Malevich, Moholy-Nagy) with Dada to formulate a concept-based art.⁹⁸ Sidra Stich's 1994 monograph emphasized the experiential aspects of Klein's work, and the precedents he established for installation and performance work.⁹⁹ In these studies, Klein's role in establishing the Ecole de Nice is mentioned, but not explored.

Arman's work is generally discussed in formal terms. Bernard Lamarche-Vadal and Alison de Lima Greene, for example, emphasize the logical progression evident in Arman's work as the object is subjected to a series of operations from use as stamped image, to accumulation, and final obliteration.¹⁰⁰ One exception is Benjamin Buchloh's recent argument that Arman's 1960 Paris installation, Le Plein "would become the single most important paradigmatic change in reconstruction sculpture."¹⁰¹ Buchloh asserted that Arman's work, a complement to Klein's Paris show Le Vide, addressed repressed themes of death and memory held in reserve by massive consumerism. I agree with Buchloh, but as I will argue later in this study, I believe that Klein too succeeded in addressing the issues of memory and historical repression in his work.

Raysse's exhibitions in Paris in 1980 (Centre Georges Pompidou) and 1992 (Jeu de Paume) confirmed the decisive change in the artist's works coincident with the uprisings of 1968. However, even during the early 1960s,

when his work appeared to celebrate mass culture in the subjects and mediums he chose. Raysse's images of women derived from advertisements and art history address the nature of reality and spectacle with incisive critical wit. Didier Semin's 1992 essay "Martial Raysse: alias Hermès: la Voie des Images."¹⁰² which explores the issues of truth and fabricated illusion in Raysse's work, has informed my perspective on this artist, who is often misleadingly associated with Pop Art in the United States.

Ben had an important role in organizing Nice à Berlin in 1980. In "Mon point de vue." Ben described the "cosmopolitan" art in Nice as Nouveau Réalisme. Supports/Surface, Fluxus, and non-art. This was distinct from the art of Occitane culture, or ethnic culture alive in the area. He believed they functioned simultaneously – one broke tradition, one maintained tradition – a relationship that kept the culture vital. The result was Nice, an international city, but with deep regional roots derived from the diversity of the people.¹⁰³

Four of the five artists in this study have been generally identified most directly with Ecole de Nice. Viallat is the exception. In fact, Sosno believed that the painting movement initiated by Viallat – he was mistakenly linked to formalist abstraction – contributed to the decline of the Ecole de Nice. Sosno felt that Viallat and the Supports/Surface artists diverged from the social agendas of the Nouveaux Réalistes, Ben, and their followers. Though Viallat was invested in the analysis of painting's formal components, he also considered his installations a form of intervention that directly responded to the culture and landscape of Nice in both form and content.

I argue that Viallat's has an important place within this group. His work is a product of the milieu – both artistic and geographic. Viallat credited Arman with moving him toward the use of a repetitive image and his approach to color, processes, and the materiality of his painting share affinities Klein's work. Viallat has been staunch in his allegiance to the south of France, especially to the landscape, rhythms, and local pastimes evident in his work *and* that of other Ecole de Nice artists.

Marcelin Pleynet, editor of the journal Tel Quel, and self-described "tourist" in the field of art criticism, was an influential and well-known supporter of Viallat. Pleynet rejected outright the idea of formal innovation as a driving force in modernism. He argued for a new social role for painting that emphasized a practice/theory approach. The objective was the fabrication of painting as an "object of knowledge."¹⁰⁴ Pleynet's essays, such as "La Peinture et son Modèle,"¹⁰⁵ articulated a new perspective on painting (evident in Viallat's work) that was distinct from the creation of logocentric images and divorced from self expression.

The work of Viallat, featured in a monographic exhibition in 1982 at the Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris), was an embodiment of this deconstructionist turn. This catalogue included an essay by Alfred Pacquement, then lead curator, in which he discussed Viallat's practice/theory method, which included the processes of stamping, staining, and folding a variety of surfaces such as canvas, sheets, tarps, and nets.¹⁰⁶ The materials and processes Viallat employed were directly connected to the daily life of the local inhabitants, but

shared visual affinities with international trends such as Post-Minimalism and Arte Povera.

In conjunction with the opening of the new museum in Nice in 1991, the Musée National d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice, Claude Fournet, the director of the museum and critic and curator associated with the region since the mid-1970s, published Chroniques Nicoises, Genèse d'un Musée, tome I, 1945-1972, an important source of documents and reprints essential for research on this topic.¹⁰⁷ The material was drawn from private and public archives, especially those of Sosno. Ben, and curator Frédéric Altmann. Part I covers the period 1945-1962. This section of the text devotes considerable attention to the Nouveaux Réalistes Klein and Arman, detailing their activities as early as 1947. Part II covers the years 1963-1972 or the post-Klein period. The essays are by critics and historians including Restany, Hahn, Pierre Cabanne, and Millet, the British Pop historian Marco Livingstone, and Pincus-Witten. All discuss the Ecole de Nice in relation to international currents, especially in Paris and New York. A planned second volume dedicated to the period after 1972 has yet to be published.

The reconstruction of the postwar Côte d'Azur made an Ecole de Nice possible. In Chapter 1, I will examine the re-construction of the postwar Côte d'Azur, an initiative that combined expansion of tourism with more cultural visibility. Parallels between the art produced in Nice and commercial advertisements of the Côte d'Azur promoting youth, health and freedom will be discussed. This area had successfully capitalized on its legacy as an international leisure destination and home of modern masters, Matisse and Picasso, among

others. Matisse, in particular, dismissed Paris-based formalist abstraction, maintaining that the environment was critical in establishing a context for the work.¹⁰⁸ The 1950 Matisse retrospective that inaugurated the new Galerie des Ponchettes and opening of the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence in 1951 confirmed the artist as the dominant presence in the area. His work influenced Klein, Raysse, and Viallat most evidently.

Chapter two is devoted to Restany and his formulation of Nouveau Réalisme, developing the historical and theoretical context that forms the basis for my examination of individual artists in subsequent chapters. Restany advocated a fresh perception on Americanization that relinquished the sense of nostalgia that permeated even the most advanced and sophisticated tendencies in postwar French art. He not only initially defined the group, but his writings about the artists from Nice impacted their reception in Paris, Milan, New York, and Nice.

In subsequent chapters, I focus on each of the five artists that warrant recognition as an Ecole de Nice. In making this choice, I am not suggesting that other artists associated with Ecole de Nice have not created successful works. However, their work is indebted to the artists that I have selected for this study. My chapter on Klein argues that his work – “demonstrations necessary to convince the public” – illustrates new discursive possibilities closer to theatrical modes aimed at revitalizing art from its peripheral social role (subjective abstract painting) and enabling the public to recognize concepts or aspirations relevant to their daily lives. Klein’s pairing of Malevich and Duchamp, noted by Millet and Buchloh, is relevant because the former envisioned

the monochrome as a vehicle of spiritual transformation and the latter introduced the readymade and appropriation as a critical strategy.¹⁰⁹ However, I disagree with Buchloh that he drew from their precedents because these two artists were safely absent from recent history or silent about recent history.¹¹⁰ Instead, they represented an alternative to expressionism,¹¹¹ and their works were topical because of recent publications and exhibitions in the 1950s.

In chapter four, I stress Arman's penchant for collecting objects that recollect the past as a means of coping with the lost patterns of daily life and the realities of consumption. His approach was pragmatic. He soon mimicked the processes of consumer production – accumulation, distribution, disposal. Chapter five describes Raysse's formulation of a modern myth based on the iconography of the Riviera. His chic pop style, centered on cover girls and beach products, dramatized the Côte d'Azur's allure, particularly to the nation's young who initially embraced the new consumer sensibility. The discussion of Ben's works that follows in chapter six is focused on his staged events. The situations that he framed illustrate his view that art is social and relational activity that has the capacity to communicate directly with an audience in an open-ended situation. Ben considered these framed encounters a space in which the possibility of the "new" might be achieved. Finally, in chapter seven, I discuss the works by Viallat that link him directly to the area. His analytic and repetitive approach to the process, materials, and structure of painting also included an acknowledgement of the social space the work was destined to inhabit. Viallat drew attention to the spatial context in his installations and, through them,

further revealed qualities within the work and locale or architectural space where it was installed.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Nice acquired a cultural identity based upon the presence of masters of French modernism who visited or re-located to the area in their later years. In the postwar era, the Riviera took on metaphoric associations for the country itself, and became a locus of French modernism and popular culture. The Ecole de Nice emerged from this context. The artists did maintain continuity with prewar modernism – but not in terms of stylistic continuity. Rather, the five artists I consider as constituting an Ecole de Nice formulated new means of visual communication. In this dissertation, I will discuss how they incorporated precedents established by the modernists in residence (whose works had become increasingly visible) into a more socially oriented visual language that drew attention to their new social spaces and incorporated aspects of mass culture and popular art.

¹ Robert Pincus-Witten. "Ecole de Nice: A Missing Book." *Arts* Vol. 60 (January 1986), 88. Pincus-Witten attributed this to critics and historians who have concentrated primarily on artists Yves Klein and Arman. Furthermore, Ben Vautier assumed the role of "anarchic bad boy" who adopted a "provocative role akin to the self-canceling hi-jinx of Tristan Tzara in the history of Dadaism."

² Robert Pincus-Witten. "Ecole de Nice." *Arts* Vol. 62 (December 1988), 61.

³ Claude Fournet. "The School of Nice and its Movements" *L'Ecole de Nice et ses Mouvements* (Sarasota and Miami Beach: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and the Bass Museum of Art, Autumn-Winter, 1989-1990) and *The School of Nice and Its Movements* (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1990). Both included seventeen artists from the 1960s and 1970s: Marcel Alocco, Arman, Ben, César, Louis Chacallis, Max Charvolen, Albert Chubac, Jean-Claude Farhi, Claude Gilli, Vivien Isnard, Yves Klein, Robert Malaval, Martial Raysse, Serge III, Sacha Sosno, Bernar Venet, André Verdet.

⁴ Sam Hunter. "The Ecole de Nice: Origins, Artists, and Major Events." *The*

School of Nice and Its Movements ((Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice, October 6 – December 9, 1990). 18.

⁵ Laurence J. Ruggiero, "L'Ecole de Nice," L'Ecole de Nice et ses Mouvements (Sarasota and Miami Beach: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and the Bass Museum of Art, 1989-1990), 17.

⁶ Edouard Valdman, Le Roman de l'Ecole de Nice (Paris: La Différence, 1991), 20.

⁷ "Ecole de Nice." exh. cat. (Vence: Galerie de la Salle, March 18-April 18, 1967).

⁸ Alexandre de la Salle, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 114.

⁹ Ibid., 115. He referred to "modernity" as the art of Duchamp, Malevich, Mondrian, and late Matisse.

¹⁰ Other artists in the exhibition included: Marcel Alocco, François Arnal, Albert Chubac, César, J.C. Fahri, P.A. Gette, J. C. Gilli, Robert Malaval, Annie Martin, Venet, André Verdet.

¹¹ Claude Rivière, "La Charge Solaire de l'Artiste," Combat. (August 22, 1960).

¹² Catherine Francblin, Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1997), 153.

¹³ Jacques Lepage. "Nice." Opus International, no.5 (February 1968), 96.

¹⁴ "Trois Artistes de l'Ecole de Nice: Arman, Yves Klein, Martial Raysse." (Musées de Nice – Galerie des Ponchettes, December 1967-February 1968), unpaginated.

¹⁵ Ben Vautier, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 38.

¹⁶ Festival of Non-Art, No. 31 (1969) Special Collection Periodical, Schmuck, no. 6, no date. Special Collection, Museum of Modern Art Library, NY.

¹⁷ A Propos de Nice, exhibition catalogue. (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne au Centre Georges Pompidou, January 31- April 11, 1977). Pontus Hulten organized this exhibition. The catalogue included an essay, "La Créativité à Nice." by Jacques Lepage.

¹⁸ Claude Viallat, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 195.

¹⁹ Peintures cahiers théoriques, no. 1 (May 1971) Reprinted in Marie-Hélène

Grinfeder, Les Années Supports Surfaces (Paris: Herscher, 1991), 57.

²⁰ Arman, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 31.

²¹ Pierre Restany. "Nouveau Réalisme: The Richness of the World of Objects." trans. Editha Carpenter (NY: Zabriski Gallery, 1988), 4. The cover of this catalogue features the declaration of the Nouveaux Réalistes signed by the artists and dated Thursday, October 27, 1960.

²² Hélène Lassalle. "Art Criticism as strategy: the idiom of 'new realism' from Fernand Léger to the Pierre Restany group." (trans. Ann Cremin) Art Criticism since 1900 Malcolm Gee, editor (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 203.

²³ Jill Carrick. "Le Nouveau Réalisme: Fetishism and Consumer Spectacle in Post-War France" (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1997), 3.

²⁴ Arman, interview by author, written notes taken during the session in New York, Thursday, June 6, 1991.

²⁵ "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes." 1960 interview with Sosno reprinted in Yves Klein (Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée d'Art Moderne, 1983), 263.

²⁶ Pierre Restany, A 40° au dessus de Dada (Paris: Galerie J, May 1961) unpaginated. In the second manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme published in conjunction with the April 1961 exhibition, A 40° au dessus de Dada, Restany defined the work of these artists as "the passionate adventure of the real perceived in itself and not through the prism of conceptual or imaginative transcription." Dependent on the Duchamp readymade, it nonetheless was not defined as anti-art but as a body of work charged with "positivity."

²⁷ 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986), 81. Klein rejected Restany's association of his work with Dada altogether, and on October 8, 1961 he joined with three critics Alain Jouffroy, Pierre Descargues and John Ashbery in a "*journée des observateurs neutres*" to formally reject Restany's position. That evening, Klein, Raysse, and Raymond Hains withdrew from the group.

²⁸ Yves: Propositions Monochromes (Paris: Colette Allendy Gallery, February 21 – March 7, 1956). Restany wrote the catalogue preface titled. "La Minute de Verité."

²⁹ Claude Rivière. "Vers la Sculpture Aérienne." Combat, July 2, 1960; "Antagonisms." Combat, February 2, 1960 and XXe Siècle (Paris) no. 14 (June 1960). "Exhibitions, requins et vampires." August 29, 1960.

³⁰ Claude Rivière. "La Charge Solaire de l'Artiste," Combat. (August 22, 1960). The full title of this weekly is Combat de la Résistance à la Révolution. It was edited by Louis Aragon and founded by members of the Resistance.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Claude-Hélène Sibert. "Malaise de la peinture contemporaine," Cimaise no. 2 (November-December 1954) 14-15.

³³ Serge Guilbault, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (University of Chicago Press, 1983), 2.

³⁴ Kathryn Anne Boyer. "Political Patronage: How New York Displaced Paris as the Center of Contemporary Art, ca. 1955-1968" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1994).

³⁵ Bernard Dorival, Ecole de Paris au Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1961). Also see: "Ecole de Paris: un Essai de Redefinition." Les Années 50 (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1988). In this catalogue, he expanded its definition to include Nouveau Réalisme and maintained that it relied on the earlier pre-war avant-garde.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ "Ecole de Paris." exhibition organized by Raymond Nacenta (Paris: Galerie Charpenier, 1960). The exhibition was reviewed in "Les 80 Peintres de la Jeune Ecole de Paris." Arts (Paris), no 795 (November 1960), endpage.

⁴⁰ Claude Rivière. "Langue et Communication" Sud-Communication: Arts et Spectacles sur La Cote d'Azur (October 1961) 25. By this time, Rivière had accepted a faculty appointment at University in Nice.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Pincus-Witten (January 1986), 87.

⁴⁴ Sasha Sosnovsky, 1960 interview. "Klein, Arman, Raysse: Des Nouveaux Réalistes." quoted in Yves Klein (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou 1982), 263-264; "Tendances du Nouveau-Réalisme Niçois." Sud-Communications, #108 (June 1961); "Encour Le Nouveau Réalisme." Sud-Communications, #110 (August

1961); "L'Ecole de Nice a La Biennale de Paris", Sud-Communications (October 1961), 22-23.

⁴⁵ Frances Morris, Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism 1945-1955, Exh. Cat., June 9-September 5 (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), 16-17. Morris emphasizes the impact of wartime suffering and privations on artists Wols, Jean Hélion, Jean Fautrier, and others. They found support in the circles of existentialist writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

⁴⁶ Fontana purchased one of the three blue monochromes sold at Klein's first exhibition at Galleria Apollinaire in 1957. Also see: Tristan Sauvage, Nuclear Art (NY: Marcello Maestro, 1962), 40.

⁴⁷ Otto Peine described Klein as the "real motor in provoking a Zero movement." Otto Peine and Heinz Mack, Zero (MA: MIT Press 1973), xxi. Yves Klein, "My Position in the Battle Between Line and Color," (1958), and "Truth becomes Reality" (1958) appeared in Zero, no. 3 (Düsseldorf, 1961), reprinted in Otto Peine and Heinz Mack, Zero (MA: MIT Press 1973), 10-11 and 91-94. Arman, "The Realisme of Accumulation," (July 1960) Zero, no.3 (Düsseldorf, 1961), 209.

⁴⁸ Jacques Lepage, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 124.

⁴⁹ Pincus-Witten (1986), 88.

⁵⁰ César, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 83.

⁵¹ Yves Klein le monochrome (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, April 11-29, 1961).

⁵² The New Realists, exh. cat. (NY: Sidney Janis Gallery, November 1-December 1, 1962).

⁵³ Brian O'Doherty, "Art: Avant-Garde Revolt," New York Times (October 31, 1962), 41. Reprinted in Steven Henry Madoff, Pop Art: A Critical Anthology (CA: University of California Press, 1997), 42. "There is also excellent work by foreign artists, but it is more traditional in style. The main interest is the American satire of America's mass market. This is new." Sonya Rudikoff, "Art International Vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1963), 40. She described Tinguely's work as a "highly sophisticated and exhausted method of representing reality." She also rejected sociological view of New Realism, a clear reference to Restany's view. Barbara Rose, "Dada, Then and Now," Art International (January 1963), 23-28. Reprinted in Madoff (1997), 57-64. Rose states that it is important to find an American source for new dada. She identifies works by Rauschenberg, Johns, Rivers and Dine as representing two trends of new dada whose source is not European, but indebted to John Cage and his lectures at Black Mountain Collage and The New School for Social Research.

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- ⁵⁴ Pierre Restany, "Le Nouveau Réalisme à la Conquête de New York." Art International Vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1963), 29.
- ⁵⁵ Brian O'Doherty, "Art: Avant-Garde Revolt," originally published The New York Times (October 31, 1962), 41. Also see Steven Henry Madoff, Pop Art: A Critical Anthology (CA: University of California Press, 1997), 65-81.
- ⁵⁶ Virginia Dwan, interview by Charles Stuckey, New York, March 21-27, New York: Archives of American Art, Virginia Dwan archives transcript, 20.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Otto Hahn, "L'Ecole de Nice." Express (August 2-8, 1965), 30-32.
- ⁵⁹ Chroniques Niçoises Genèse d'un Musée, tome 1: 1945-1972 (Nice: Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice, 1991), 299-301. Photographs of this event are reprinted.
- ⁶⁰ Otto Hahn was a respected critic and journalist began writing about art in Les Temps Modernes, edited by Sartre, before beginning a nearly thirty-year career for L'Express in the mid-1960s.
- ⁶¹ "Lettres et le Néon: l'Ecole de Nice." Identités nos. 11-12 (Summer-Autumn 1965). This issue included statements by Arman, Paul-Armand Gette, Jean Gilli, J.M.G. Le Clézio, Robert Malaval, Martial Raysse, Ben Vautier, and Bernard Venet. It also included an essay by Marcel Alocco, "Signer au dos le ciel."
- ⁶² Ben Vautier, quoted in Identités (1965), 2.
- ⁶³ A Propos de Nice, annotated chronology by Ben Vautier (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1977), 6.
- ⁶⁴ Claude Viallat, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 194.
- ⁶⁵ François Pluchart, "Sur le tombe de Klein, L'Ecole de Nice compte ses sous." Combat (June 22, 1966), 7.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ According to Claude Fournet, director of the museums in Nice, "François Pluchart became the theoretician of body art. If it had not already existed, he would have invented it." Claude Fournet, "arTitudes [sic] de François Pluchart: une revue internationale à Nice (Nice: Galerie d'Art Contemporain des Musée de Nice – Galerie de la Marine, November 14, 1978 – January 29, 1979), 13. This exhibition included the works of artists such as Gina Pane, Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Arman, Raysse, and Ben, among the roster of international artists associated with this tendency in the 1970s.

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- ⁶⁸ Jacques Martinez, "Nice: une ville et son 'ÉCOLE.'" Combat (February 1, 1968), 11.
- ⁶⁹ "Festival of Nouveau Réalisme." (Nice: Galerie Muratore, July 13-September 13, 1961). Artists included: Arman, César, Dufrene, Klein, Raysse, Rotella, Saint-Phalle, Spoerri, Tinguely, and Villeglé. Poster reprinted in Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice (1991), 199.
- ⁷⁰ Sasha Sosnovsky, "Tendances du Nouveau Réalisme Niçois." Sud-Communication, no. 108 (June 1961), 1.
- ⁷¹ Sasha Sosnovsky (1961), 20.
- ⁷² Jean-Jacques Lévêque, "École de Nice." Opus International, no. 1 (April 1967), 100.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁵ Richard F. Kuisel, Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- ⁷⁶ Kristin Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture (MA: MIT Press, 1995).
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 158 passim.
- ⁷⁸ Kenneth E. Silver, Making Paradise: Art, Modernity, and the Myth of the French Riviera (MA: MIT Press, 2001), 17, 180.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 170.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 172.
- ⁸¹ Abraham Moles, Le kitsch, l'art de Bonheur (Paris: MAME 1971).
- ⁸² Dean MacCannell, Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.
- ⁸³ John Urry, The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies (London: Sage Publications, 1990).
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 3.
- ⁸⁵ John Frow, "Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia." October vol. 57 (Cambridge: MIT Press, summer 1991), 129.

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- ⁸⁶ Eric Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism." The Annals of Tourism Research vol. 15, no. 3 (1988), 376 as cited by Frow (1991), 129.
- ⁸⁷ Claude Fournet. "The School of Nice and its Movements" L'Ecole de Nice et ses Mouvements (Sarasota and Miami Beach: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art and the Bass Museum of Art, Autumn-Winter, 1989-1990), 14.
- ⁸⁸ Sam Hunter. "The Ecole de Nice: Origins, Artists, and Major Events." The School of Nice and Its Movements (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1990), 19.
- ⁸⁹ Pierre Restany as quoted in Valdman (1991), 163.
- ⁹⁰ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Ecole de Nice," Arts (December 1988), 62.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² Herman Lebovics, Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture (Cornell University Press, 1999), 5.
- ⁹³ Brian Rigby, Popular Culture in Modern France: A Study of Cultural Discourse (London: Routledge, 1991), 1.
- ⁹⁴ Diana Orvieto Pinto. "Sociology as a Cultural Phenomenon in France and Italy: 1950-1972" (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1977), 95.
- ⁹⁵ Yves Klein. "Quelques extraits de mon journal en 1957." Yves Klein (Paris: Union Central des Arts Décoratifs and Centre National d'Art Contemporain, c. 1968), 25.
- ⁹⁶ Henry Périer Pierre Restany: L'alchimiste de l'art (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1998), 173.
- ⁹⁷ Nan Rosenthal. "Assisted Levitation." Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982). This essay is based on a chapter from her doctoral thesis. "The Blue World of Yves Klein" (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1976).
- ⁹⁸ Catherine Millet, Yves Klein (Paris: Art Press Flammarion, 1983).
- ⁹⁹ Sidra Stich, Yves Klein (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994).
- ¹⁰⁰ Denyse Durand-Ruel, Arman: catalogue raisonné, 1960-1961-1962, essay by Bernard Lamarche-Vadal (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1991), 26-27. Alison de Lima Greene, Arman 1955-1991: A Retrospective, (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1991).
- ¹⁰¹ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. "Plenty or Nothing." Premises (NY: Guggenheim

Museum, 1998), 98.

¹⁰² Didier Semin. "Martial Raysse, alias Hermès: la voie des images." Martial Raysse (Paris: Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, 1992), 13-26.

¹⁰³ Ben Vautier. "Mon point de vue ou Conversation avec Ben a propos de thé, de Nice, de l'art, de Berlin, et de L'Occitanie" Nice à Berlin (Berliner Künstlerprogramm and Galerie d'Art Contemporain des Musées de Nice, 1980), 11-12.

¹⁰⁴ Marcelin Pleynet. "Disparition du Tableau." Art International, Vol. XII/8 (October 20, 1969), 48. Also see Pleynet. Painting and System (1984), 98.

¹⁰⁵ Marcelin Pleynet. "La Peinture et son Modèle." Les Lettres Francaises, no. 1, 239 (July 3-9, 1968), 29.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred Pacquement. "Un Oeuvre Multiple." Viallat exh. cat. (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, June 24-September 20, 1982), 33-35.

¹⁰⁷ Chroniques Nicoises. Genèse d'un Musée, tome I, 1945-1972 (Nice: the Musée National d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice, 1991).

¹⁰⁸ Jack Flam, editor. Matisse on Art, revised edition. (University of California Press, 1995), 210.

¹⁰⁹ Klein did not consider his work to have a source in the pairing of Malevich and Duchamp. He parodied Malevich in a hand-drawn cartoon title. "The True Position of Malevich in Relation to Me." c. 1959. Malevich is shown at an easel copying a Klein monochrome painting hung on the wall. Klein also rejected the association with Duchamp. Restany's "À 40° Au-dessus de Dada," the second manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme published in conjunction with the exhibition at Galerie J in Paris, May 17-June 10, 1961, was outright rejected by Klein.

¹¹⁰ Buchloh (1998), 89-90.

¹¹¹ Klein, Arman, and Raysse defined expressionism in relation to highly subjective painting either in style or subject, which characterized, in a general sense, postwar gestural abstraction or figurative artists such as Bernard Buffet. Klein wrote: "I loathe artists who empty themselves into their painting, as is quite often the case today. Morbidism [sic], rather than thinking of the beautiful, the good, the true in their painting: they express, they ejaculate, they spit out every horrible, rotten, and infectious complexity in their painting as if relieving themselves and putting the burden on others. "the readers of their works." of all their sorry failures." See: Yves Klein. "The Monochrome Adventure." Le Dépassement de la problématique de l'art (La Louvière, Belgium: Éditions de Montbliart, 1959), 27-28, as cited in Rosenthal (1992), 93.

Chapter 1

Postwar Nice: Riviera Dreaming

Nice's reputation for attracting artists and tourists was well established by the early part of the twentieth century. However, the city and surrounding towns were never considered central to French modernism but rather a satellite locale where artists blended leisure and experimentation in an atmosphere distinct from that of Paris. But the perception that the area was a cultural desert by mid-century was unfounded. In fact, the Matisse exhibition at the Galerie des Ponchettes (1950), the inauguration of the Chapelle du Rosaire (1951), and the establishment of the Picasso Museum at the Chateau Grimaldi in Antibes in the early 1950s signaled an extraordinary cultural vitality that attracted artists and tourists alike.

A sociological shift by the middle 1950s in France – toward leisure expenditure and consumerism -- situated the Côte d'Azur as natural destination for both cultural and recreational tourism within the country. French tourism, in addition to international tourism, increased rapidly in the 1950s. Simultaneously, the rise of the sixties generation in France signaled a change in demographics and outlook. The Ecole de Nice emerged as a response and product of this change in social and cultural orientation.

By 1960, artists associated with the Ecole de Nice recognized that the image of the Riviera -- free, youthful, exotic, fashionable, and popular – could provide a

model for a new vision of French society, transformed by the beauty of the Mediterranean coastline. This image was a hybrid of earlier international tourism, a legacy associated with modern masters, and popular culture that advertised the Riviera as the Tahiti of France.

The Ecole de Nice continued a modern artistic tradition with an important difference. Their sensibility was derived from their experience as inhabitants of the Côte d'Azur. Their perceptions differed from those of artists who visited the area or relocated there in retreat from Paris. As Klein described it,

Although we are always, we of the School of Nice on vacation, we are not tourists. That's the essential point. Tourists come to our countryside for vacations. We live in the land of vacations, which gives us this spirit of nonsense. We amuse ourselves without thinking about religion, art or science.¹

Raysse echoed Klein when he stated,

We are not artists... we live on vacation. We have never worked in our lives. I don't know what society is. I prefer to go for a stroll. I make love with nature, with the dime stores, with my friends, and if people give me money in exchange, that's very well. We are eternally on vacation; I am a sculptor the way I have blue eyes.²

The image these two artists present was a calculated hyperbole. Both were sophisticated in their knowledge of contemporary art – Klein knew many of the leading vanguard artists in Nice and Paris through his mother, the painter Marie Raymond. Raysse's parents worked at the ceramic workshops at Vallauris, and one of his early supporters was Jean Cocteau. However, their comments are indicative of a change, one increasingly oriented to American productivity, in which the distinction between work and pleasure was becoming more pronounced. The Ecole de Nice responded to modernity (and tourism was one of its primary embodiments)

paradoxically – with irony and even disdain, but also by reproducing it or celebrating it in their work.

They were also distinguishing themselves from the older generation of modern masters who lived in the area. These artists sought out the locale because it was distinct from the urban space that enabled them to experiment and experience a different sense of space and light.

Matisse initially drew attention to France's southern coastline in the first decade of the twentieth century. He was attracted to Paul Signac's Post-Impressionist color, and he was inspired by the landscape of Saint-Tropez and other small villages along the Mediterranean coast. By the 1950s, Matisse was revered along the Côte d'Azur: his Fauve images of raw sensory delight had astonished Parisian viewers when they were first exhibited in 1905. James Herbert pointed out in his seminal work on the Fauves that several narratives conjoined in the success of Matisse and his fellow artists early on. These included the rise of promotional tourism and the broader national urge for health and rejuvenation.³ These same factors again drew attention to the Riviera in the postwar era.

With the outbreak of World War I, a legion of French modernist artists and writers headed South. The years of war in Nice proved to be a turning point both in the artistic history of the region and the careers of the artists and writers who congregated there.⁴ Art, literature, and film enlivened the cultural milieu and the small scale of the city and towns brought modernist innovators in close contact. Matisse, Archipenko, Modigliani, and Soutine, to name a few, relocated to a

Riviera, a zone that appeared little affected by this devastating war. The writer Apollinaire (a native of the Côte d'Azur) was stationed in Nîmes after his enlistment in 1915, allowing him to frequent Nice. He wrote, "I know why I was so fascinated in Nice by the orange gleam that appeared at mid-day over the Place Masséna, it was because I love liberty and rebellion above all things."⁵ Blaise Cendrars frequented Cannes and Nice in 1917; he moved to Nice in 1918 where he worked with Abel Gance on the film J'accuse, the first of his collaborations in cinema.⁶ The French film industry established this area as one of its centers with the opening of Gaumont Studio (1913) and, soon after, the Victorine Studios (1917-1919) in Nice.⁷

The Paris of the Dada and Surrealist in the 1920s bears little resemblance to the sensuous reveries produced by Matisse or others entranced by the Riviera light. Matisse expanded on the legacy of Renoir, Signac, and Cézanne in his study of light and picturesque views to create a language of richly decorative works that attest to impact of the environment on his painting, later cutouts, and the design of the Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence.

Between the wars, the area around Nice continued to prove itself an artistic and leisure destination for international artists and tourists. Kenneth Silver pointed out that "artists and tourists shared a common interest, the visual experience."⁸ His examination of paintings and photographs from the era demonstrated the intersection of these visual experiences. Raoul Dufy's paintings, for example Nice, La Baie des Anges (1929)—both "faux-naïve and ultra-sophisticated"—best exemplify the artist tourist experiences⁹ (Fig. 4). Like the previous Fauve

generation, Dufy selected ideal tourist sites as his subjects. Silver also emphasized the importance of photography in documenting two distinct touring styles by contrasting the works of Lisette Model and Jacques-Henri Lartigue. (Figs. 5-6) Model's middle-aged hotel guests reflect nineteenth century trends. Her subjects are stiffly dressed with a formal air more appropriate to an urban environment. They appear displaced in this more picturesque, casual atmosphere, with its orientation to the pleasure of the environment. In contrast, the photographs of Lartigue show a younger more sporting clientele in the 1920s relishing the sun and sea.

Silver characterized Matisse's paintings in the 1920s as exemplifying the "tourist view par excellent."¹⁰ They are, in fact, indicative of the link between modernism "in retreat" and a "working vacation."¹¹ Silver describes the artist and the paintings in relation the environment as one of detachment and observation with an aura of sophistication and calm. These qualities could equally apply to the works of Raysse, whose images of women in chic apparel or beachwear display a sense of presence and absence simultaneously. However, the fact that Raysse was not a tourist impacted his perspective. Rather than consider his imagery and mixed medium works as a "retreat," he used his own perception of the reality of the Mediterranean environment as vehicle of assault against abstraction. The tension in his work derives from a sense of calm and passivity combined with the aggressiveness evident in his garish colors and clashing patterns.

In the film, A Propos de Nice (1929), Jean Vigo did not address the relationship between modern art, tourism, and local color. Instead, this short

documentary focused on the separate worlds occupied by well-heeled tourists and the local population. There was a nostalgic cast to the seasonal visitors flocking to grand hotels for extended winter vacation that seemed to reflect a former age. The Promenade des Anglais provided an attractive setting for a mature clientele who strolled and lounged in the winter sun. In contrast to the tourists, the permanent residents were identifiable by their tanned skin and the curious manner in which Vigo filmed them as foreign specimens. In this film, Nice is two worlds at once – the sophisticated and primitive, both reclusive and fully ensconced in the physical nature of their space. Vigo vividly portrayed the distinct visual gap between the urbane traveler and the physical characteristics and comportment of the local inhabitants – both groups conveying a sense of foreignness. Vigo's film addressed critical issues related to class and ethnicity, but he also elaborated upon the distance between the sophisticated travel and the primitive site, a hallmark of recreational tourism. Vigo's images of Nice also provide a striking contrast to the American experience of the area in the 1920s. This is best characterized by youthful extravagance and unrestrained freedom, where summer sunning, gambling, and sports dominate.¹² This American experience of foreign space is less distinct, and comes closer to linking the space between tourist and site.

Tourism has been interpreted as a form of collision, a jarring of sensibilities whereby a new way of seeing the self emerges in a new environment or for the purpose of this study, it will be linked to notions of escape, adventure and a return to an Edenic past,¹³ or paradisiacal future, for the purpose of this study. The

Mediterranean was linked to the classical and its sense of order, stability, and ideal of beauty. But its diversity of people and links with other cultural traditions (Spain, North Africa, United States) also enabled a broader, perhaps more fluid, conception of traditions and culture. The area is associated with timelessness and immediacy, memory and future pleasure. These are themes that resonate in the five artists discussed in this study.

The touring of artists associated with modernism meshed with broader tourist trends. In the case of the Côte d'Azur, both groups achieved the freedom to venture into the exotic, if tame, world of the azure coast. But the tourist experience is more than a personal awakening or physical displacement. It is linked to sociological changes and cultural priorities. The innovations of modernism and the increased capacity to travel enabled the Côte d'Azur to develop a modern cachet while retaining its sense of exoticism.

In the post 1945 era, the relationship between the visual arts and the cultural identity of Nice becomes even more pronounced. The Riviera was already the home to major figures of modernism; they arrived with well-established reputations. While these artists enjoyed the welcome of local townspeople, the lack of any institutional support, locally or nationally, soon became apparent. With this wealth of artistic figures, Nice and the Côte d'Azur in general positioned itself to become the cultural as well as recreational capital of the South. The objective was not just to attract the international visitor but to attract a greater French audience.

Another important outgrowth of World War II that impacted the Riviera was

a national decentralization initiative. The main expansion area was to the south and east, due to the climate, natural resources and geography. Along the southern coast, Marseilles, for example, was targeted because of the oil industry and its port linking Europe with other Mediterranean countries. The French government recognized that regional development was essential to reconstruction and modernization of postwar France. Olivier Guchard, an aid to Charles de Gaulle, considered France's neglect of regional development a critical problem hindering reconstruction and modernization.¹⁴ After four years of Occupation and the Vichy government in the southern regions of France, centralized leadership had already been crippled. Local bureaucracies and regional publications flourished, whether collaborationist or Resistance.¹⁵ A sense of independence was already well established.

Nice was ready to assume a leadership position in cultural and recreational development. Though not unscathed by wartime deprivation or by the allied landings along the Côte d'Azur, the mythic status of the Riviera saved the coast from widespread devastation. American troops were said to have brought guidebooks to local sightseeing spots when they landed.¹⁶ This geographic paradise was a natural place to cultivate further Riviera traditions of tourism and art. The Mediterranean exemplified the link between classical and modern heritages. And the locale's associations with freedom and health epitomized the desirable characteristics of a renewed French national identity.

Matisse and Picasso assumed central roles in these postwar cultural initiatives. Their position as undisputed masters of the twentieth century sustained.

even grew, as they aged. And despite offers to leave France during the Occupation, both chose to remain, providing evidence of allegiance to France and French modernism. Their presence in the Midi was a source of growing pride.¹⁷ Despite this, there was no museum devoted to modern art in the area where residents or tourists could educate themselves about the works of these distinguished artists and so many others in residence. In an effort to rectify this situation, a local scene painter and designer, Jean Cassarini, organized a city-sponsored commission in November 1945. The Comité des Arts Plastique de Nice was to evaluate the artistic resources in the area in an effort to gain support for a local cultural initiative. Cassarini was already a regional member of a national group, Mouvement National des Amis de l'Art, founded by Gaston Diehl. At the time, Diehl was preparing an essay on Matisse; he would later publish a monograph on the artist in 1954.¹⁸ Cassarini immediately enlisted the support of Matisse, who advised him to divest the committee of local political control and to reform the group as an independent entity.¹⁹ Cassarini then expanded his initial committee to form the Union Méditerranéenne pour l'Art Moderne (U.M.A.M.). Matisse and prominent local citizens joined Cassarini as his commission enlisted the support of local and national arts administrators and politicians. Their stated mission was twofold: to establish a museum devoted to modern art and second, to discover and assist young artists locally. Their first strategy was to schedule exhibitions of modernist masters to educate the local population and to stir their cultural pride. This signaled a change in local awareness about modern art and the importance of the artists in

residence. Matisse and Picasso were recognized for their international celebrity and honored among the population, but young artists needed to travel outside the region to see the works of artists residing among them. Consequently, the initiative to establish cultural institutions locally was a significant factor in enabling young artists such as Klein, Arman, and Raysse to experience modernism and to recognize the importance of the Côte d'Azur as a subject and an inspiration for formal innovations in light and color. Not only were early modernists in residence celebrities, but many of their innovations were directly connected to the Southern environment.

The first exhibition mounted by the U.M.A.M. was a Matisse show at the Palais de la Méditerranée (February–March 1946). This exhibition brought together seven paintings dating 1897-1944, two sculptures, sixteen drawings and ten illustrations for a collection of poetry by Baudelaire. Five paintings dated from 1939–1941, including Still Life with Sleeping Woman (1940), the color saturated Still Life with a Magnolia (1941), and Still Life with Seashell (1940), all painted at the Hôtel Régina in Nice-Cimiez. Cassarini used the introduction to point out that Matisse's work was celebrated by museums in Paris, London and New York. In addition, Matisse continued to pay homage to the beauty of the area, yet Nice failed to provide a permanent home for his oeuvre. He observed that the city had now been given the opportunity to elevate its status nationally by taking advantage of decentralization initiatives aimed at regional cultural development. The exhibition included photographs of Matisse at work in his studios in Nice and Vence. The

breadth of mediums underscored the importance of materials and experimentation, that beyond easel painting, Matisse continued to explore.

The art dealer Aimé Maeght and Nice's mayor, Jacques Cotta, promoted the exhibition and generated broad public interest. The mayor encouraged all school children and workers to visit the exhibition. The exhibition was open every day of the week, with extended hours that enabled maximum attendance. The local press joined the mayor's office in promoting the exhibition to all, laborer and cosmopolitan visitor alike. Making masterpieces available to the public was advocated a decade earlier by the Popular Front. French culture, it was argued, was a birthright that unified the country and bridged social hierarchies. This belief in the unifying potential of French culture would become widespread once André Malraux assumed stewardship of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs established by Charles de Gaulle in 1959.²⁰

In April 1946, Henri Matisse and Pierre Bonnard assumed honorary directorships of the U.M.A.M. The following year, Matisse was honored with the Legion of Honor. On Matisse's advice, Cassarini enlisted the support of Georges Salles, Director of the Museums of France, who favored a program to create more regional museums. Salles chaired the committee and appointed additional members from central and local offices. The working committee included Jean Cassou, then director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, who had just written the introduction to Matisse's 1945 Salon d'Automne exhibition. Cassou had also written a book on Matisse in 1939. Along with André Malraux, he was a member of the first

International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture established by André Gide in 1935 in Paris.²¹ He was subsequently celebrated for his role in the French Resistance. In 1947, he published "Matisse's Thoughts," and in 1949, he would again write the introduction to a Matisse exhibition at the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Paris.

Another important figure on the committee was Bernard Dorival, Conservator of the Musée National d'Art Moderne. Dorival championed the postwar artists of the Ecole de Paris and promoted modernism as a combination of French innovations in light and color and "foreign" elements such as cubism.²² Dorival was also important because he advocated for the role of culture as crucial to postwar reconstruction and unification. For Dorival, modernism was defined as French, but with international traits that conveyed a spirit of innovation.

On the local level, prominent committee representatives included Jacques Cotta, Nice's Mayor, and Romuald Dor de la Sorchère, Conservator of the Chateau Grimaldi in Antibes. Cotta was responsible for initially generating a proposal for a museum of modern art in Nice in April 1946. Matisse reviewed it before it was sent to Salles in Paris. Salles responded in a letter to Cotta:

It is evident that over the past fifty years, the Niçois region and Paris has been the principle source of inspiration for all our great painters, Renoir, Matisse, Bonnard, Picasso, Dufy, Derain, Dunoyer de Segonzac, citing only the most famous, there are many others working under our skies. It is a remarkable event in the history of art, given the importance of the movement these artists represent and their world renown. It is necessary to affirm this and to consecrate this fact in a museum, the important role that Nice played in contemporary tradition.²³

The following month, the U.M.A.M. organized an exhibition of 73 works titled Grands Peintres Contemporains, again at the Palais de la Méditerranée. It featured artists who painted in the area such as Bonnard, Braque, Derain, Dufy, Léger, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso, Signac, and Soutine. In the introduction to the catalogue, Jean Dagrón wrote of the necessity to familiarize the French people with great French artists, especially since French art represented the universal standard of modernism. He asserted that a museum of contemporary art in Nice would benefit both Nice and France. Nice would bolster its tourist trade, drawing cultural tourists in addition to those drawn to the climate and beaches. The museum would also be the best instrument of cultural propaganda beyond France.

The newspaper Nice-Matin published the committee proposal in support of a museum in October 1946 and, along with the proposal, it urged the public to join in support of this initiative. The proposal stressed the importance of modern art, especially French modernism, along with the idyllic environment proven attractive to older and younger artists:

Our region, thanks to its climate and luminous atmosphere, has always been a place of choice for painters. They traveled here in numbers; they came here and remained here, such as Renoir in Cagnes, Bonnard in Cannet, Matisse in Nice, to cite only the most illustrious of them.

It seems evident that Nice should acquire and conserve the works of our best artists who came to the Côte d'Azur in search of peace to work, inspiration, and light.²⁴

Concurrent with the drive to realize a modern museum in Nice, Dor de la Sorchère orchestrated a second museum in Antibes. Picasso arrived in the area in 1946, and Dor de la Sorchère offered Picasso use of the Chateau Grimaldi as a studio in July

1946.²⁵ The studio became the Picasso Museum after the artist donated 53 paintings and drawings from The Antipolis Suite to form the basis of a collection. These classically inspired paintings celebrate the Greek heritage of Antipolis, now Antibes, but were inspired by Picasso's observations of local individuals. In many of the paintings in this series, he used marine plywood and enamel paint used on local fishing boats, establishing a clear material connection with the local population.²⁶

Picasso added sculpture and pottery to this donation between 1948 and 1951. His ceramic work in Vallauris brought renewed pride to the local ceramic workshops. He accepted an invitation from Suzanne Ramie to visit the studios and subsequently created some 4,000 works in this medium. The area had been a center of local ceramic production, but after Picasso's lead, the Madoura and Tapis Vert workshops hosted artists Matisse, Chagall, Léger, Cocteau, Victor Brauner, Amédée Ozanfant, Le Courbusier, and Tristan Tzara.²⁷ Picasso was active in promoting the workshops and the town by donating posters he designed for advertisement. Photographs of Picasso surrounded by throngs of people as he rode through Vallauris during local celebrations are indicative of the admiration he enjoyed from local population and tourists alike and the great pride he generated in them. As Silver described it,

What's more, it is with the ceramics-in-series that the utopian dimension of Picasso's project becomes clear. Not only did his pottery, rather than the unique items, provided renewed work for the Vallauris potters, but it also enabled Picasso to fulfill the mandate that had eluded so many previous modern artists and craftsman: the creation of a truly popular art of complete artistic integrity through the widespread diffusion of high quality work. Indeed, I think that Picasso sensed with his usual acuity, that a new world was dawning after the war. The small, tight-knit community of artists, dealers and patrons, that had, until then, circumscribed his

existence, was being amplified in another, vastly more influential world of producers and consumers, tied to the apparatus of publicity and marketing. As had always been the case, Picasso looked forward rather than back, and both the blue-collar workers of Vallauris, and the white-collar tourist of the Riviera were the beneficiaries.²⁸

Dor de la Sorchère recalled that Picasso was not interested in establishing a conventional museum. Rather, the interior of the Chateau Grimaldi was re-designed for the installation of his work.²⁹ The environment was a working studio that opened up onto the sea. Once established as a museum, the chateau offered the visitor a remarkable collection of works by Picasso that typify themes and materials associated with the area as well as a location that provides an extraordinary scenic view. Part of the mission of The Picasso Museum, like that of the museum proposal in Nice, was to encourage young artists with purchases and exhibitions.³⁰ Beginning in 1951 works by Nicholas de Staël, Germaine Richier, Jean Atlan, Kijino, Alberto Magnelli, Clavé, Georges Mathieu and Hans Hartung formed the nucleus of the Picasso Museum collection.

The U.M.A.M. actively promoted artists and exhibitions into the early 1950s. In March 1947, Nice's Hotel Ruhl was the site of a broad survey of surrealist and abstract painting. Raymond Cogniat, editor of the art feature "For and Against," in the Chroniques du Jour, wrote the essay Peintres d'aujourd'hui to accompany this exhibition. Cogniat had described the Ecole de Paris as "a large mosaic of movements, of styles, of tendencies, all fairly clearly defined along political lines."³¹ This sense of chaos appeared symptomatic of a crisis in the Ecole de Paris. Cogniat openly criticized the gallery system in Paris for contributing to divisive stylistic

wars. Nice was advantageously distant from the stylistic confusion that characterized art in Paris, having spearheaded a cultural initiative under the mantles of Matisse and Picasso. There was no gallery competition, only public support to establish institutional space that would support acknowledged modern masters and young, local talent.

To add even more support to the establishment of a permanent museum space, Matisse donated his painting Nature Morte aux Grenades to the U.M.A.M. in 1949. He authorized it to be made into a promotional tourist poster inscribed "Nice Travail & Joie" (Fig. 7). The effort to link art and tourism was succeeding, as evidenced by an article in the March 18, 1949 Arts. Nice is described as an international locale where tourists will witness the vitality of the art of the period.³² The article also reported that the new mayor Jean Médecin had given Matisse honored citizen status in Nice.

The new Galerie des Ponchettes was to be strategically located on the quai des Etats-Unis, not far from where Matisse initially lived when he moved to Nice, 1 rue Charles Félix. Matisse supported this location because it would attract tourists: It has already been written that the site, picturesque and well placed, is located on the route connecting Cannes and Monaco... The proximity of restaurants, and the character of the architecture with its Genoa-inspired elements are favorable conditions.³³

On January 26, 1950, the Galerie des Ponchettes was inaugurated with a Matisse retrospective. He then accepted an honorary directorship of the museum. This exhibition was by far the most important Matisse exhibition to date in any French

province. The show included thirty-eight paintings, drawings, sculpture and tapestries dating from 1896-1947 drawn from museums in Paris, Lyon, Lucerne, Zurich, Stockholm, and Amsterdam. Salles and Cassarini contributed to the catalogue. Salles described Matisse as a poet of light working under the skies of Nice.

That summer, Matisse won the grand prize at the Venice Biennial, and one year later he was celebrated for the Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence. In Statements to Tériade: Matisse Speaks (1951). Tériade remarked: "Matisse calls it his chef d'oeuvre. He considered it a supreme endeavor by a painter who has always been involved with the problems of radiant color and light. In his designs for this chapel he sought the definitive solution to nature, and by utilizing the materials of nature – sun and transparency."³⁴ This chapel of human scale demonstrates clarity of space complemented by a richness of colored light. The materials and environment provide a context for physical and spiritual illumination.

Matisse discussed his chapel again in a 1952 article published by Maria Luz. In this text, he stresses the importance of the environment in establishing a context for a work of art. He insists that the object is not interesting in itself. It's the environment that creates the object: "The object must act powerfully on the imagination: the artist's feeling expressing itself through the object must make the object worthy of interest: it says only what it is meant to say."³⁵ Matisse designed the entire space as a light filled environment. The patterned yellow, blue and green stained glass in the Tree of Life apse window of the chapel illuminates the

white tile panels depicting the Stations of the Cross and the Crucifixion drawn with simplicity in black line. He established reciprocity between the physical light of the exterior and the more intimate illumination of the interior space.

Marie Raymond, Klein's mother, was commissioned to interview Matisse for a Japanese publication in 1952. It appeared in the art revue Mizue in March 1953.³⁶ She also published the interview, "Matisse versus the Abstractionists" in a Dutch publication the same year.³⁷ She described how tense the interview became when the topic of abstraction was broached. With irritation, Matisse told Raymond to write down, "Matisse is against abstract art."³⁸ Matisse stated that in his own work he looked to artists who tried to develop their unique vision, citing Cézanne and Van Gogh. He posed the questions to her: "Do people not have the right to aspire to purely impetuous perception?"³⁹ Matisse's remark suggests that painting - particularly abstraction -- had centered on groups of artists who had succumbed to a formulaic approach to painting. What had been repressed in this approach was the development of instinct and sensations.

Raymond clearly admired Matisse's work stating, that she "would never written the article if I hadn't loved Matisse's work."⁴⁰ Raymond's sensitivity to Matisse's views was evident in the short interview. She later described her working method in relation to sensations derived from the experience of nature, which were then synthesized in accord with harmonies of color.⁴¹ At the time, she was a leader in Parisian abstract painting circles, and had just two years earlier received the Kandinsky Prize.⁴² Nina Kandinsky established this award in 1946 to acknowledge

and support the work of young abstract artists.⁴³ Raymond was an important link between Paris and Nice and two generations of artists. She exhibited with the major figures of the postwar Ecole de Paris Tachistes and pre-war masters of abstraction, and she was twice included in the Sao Paulo Biennial (1951, 1956).⁴⁴ Raymond's friends included Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulage and de Staël (who worked in Antibes in the last year of his life, 1954-1955). In Paris, her Monday Salon was well attended by leading artists, critics, and dealers. Klein, Raymond Hains, Jacques de la Villeglé, Pierre Restany, and the art dealer Iris Clert were occasionally present. And like his mother, Klein shuttled regularly between Paris and Nice.

In 1952, the poet and essayist André Verdet, a friend of artists Klein, Arman, and Raysse, interviewed the painter about his cutouts and the chapel at Vence. In this interview, published in 1978,⁴⁵ Verdet prompted Matisse to discuss contemporary abstract art. "Do you think that today's abstract art could lead to a dead-end?" Matisse replied. "All art is abstract in itself when it is the fundamental expression stripped of all anecdote."⁴⁶ Matisse continued by stressing the importance of beginning with some perception of an object that remains in the memory and produces reactions in the mind. It is a process he describes from object to sensation. His critical position about contemporary abstraction is based on what he suggests is a void that produces only an imitation of abstraction. Matisse described the Chapel as an "opportunity of express my self in a totality for form and color." Jack Flam pointed out in the introduction to Verdet's interview that Matisse was not against abstraction but expressed a "dislike of what he felt to be a loss of

contract with nature.⁴⁷ For Matisse, establishing an opposition between abstraction and more representational work was not the issue, but what concerned him was the failure to recognize the importance of direct perception of nature itself.

Matisse provided an alternative in the polarized debates that dominated painting. His approach to representation, abstract or figurative relied on a fresh perception of nature and establishing a context for the work as part of the environment. Matisse pointed out to Raymond that all art is abstract.⁴⁸ What interested Matisse was the creation of visual signs rich enough to establish a language through the interplay of forms, colors and materials. This established an important precedent for artists in Nice.

Matisse's connection with the Galerie des Ponchettes established it as a major venue for great talents associated with or residing in the area. Exhibitions of Renoir, Chagall, Bonnard (1951), Cocteau (1953), Raoul Dufy (1954) were scheduled in rapid succession. Group shows were organized by the mid-1950s. The first was "Les Dessin Contemporain aux États Unis" featuring the works of Calder, Davis, Feininger, Gorky, de Kooning, Tobey, Steinberg, Tanning, and Roszack (1955). These artists were of different generations and different national origins. They represented stylistic plurality, from cubism and Constructivist tendencies to Surrealism and postwar expressionsim.⁴⁹

Librarie Matarasso was another establishment promoting modern and contemporary art in the area. Henri Matarasso, a Spanish book dealer, established the bookshop/gallery in 1956 with a major exhibition of prints and illustrated books

by Picasso. This show included fifty years of Picasso's work featured seventy-two illustrated volumes of books and graphic works. Matarasso kept the exhibition on view for a period of three years. Picasso had just finished the film Le Mystère Picasso, shot at the Victorine Studios in Nice by H. G. Clouzot. The film documents Picasso's capacity to invent and re-invent a repertoire of images. Clouzot captured Picasso's pictorial vitality with a sense of unmediated realism. Verdet published a book about the film, Picasso et Son Image, that Matarasso included in the exhibition. Matarasso's son, Jacques, was soon involved with a younger generation of artists in the area and exhibited works of artists associated with the Ecole de Nice beginning 1957 with the exhibition "Miniscules" that included Arman (Armand). His bookstore and exhibition space, Librairie Jacques Matarasso, was located on rue Longchamps where Galerie Longchamps exhibited Raysse in the summer exhibition "Peintres de Vingt Ans" in July 1957.

Meanwhile, trends and initiatives in national tourism abetted the cultural pride generated by artists and community initiatives. French attitudes about leisure began to change in the 1950s. In his study of modern France, John Ardagh, author and journalist for the Times (London), noted that the "equation of leisure and idleness was replaced with a more 'modern' concept leisure, one given value on par with work."⁵⁰ The Commission des Loisirs, established by the central government, was charged with developing holiday travel and centers for youth, art and recreation.⁵¹ The trend was toward sport and recreation (rather than culture, per se). The evident attraction to nature, especially the Côte d'Azur, was a reaction to rigid

urban existence. According to Ardagh:

Certainly it is a reaction against urbanization, to which the French are not adapting easily. Sociologists are therefore unsure whether the frenetic urge to escape to a new life is a token of healthy adventurousness or of maladjustment. One of them, Michel Crozier, blames the holiday mania on the rigidities and tensions of French society and office life where, he says "no one is truly at ease or in his right place, and so the French need holidays more than, say, the Americans." Many Frenchmen are thus looking not only for change and relaxation on holiday, but for a social liberation they do not find in their own lives...there is a new emphasis on holidays at once more collective and more individual – on the colonie de vacances...where everyone is democratically equal...⁵²

As a result of this trend, the Côte d'Azur saw a five-fold increase in tourists from the 1950s to the early 1960s.⁵³ This "holiday mania" was a luxury defined as freedom and open space. The success of this program is also apparent in the 250% increase in French expenditures on leisure from 1950-1966. Beach vacations account for 40% of that holiday travel.

In 1950, Gérard Blitz seized the opportunity presented by this new tourist trend and founded the Club Méditerranée, promising guests the four "Ss": sun, sea, sand, and sex. The success of his packaged holiday adventures lay in their blend of sophistication and primitiveness. The vacations emphasized sports, sensuality, exoticism, and culture. The government's support of leisure time for young urbanites provided added incentive with the guarantee of a three-week vacation in 1956 (increased to 4 weeks in 1965).

The National Tourist Office commissioned the young filmmaker Agnès Varda to make a promotional documentary film on the attractions found along the Côte d'Azur in 1958. She wrote and directed this film short, titled du coté de la Côte (The Riviera – Today's Eden), which was released in 1959.⁵⁴ It began with the

refrain "azure. azure. azure." as Nice and the surrounding towns were introduced by publicity posters from the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée line. Slogans such as "come to the coast for a sense of freedom" are echoed throughout Varda's witty script. The English-Italian presence is explicit in views of British pharmacies and romantic love songs about Nice sung in Italian. But exoticism is most apparent in the pastiche of the architectural styles she documents, including Russian church domes, Islamic mosques, Roman arenas, a Chinese scholar's pavilion, and Guimard's art nouveau train station. But ultimately, Varda conveyed the message that it is the exotic landscape of the coast that beckons tourists, and has the capacity to transform them. The Côte d'Azur represented a collective dream, a reassurance that "Eden exists."

Varda's view of the seasonal tourists contrasts sharply with Vigo thirty years earlier. Camping and sunning replace winter strolls. Hotels are grand but also friendly and casual. They appear more enticing by her placement of single young women at the wheel of sporty convertibles arriving to check in. The French tourists throughout tend to be young, female, and bathing suit clad. They are tanned, healthy, athletic, and fashionable -- all wearing blue bathing suits in homage to the sea and sky. In contrast to the French, the British and German tourists are decidedly unfashionable, wearing green and red suits that fail to complement their thick sunburned bodies.

Varda's film is an important document of the period, combining propaganda and cutting edge cinematic techniques. The Riviera was an Eden for the youth of France. Beyond documentary advertising, she wanted to respond to Vigo's. Jean-

Luc Godard considered her film one of the best released in 1959, beyond its use as tourist promotion.⁵⁵ He acknowledged that his new wave masterwork, Le Mépris, drew on her technique of suggesting unmediated realism. Varda's film is also evidence of the French postwar policies to develop regional cities and to promote French tourism for the French themselves. Regeneration and youth were the antidote to an aging France, and the Mediterranean provided the setting.

The Cote d'Azur was also a Mecca for American investors and film professionals in the 1950s. It was the backdrop for a new wave of French films that catapulted French directors and stars into an international spotlight. This further added to the area's exotic and desirable reputation.⁵⁶ Brigitte Bardot embodied the new myth of the Riviera. Her youth and unbridled sensuality depicted a spirit of independence and freedom from social conventions that resisted taming. Roger Vadim's film And God Created Woman (1956) made at Nice's Victorine Studios, secured this image internationally. According to Simone de Beauvoir, Vadim presented Bardot as a "phenomenon of nature."⁵⁷ She credited Vadim with recognizing the need for a new type of eroticism to boost the French film industry, and Bardot epitomized his modern version of the "eternal female."⁵⁸ Beauvoir's description of Bardot as a free woman is captured in the opening shot of Bardot lying nude in the sand at the Mediterranean edge. She represented an "eroticism brought down to earth."⁵⁹ Bardot stated, "When I'm in front of the camera, I'm simply myself." Beauvoir credited Bardot with rejecting the artifice of fashion, and with projecting an eroticism that was aggressive

In Latin countries where men cling to the myth of 'the woman as object,' BB's naturalness seems to them more perverse than any possible sophistication. To spurn jewels and cosmetics and high heels and girdles is to refuse to transform oneself into a remote idol. It is to reassert that one is a man's fellow and equal, to recognize that between the woman and him there is a mutual desire and pleasure.⁶⁰

The end of Vadim's film tempers Bardot's display of freedom when her previously insecure husband slaps her after an exhibitionistic mambo dance and she demurely follows him home. Beauvoir also makes the point that Bardot's mix of youth and eroticism rendered her male viewers voyeurs incapable of projecting themselves into her space. Her sense of occupying her own space is evident in Varda's film, which shows Bardot jaunting down a crowded street in Saint-Tropez, entrancing visitors in local shops and cafes with her energy and spiritedness. According to Ardagh, Bardot epitomized a French national trend in the late 1950s. "a young France – be youthful – have a young spirit."⁶¹

Beauvoir makes two important points about Bardot in this film – her type of eroticism was linked to her lack of sophistication, if not ill-breeding, and she appealed more to the Americans than the French.⁶² She was "an export product as important as Renault automobiles."⁶³ Bardot was an assault on French social mores, which dictated an older female stereotype. Her age and sense of physical freedom in particular had an appeal that was linked to French and American youth, and in France inseparable from the Côte d'Azur. Bardot initiated a "mass tourism with a vengeance," which like the Saint-Tropez in Vadim's film, targeted less developed areas along the Côte d'Azur. The promise of film stars and Hollywood flamboyance ushered in a sense that the Riviera offered "spiritual fulfillment

through glamour and wealth.”⁶⁴ Paris Match reported on the new religion of stardom linked to Saint Tropez, Vadim, and Bardot.

The Cannes Film Festival drew a growing audience of socialites and celebrities from 1946 into the 1960s. Cannes had been originally chosen as a site of the film festival in June 1939 because of its sunshine and “enchanting milieu.”⁶⁵ Suspended during the Occupation, the festival resumed in 1946, seeking to lure the international gambling set that had abandoned the area during the war. A real estate boom resulted; Antibes saw the construction of 400 villas from Liberation to 1950. This suggests the extent of development in the ensuing decade.⁶⁶ The Cannes Film Festival grew in prestige and numbers during the 1950s. Media events like the wedding of Prince Rainier and American star Grace Kelly added to the glamour. Jean Cocteau even wrote a wedding ode in their honor.⁶⁷

Two simultaneous developments proved crucial to the success of Cannes. bikini-clad starlets and the French New Wave. Cannes became synonymous with both and inseparable from “palm trees, tall green drinks, black sunglasses, white scooters, and bikini tops abandoned in the sand. The spirit of the Côte d’Azur was bright, sexy, youthful revolt.”⁶⁸ Inspired by this trend, young women were eager to embrace new moral standards. Ardagh reported that one young Parisian student described it as an attempt to establish counter-conventions, like the tricheurs: “The basis of our behavior is rejection of constraint, and within that framework we are very moral.”⁶⁹ Age and hierarchy were associated with the defeats of France in the previous decade; French renewal would be led by the young and free spirited. In

Nice, the decline in population as the result of the war was quickly countered by a population increase of 20% as a result of the postwar baby boom.⁷⁰ The resurrected Cote d'Azur was firmly linked with youth, hedonism and beauty. The strictures associated with the adulthood of France were replaced by the liberation of France's youth. Daniel Filippachi's Europe One radio program Salut Les Copains is another example of a new youth-based program playing American rock music and ushering in the French pop star Johnny Halliday.

Nice was enjoying a renaissance of art and popular culture parallel to a dramatic increase in tourism. The U.M.A.M. continued to organize exhibitions in grand hotels along the Promenade des Anglais. At the Galerie d'Art Negresco, the 1951 exhibition of abstract featured the works of Kandinsky, Klee, Nicholas De Staël, Laubiès, and Anita Staritsky. In May 1951, Arman first exhibited gestural abstract paintings at Nice's Hotel Palais. And, in Vence, the Galerie d'Alphonse Chave held exhibitions with Klee, Kandinsky, and Laubiès. In Cannes, la Galerie Martin-Gruson even featured exhibitions in conjunction with the Cannes Film Festival.

The literary group Le Club de Jeunes opened in 1952 to enliven the scene, especially for writers and musicians. Founded by Robert Rovini, Paul Mari, and critic Jacques Lepage, this group included artists later associated with the Ecole de Nice, Armand Fernandez (Arman), Robert Malaval, and Ben Vautier. Lepage credits this short-lived group with setting the direction for younger artists to meet vanguard musicians and poets interested in concrete poetry and sound music; the

single issue of their journal Espaces was published in December 1952. Informal and café-based, Le Club des Jeunes remains significant for its interdisciplinary attitude toward literature, poetry, music and the visual arts.

The Riviera of the 1950s built itself into a reflection of the desires of a new generation. Money was an essential ingredient in the changes evident on the Côte d'Azur. Its source was a tourist explosion and an international mix of new money from the film industry and business interests.⁷¹ Aside from Paris, it was the Côte d'Azur that attracted international visitors and became a magnet for a young, freedom-seeking generation. Thanks to Bardot, the beaches and jazz clubs in Saint-Tropez seemed a "place of dangerously unbridled pleasure."⁷²

For a younger generation of artists, writers, and musicians, the atmosphere supported their growing confidence that it would be the Riviera that would link France with postwar internationalism, especially the emphasis on consumerism, tourism, and art – regional, popular, and fine art. The three most well-known artists of the period, Yves Klein, Arman, and Martial Raysse, assumed the title Ecole de Nice after their success in Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, New York and Los Angeles. Like the masters Matisse and Picasso, they returned with fame to the Côte d'Azur to be acclaimed as native sons. Their internationalism substantiated them to a local audience recently awakened to the cultural importance of prewar modernism. Nice provided the context for artistic innovation, and these artists exploited the notion that the Côte d'Azur not only beckons tourists, but the experience potentially one of physical and spiritual transformation.

On the occasion of the 1991 inauguration of the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain in Nice, Claude Fournet declared the city France's southern capital. He described Nice as the model of cultural and historical pastiche able to succeed because of its geographic beauty and its attraction to artists and tourists.³ The Ecole de Nice portended the success of pluralism and cultural pastiche; it is a phenomenon situated between modernism's high ideals and the postmodern perspectives of its aftermath.

¹ "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes." interview with Sasha Sosnovsky (1960), reprinted in Yves Klein, exh. cat. March 3 – May 23, 1983 (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne), 264.

² Ibid.

³ James Herbert, Fauve Painting and the Making of Cultural Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), chap. 7 passim.

⁴ Kenneth Wayne, "Montparnasse Heads South." exhibition catalogue, Impressions of the Riviera (Portland Museum of Art, June 25 – October 18, 1998) 27.

⁵ Cecily Mackworth, Guillaume Apollinaire and the Cubist Life (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), 187.

⁶ Frédéric Ferney, Blaise Cendrars, (Éditions François Bourin, 1995), 146, 147.

⁷ Christian Viviani, "Côte d'Azur: Lieu Imaginaire." La Côte d'Azur et la Modernité, 1918-1958 exh. cat. (Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 1997), 159.

⁸ Kenneth E. Silver, "The Mediterranean Muse: Artists on the Riviera between the Wars." Impressions of the Riviera: Monet, Renoir, Matisse and their Contemporaries, exhibition catalogue, June 25 - October 18, 1998 (OR: Portland Museum of Art, 1998), p. check

⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰ Ibid., 53. Silver explained that this view is one “derived from the distance he keeps from the place he visits, and from his private way of being in a highly public space.”

¹¹ Ibid., 56.

¹² Mary Blume, Côte d’Azur: Inventing the French Riviera (NY: Thames and Hudson 1992), Chapter 5 passim.

¹³ Pamela M. Lee, Site Seeing: Travel and Tourism in Contemporary Art (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art 1991) n.p.

¹⁴ John Ardagh, The New French Revolution (London: Secker and Warburg 1968) 120.

¹⁵ Ardagh (1968) 117.

¹⁶ Blume (1992), 141.

¹⁷ Paris Postwar: Art and Existentialism, 1945-1955 (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), 156. “Picasso’s work, and exhibition, of the Liberation period were exuberant responses to liberty dominated by classical and Mediterranean imagery...” Also see Gertje R. Utley, “From Guernica to The Charnal House: The Political Radicalization of the Artist.” Picasso and the War Years: 1937-1945 (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1999), 75.

¹⁸ Gaston Diehl, Henri Matisse (Paris: Pierre Tisné, 1954).

¹⁹ Christian Arthaud, “Union Méditerranéenne pour l’Art Moderne,” Côte d’Azur et la modernité 1918-1958 (Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur 1996) 214.

²⁰ Herman Lebovics, Mona Lisa’s Escort (NY: Cornell University Press 1999) 45.

²¹ Ibid., 89.

²² Dorival more recently (Les Années 50) updated his view of the Ecole de Paris. He expanded its definition to include Nouveau Réalisme but maintains that it relied on the earlier pre-war avant-garde.

²³ Mari, reprinted in Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain, Chroniques Nicoises, 1945-1972. (Nice, 1991) 27. “Il se trouve que depuis une cinquantaine d’années, la région niçoise a été avec la région parisienne, la principale source d’inspiration où tous nos grands peintures, Renoir, Matisse, Bonnard, Picasso.

Dufy, Derain, Dunoyer de Segonzac, pour ne citer que les plus fameux, se sont plus à travailler sous votre ciel. C'est un fait remarquable dans l'histoire de l'art, étant donné l'importance du mouvement que représentent ces artistes et leur renommée mondiale. Il serait donc nécessaire d'affirmer en le concrétisant dans un musée, le rôle de premier plan que joue Nice dans la tradition contemporaine."

²⁴ "Un Heureuse initiative vers la création à Nice d'un musée d'art moderne." Nice-matin (October 1946). Reprinted in Chroniques Nicoises, 1945-1972. (Nice, 1991) 26. "Notre région, grâce à son climat et à la luminosité de son atmosphère, a toujours été pour les peintures un lieu d'élection. Ils y ont séjourné nombreux; ils sont même venus s'y fixer, comme Renoir à Cagnes, Bonnard au Cannet, Matisse à Nice, pour ne cite que les plus illustres d'entre eux.

Il semble bien que Nice se doive d'accueillir et de conserver dans un musée les oeuvres des meilleurs artistes, venus chercher sur la Côte la paix dans le travail, l'inspiration, la lumière."

²¹ Danièle Giraudy, The Picasso Museum, Antibes (Antibes: Musées et Monuments de France, City of Antibes & Albin Michel 1989), 45.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁷ Vallauris: Céramiques de peintres et de sculpteurs. (Vallauris: Musée de Céramique d'Art Moderne de Vallauris, 1995) Particularly in the 1950's, the workshops celebrated their collaborations with the artists. For example, in 1954, a celebration in honor of Picasso drew crowds; Picasso made some 4000 works in the Madoura and Tapis Vert workshops and many posters that were used to decorate the town and celebrate its longstanding tradition. A "Celebrity Collection" was begun 1952 with the works of the artists and writers such as Paul Eluard and Pierre Reverdy. By far, the most works made in the workshops were by Picasso and Chagall.

²⁸ Kenneth E. Silver. "Pots, Politics, Paradise." Art in America, no. 3 (March 2000), 141.

²⁹ Giraudy (1989), 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ Serge Guilbaut. "Postwar Painting Games." Reconstructing Modernism (MA: MIT Press 1992), 33.

³² "A Nice – Un don d'Henri Matisse." Arts (March 18, 1949). Reprinted in Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (1991), 46.

³³ Ibid., 27. Statement by Henri Mari, "Retiré dans sa propriété de Vence Matisse nous a déclaré 'Nice qui possédait déjà tant des richesses, se devait d'avoir un musée d'Art moderne. J'approuve le choix de l'emplacement.'" Matisse is quoted: "C'est a-t-il écrit, un heureux endroit, pittoresque et fort bien placé, puisqu'il se trouve sur la route Cannes-Monaco... La proximité des restaurants, le caractère de l'architecture de facture génois sont encore, dit-il, des conditions favorables."

³⁴ E. Tériade. "Matisse Speaks." Art News Annual, 21 (1952), 40-71. Reprinted in "Statements to Tériade: Matisse Speaks." Matisse on Art, revised edition, Jack Flam, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 207.

³⁵ Maria Luz. "Témoignages: Henri Matisse." XXe Siècle no. 2 (January 1952), 55-57. Reprinted in Matisse on Art, revised edition, Jack Flam, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995), 208.

³⁶ Marie Raymond, interview with Matisse, Mizue (March 1953), n.p. excerpt in Marie Raymond: Forty years of Abstract Painting Exhibition catalogue (Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice and Pascal de Sarthe Gallery, San Francisco, 1988), 34. She describes the setting at the Régina in Cimiez, Nice in "Reminiscing with Marie Raymond," an interview with Frédéric Altmann, 119.

³⁷ Marie Raymond, "Matisse contra de Abstracten." Kroniek van Kunst en Kultuur (1953). Reprinted in Matisse: A Retrospective (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1988), 382-384.

³⁸ Ibid., 382.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice and Pascal de Sarthe Gallery, San Francisco (1988), 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 30-31. Arman described Klein's first monochrome as a blue circle pasted to the cover of his journal. Pierre Restany in an interview with the author, March. 24 1994 (New York), acknowledged that Klein's work could be seen in relation to Kandinsky, but he did not believe that Klein was particularly interested in the artist.

⁴² Ibid., 30. Galerie René Drouin published Du Spirituel dans l'art de dans la peinture en particulier in 1949. Raymond described her working method in relation to the sensation of internal rhythms and the organization of harmony.

⁴³ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 130-133. The bibliography in this catalogue lists the exhibitions of Marie Raymond beginning in 1946 with the exhibition Salon des Surindépendants held at the Denise René Gallery, Paris. She also exhibited at the Colette Allendy Gallery in Paris where her son, Yves Klein holds le Vide in 1958. In 1960, Marie Raymond was included in "Homage to Colette Allendy" along with artists Arp, Atlan, Bryen, Hartung, Kandinsky, Klee, Poliakoff, Schneider and Soulage. In 1960, she also was awarded the Prix Marzotto in Italy. Arman would receive this prestigious award in 1966.

⁴⁵ André Verdet. "Entretiens avec Henri Matisse." Prestiges de Matisse (Paris, 1952), 37-76. Reprinted in Flam (1995), 210-219.

⁴⁶ Verdet (1952), 215.

⁴⁷ Flam, Matisse on Art (1995), 210.

⁴⁸ Raymond (1953), 382.

⁴⁹ Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (1991), 110.

⁵⁰ Ardagh (1968), 265.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 282.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 281-283.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.

⁵⁵ Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Luc-Godard by Jean-Luc Godard, trans. Martin Secker & Warburg Limited (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 113, 160. "...I shall never forget the wonderful pan back and forth along the branch of a tree twisted in the sand, and ending on the red and blue sandals of Adam and Eve."

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Bocca, Bikini Beach: The Wicked Riviera – as it was and is (London: W.H. Allen, 1963), Chapter 2 passim.

⁵⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome (NY: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972), 12. Originally published Esquire (August 1959) trans. Bernard Fretchman, with Reynal & Co., Inc. 1960.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁶¹ Ardagh, 306. "une France jeune – soyez jeune – il faut l'esprit jeune"

⁶² Ibid., 6, 10.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ardagh (1968), 292.

⁶⁵ Cannes, (NY: Museum of Modern Art 1994), 11.

⁶⁶ Blume (1992), 143.

⁶⁷ Blume (1992), 144.

⁶⁸ Cannes, 22-23.

⁶⁹ Ardagh (1968), 342.

⁷⁰ La Côte d'Azur et la modernité, 1918-1958 (Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 1996), 224.

⁷¹ Blume (1992), 145.

⁷² Ibid., 148.

⁷³ Fournet (1991), 15.

Chapter 2

Pierre Restany: Defining the New

Pierre Restany issued three manifestos on Nouveau Réalisme in 1960, 1961, and 1963.¹ In these defining statements, Restany successfully established the group of Nouveaux Réalistes and he supported the individual careers of these artists after their brief alliance as a group. He defined their work as sharing a common world-view, which he described as "a new perceptive approach to the real."² The readymade was the basis of his theoretical formulation, and appropriation was the common strategy of this eclectic group. Unlike predecessors whose work employed the readymade object, such as the Surrealists who relied on chance, these artists responded to the world of objects through the lens of sociology, thus allowing the objects to "descend to earth." His aim, and that of the Nouveaux Réalistes, was to form a new means of communication that was direct, and in the language of the present -- not to transform the object. Restany's definition of the new, the basis of Nouveau Réalisme, did provide the foundation of the Ecole de Nice.

What, then, are we proposing? The passionate adventure of the real, perceived in and of itself and not through the prism of conceptual or imaginative transcription. What is our method? The introduction of a sociological link is essential for communication...³

As an art critic, Restany's path was indirect, but his influence was substantial for Ecole de Nice artists Klein, Arman, and Raysse, and they remained a distinct Niçois group within the larger Nouveaux Réalistes circle. He wanted to

re-engineer aesthetic vision by turning attention toward the changed environment that resulted from the rapid modernization of postwar France. This drive to modernize, viewed commonly as the Americanization of France, was perceived as a social and cultural threat *and* as an exhilarating shift away from a traditional society towards a consumer society. The speed with which this change occurred was unprecedented generating debate consistent with political and intellectual ideologies. Two factors that impacted Restany and the Nouveaux Réalistes were the rise in status of sociology that eclipsed the central role intellectuals held in public debate, and the increase of postwar American art in Paris. To his credit, Restany recognized the impact of these changes. As Diana Pinto pointed out sociology was considered an American social science, which became important in France as it “entered into a phase of ‘mass culture,’ consumerism and modern industrial development.”⁴ It was “increasingly linked in the minds of ‘intellectuals’ with American ideas and techniques.”⁵ Pinto pointed out that with the working class displaced from the stage of French society, sociology in that country directed its attention to “the content of mass culture and communication, the phenomenon of stardom, and the implications of leisure.”⁶ More traditional intellectuals viewed the emergence of the new sociology with suspicion, particularly since their studies were no longer structured along traditional lines of working class, bourgeois, or elite derivations. Pinto explained that the world of intellectuals in France was divided into two general groups. The more traditional intellectuals in the high art and university camps tended towards anti-

Americanism and the view that American culture was unrefined, but those earlier associated with the Resistance, turned to America as a topic of study.⁷ The latter group expressed particular interest in the culture of minority groups or regional expressions that conveyed a sense of America's cultural pluralism. What troubled the more traditional intellectuals, according to Pinto, was that America had never formulated a cultural framework premised on a historical or elitist set of references. The sheer number of pluralistic expressions, or sub-cultures, thwarted conventional intellectual discourse, and sociology seemed a more appropriate tool to study a pluralist society.

In France, the rise of sociology paralleled modernization and increased consumerism. The sociologist or intellectual who touched 'ground' had the tools to organize social givens into a system of knowledge that could change reality.⁸ Restany's formulation of Nouveau Réalisme reflects an understanding of social science methods geared toward observation of the social space, and communicating about its landscape by using its material and visual culture as the basis of a new visual language. Restany recognized the need for artists to turn attention away from older, more intellectual models based on painting styles. It was the new environment that offered the possibility of a revitalized postwar art, one that relinquished the sense of nostalgia that permeated even the most progressive tendencies in postwar French art. Restany envisioned a new international art based in Paris, but distinct from a postwar Ecole de Paris.

Restany came of age after World War II, but he was old enough to have

experienced the war years and knew well the precedents established by artists who were championed in the immediate aftermath of Liberation. They inherited a tradition of French cultural dominance that was strengthened by the French Revolution, and for the first time in the modern period, was seriously compromised by a sense of national crisis that remained entrenched for more than a decade after the war. The uncertainty of French national identity was exacerbated by political and social strains that resulted from the polarization of the East and West characterized by Gaullist anthropologist Jacques Soustelle as “caught between one with no heart (U.S.S.R) and one with no head (U.S.).”⁹ Tony Judt pointed out that intellectual discourse during the decade after Liberation was dominated by France’s political or ethical response to Communism.¹⁰ He observed that the Right was de-legitimized by the Vichy period, which amplified the Left’s discourse giving it a dominant voice. But he also noted that the response of intellectuals to Soviet policy was one of justification and apology, and they failed to acknowledge its failures. There were some intellectuals such as Raymond Aron who forged a separate position by relinquishing traditional intellectual ideological positions; he espoused a centrist position based on political stability, civil order, and public liberties.¹¹ Aron was appointed Chair of Sociology at the Sorbonne in 1954, where he advocated an alternative to traditional political stances by formulating a theory of society that stressed the social implications of political and economic change.¹² He rejected communism and argued against Marxism, but he also considered industrialization “the special

sin of modernity.”¹³ In staking out a liberal middle ground, Aron hoped to emphasize the need for a critical analysis of both sides, in order to maintain French ideals of freedom and individualism.¹⁴ As Aron argued: “Theoretical elaboration, in our view, should serve to sharpen awareness of the plurality of goals and aims, rather than favoring the tendency to monoconceptual interpretations, always arbitrary and partisan.”¹⁵

Political and philosophical debates deeply impacted the fissures within the Ecole de Paris. A war of styles ensued, indicating the significance of modern art as a cultural meter, but also undermining its strength as a gauge of artistic dominance. More recent exhibitions on French art from 1945-55 have drawn attention to the complexity of this moment.¹⁶ Art in postwar France mirrored early modernist styles in an effort to hold onto the possibility of cultural continuity despite national defeat.¹⁷ Sarah Wilson observed: “The psychology of the postwar period, deeply bound up in the simultaneous desire for both ceasura, continuity and catharsis, was reflected in contemporary art and thought.”¹⁸ Existentialism characterized the mood of societal absurdity and the artists’ role as witness to social madness and attempts to grapple with the very notion of humanity. This is evident in the works of artists such as Gruber or Giacometti, who returned to figuration, as a means address existential choice – faith or abandonment.¹⁹ However, by the early 1950s, the lassitude of historical relevancy and nostalgia for an idealized past was seen by some critics as little more than stylistic decadence. Critic Claude-Hélène Sibert wrote in 1954 that the “freedom

advanced by the early French modernists had become suffocating; the formal innovations of the past have become walls."²⁰

New strategies were needed to cope with the cultural pressures France was experiencing. Isadore Isou and Lettrisme, for example, took up poetry as a provocative form, which sought a force in the origin of the sign itself, and echoed Dada's first expression in Zurich's Café Voltaire.²¹ In the early 1950s, Raymond Hains and Yves Klein were associated with Isou, and Isou attended Marie Raymond's Monday Salon. The Situationist International, which developed out of Lettrist International and the postwar Cobra artists, was formed in 1957 around former Lettrist Guy Debord. As Peter Wollen pointed out, their project was a re-launching of surrealism sterilized of esoteric interests and the unconscious, but directed toward a cultural revolution.²² These artists used the urban space to create situations and experiment with models to transform the city and "to agitate and polemicize against the sterility and oppression of the actual environment and ruling economic and political system."²³ Debord's ideas are indebted to Sartre and his position that existence is always within surroundings. The Situationists refused to accept surroundings as they were, and they attempted to construct situations that transform society and to undermine a society the considered premised on productivity and consumption.²⁴

Restany's model was Michel Tapié de Céyleran, an "historic point of reference" as a critic.²⁵ In the 1940s, he was director of the Foyer de l'Art Brut at the Galerie René Drouin (and he performed as an amateur jazz musician). He

promoted artists Jean Dubuffet and later, painters Wols, Fautrier, Henri Michaux, and Mathieu. Their work was characterized by the expressive use of raw materials that prioritized the anti-rational and inchoate experience. Tapié believed that new trends in French abstraction should be situated within broader international art tendencies. Artists such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey could be considered in relation to Jean Fautrier and Georges Mathieu and the Japanese Gutai artists emerging around Yoshihara Jiro in Kyoto. Beginning in 1952, Tapié's organized exhibitions of Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Tobey and Sam Francis for Studio Fachetti, a Paris gallery owned by a celebrity photographer.²⁶ His 1952 publication Un Art Autre exemplifies his trans-national perspective. He viewed works by Dubuffet, Mathieu, Michaux, Camille Bryen, Pollock, Karel Appel, Wols, Riopelle, and Alfonso Ossorio as sharing a common conceptual basis.²⁷ As early as 1954, Tapié referred to gestural abstraction as "anarcho-informel made of recipes which have nothing to do with liberty of the spirit and imagination." a reference to international abstraction including that of New York.²⁸ Tapié advocated a direct and brutal break with the past by means of provocation and action, a position also advocated by the Dada-inspired Lettrists and CoBra.²⁹ Tapié was also a freelance public relations consultant for an American shipping company, a position that enabled him to travel and promote artists, in Japan, for example, without cost.³⁰ He formulated the idea of international axis points of expressionism linking in Paris, New York and Tokyo in 1956. Restany would later employ a similar strategy identifying key cities internationally for the

Nouveaux Réalistes.

Restany was raised in French Morocco in a family of ardent de Gaulle supporters. His exposure to American troops and Hollywood movies provided him with a positive image of Americans as superior, organized, and modern.³¹ He joined de Gaulle's entourage promoting the RPF (Rassemblement du Peuple Français) along the Côte d'Azur in 1949, enlisting support of the old and new middle class at the onset of the country's rapid industrialization.³² Other members of this delegation active from 1947-1953 included his public relations expert, André Malraux, and information officer, Jacques Soustelle. It was on this trip that Restany first met the young artist/bodyguard Arman, who was regularly employed by Gaullist aids.

In 1948, Restany entered the Ecole Normale Supérieure to prepare for a role in government administration. In 1953, he was appointed to the Transportation Administration, a department that was crucial for the modernization of smaller cities and rural areas. Modern transportation was the key to developing the more mobile work force essential for the planned economic revival and regional development. By 1954, Restany was promoted to a public relations position for the French Parliament. And, by 1955, he was appointed to the office of the "Gaullist baron" Jacques Chaban-Delmas.³³ When Chaban-Delmas left his post in May 1958, Restany entered the service of Corniglion-Molinier in the Department of National Defense in the midst of the Algerian War.

Restany was a part of the *comprador* class, a high level administrator in

government service.³⁴ In the five years he spent in government posts, he participated in the modernization and economic development of France and became well-versed in public relations and government discourse. Kristin Ross observes that administrative success was based on negotiation skills and consensus rather than history or philosophy.³⁵

Through the 1950s, Restany also cultivated his place as critic. He sought out established and younger critics associated with a variety of artistic and political positions. Aside from Tapié, he was acquainted with Charles Estienne, then a foe of American artists; Michel Ragon who initially promoted CoBra especially Atlan; the Belgian Roger Gindertael; the German Communist Herta Wescher; and Jean Robert-Arnaud, gallery owner and editor of the art journal Cimaise.³⁶ Restany began to publish art reviews for Libre Propos, a review funded by anti-Communist Americans and endorsed by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1954. Thanks to Arnaud, Restany joined Cimaise in 1957, a position that afforded him more credibility and influence.

Through his friendships with artists René Laubiès from Nice and the Milanese Gianni Bertini, he began to associate with a wider circle of artists. Laubiès and Restany had common experience in colonial France. The artist was born in Indochina, and his uncle was commander of national affairs in Morocco. In Nice, Laubiès introduced Restany to the Librarie Matarasso: their deluxe art editions on Surrealism and Picasso were well regarded in Paris. Laubiès also introduced Restany to artists and galleries in Germany and Italy. Through

Laubiès, Restany established a relationship with Gallery 22 in Düsseldorf, owned by J. P. Wilhelm, a translator of the Malraux's early writings.³⁷ In Wuppertal, he met the transportation architect Wolf Yearhling who established the Galerie Parnass known for innovative performance based work such as John Cage and early Fluxus events by artist Nam June Paik.³⁸

Restany's most beneficial acquaintance was made through Bertini. This was an introduction to Guido Le Noce, the Italian boxer who opened Gallerie Apollinaire in Milan in 1954. He also established an alliance with the Nuclear Group, artists who protested against the stranglehold that style continued to exert in the visual arts. Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo issued the first "Nuclear Painting Manifesto" in Brussels in February 1952. They wrote: "The Nuclearists desire to demolish all the "isms" of a painting that inevitably lapses into academicism, whatever its origin may be."³⁹ Enrico Baj later invited Klein to participate in an exhibition of the Nuclear Group in October 1957,⁴⁰ and Klein signed one of their last manifestos after their exhibition at Galerie Apollinaire in 1957.

Restany was building a constituency within art circles that crossed political and stylistic lines, cultivating an extensive network of artists, gallery dealers, and writers who furthered his entrée into the art nexus by 1957. He supported artists associated with lyric abstraction and even included Klein in his exhibition, "Imaginary Spaces," at the Galerie Kamer in 1957.⁴¹ The show included Laubiès, Bertini, and Hunterwasser, among others. He then published a

book on the subject the same year.

Restany knew most of the artists he would include in Nouveau Réalisme for several years before organizing the group. In Paris, he became reacquainted with Arman, who, like Klein, traveled between Nice and Paris on a regular basis, beginning in 1954. Arman introduced Restany to Klein in December 1955 at the Club des Solitaires-Editions Lacoste where he taught judo, an existential discipline he considered a hygiene of the body and the spirit.⁴² It was here that Klein first installed his monochromes in Paris. Restany and Klein began a long-term collaboration on Klein's exhibitions, and in October 1960, the critic and artist collaborated on the organization of Nouveau Réalisme in Klein's Paris apartment.

The group was launched initially in Milan, with an exhibition at the Galleria Apollinaire in April 1960. Restany first defined Nouveau Réalisme in terms of a rupture with the immediate past. In the manifesto he penned for the exhibition, he observed that nostalgic repetition of the past was futile. It was the present and the future where modernity resided, not in the ghosts of modernist forms. He advocated a sociological approach in art, which would address the new conditions of reality, particularly industrialization, consumerism and communication:

...It is the sociological reality entirely, held in common, the activities of all men, the great republic of social exchange, of our commerce in society, there to be understood...⁴³

Restany considered expressionist painting anachronistic. Nouveau

Réalisme, by comparison, provided evidence that the pulse of the nation had changed; it was a visible cultural shift related to societal reconstruction and the rapid acceleration of history.⁴⁴ In contrast to the advanced abstraction associated with subjectivity and social introversion, Restany asserted that a new perception of this new reality was called for, one that would enable the viewer to observe and respond actively to the massive changes in the postwar period. He advocated a return to the real to close the gap between the objective world and individual expression. Restany identified the artists who embraced this new reality as a group whose diverse work fermented around Paris."⁴⁵ They held a common interest in the readymade and employed appropriation as their method.

The language Restany and Klein employed to describe Nouveau Réalisme in October 1960. "new perceptive approaches to the real," was engineered to enable broad consensus among artists who had little commonality and varied interests and temperaments.⁴⁶ With their conceptual basis in place, Restany oriented the group to Duchamp, though some artists wanted to maintain the poetic sensibilities of surrealism.⁴⁷ It was because of these factors that disagreement ensued immediately, and within one year, Klein, Raysse, and Raymond Hains declared the group defunct. For his part, Restany wanted to celebrate a new vision of France linked to a consumer reality. He embraced this social shift with optimism, one he contrasted with the pessimism of postwar art and the cult of memories.⁴⁸ He reported in a subsequent interview: "My main concern has always been the relationship between the field of art and the field of production --

economic, technological, and industrial production. I have a purely sociological vision of the world."⁴⁹

There are also several sources Restany used to formulate his ideas from early modernism and the language of the public administration. Hélène Lassalle, senior curator of the Musée Picasso, Paris, describes Restany's art criticism as a strategy that diffused the understanding of the word *realism* while continuing to associate it with the social terrain. She traced the changed meaning of this term in modernism by citing how it was used in relation to the artist Fernand Léger. According to Lassalle, Léger considered realism as the appropriate description of the formal and material qualities of his work. In the 1920s, the term realism was used to describe the artist's figurative paintings despite his rejection of this perspective. In the 1930s, realism was defined in terms of a socially conscious style and subject matter by Louis Aragon, a position that Léger again rejected. Nonetheless, Lassalle has observed how flexible the definition of realism was in the pre-war period. She credits Restany with recognizing this and recuperating this broadly defined term to counter the dominance of abstraction in the late 1950s.⁵⁰

Lassalle suggests that Restany would have been aware of Léger's ideas about realism, especially in the aftermath of his death in 1955, and the retrospective of his work held the following year at Paris' Musée d'Art Decoratifs. It is worth adding that Restany attended the inauguration of the Léger Museum in Biot in May 1960, where he joined Marc Chagall, André Verdet, and Raymond

Hains. In the words of Restany's biographer, Henry Périer: "There in the Mediterranean light, the critic and Raymond Hains discussed the art of Léger, who after having practiced rigorous cubism, opened himself to a realism, witness of a new humanism."⁵¹ Lasalle described the relationship between this history of realism and Restany's formulation of *Nouveau Réalisme*.

New Realism was definitely a synthetic allusion to the history of realism. The realist style is always the metaphor of power. In a period of consumption, of economic boom and of technological adventure, New Realism also meant that there were artists capable of assuming the metaphor of power of the consumer society.⁵²

Lasalle points out that Restany shifted the use of the term realism from the Left -- that is, away from the power of the worker/producer -- toward to the Right, the power of the market and consumerism.

The re-emergence of realism in the visual arts was part of a larger trend evident in literature and film. Restany described *Nouveau Réalisme* as an aspect of the cultural terrain established by the writers and filmmakers affiliated with the *Nouveau Roman* and *Nouvelle Vague*. Françoise Grioud, co-director of *L'Express*, initially used these terms in 1958 to define a French youth culture energizing theater, academic, cinematic and literary fields. The austere "anti-ecole" proposed by writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet dismissed the notion of cultural depth, preferring the surfaces of things. The writer's experiments with simply listing objects were referred to as "thingishness" by the British, for example, to describe his neo-realist aesthetic.⁵³

Robbe-Grillet advocated a "flat and discontinuous universe where each

thing refers only to itself and objects themselves tended to dictate social and spatial relations.⁵⁴ This new aesthetic convention provided a structural means of expressing the world in its total objectivity. In "From Realism to Reality," Robbe-Grillet wrote:

When a form of reality has lost its initial vitality, its force, its violence, when it has become a vulgar recipe, an academic mannerism, which its followers respect only out of routine or laziness, without even questioning its necessity, then it is indeed a return to the real... The discovery of reality will continue only if we abandon outworn forms.⁵⁵

He described the realist author as "creator of the material world, of a visionary presence."⁵⁶ Roland Barthes praised Robbe-Grillet who "sterilized the very form of narrative" and purged it of traditional conventions, a process of cleaning up the real.⁵⁷

In Robbe-Grillet's essay, "The Use of Theory," he points out that new realism is an attempt to forge a new definition of relations between the human and the world and, as a result, a new definition of the human.⁵⁸ Rather than express concern for individual essence and to investigate the "old myths of depth," he proposes an interrogation of the "condition," not the "nature" of man.

Repetition of the past is not only futile, it is harmful by blinding us to our real situation in the world today, it keeps us, ultimately, from constructing the world and man of tomorrow.⁵⁹

He continued:

The writer must proudly consent to bear his own date, knowing that there are no masterpieces in eternity, but only works in history; and they have survived only to the degree that they have left the past behind them and heralded the future... For the function of art is never to illustrate truth, or even an interrogation known in

advance, but to bring into the world certain interrogations not yet known as such to themselves.⁶⁰

Restany also wanted to express the world from an objective point of view and to establish an aesthetic system to complement the *Nouveau Roman* and the *Nouvelle Vague*. Like Robbe-Grillet, Restany wanted to “take the presence” of the world into account since, according to Robbe-Grillet, it is where the world’s reality resides.⁶¹ Restany wanted Nouveau Réalisme extended this trend to the visual arts:

Nouveau Réalisme is a vision of the world where the object has a central place. It is a deliberate attempt to consider all that is produced by industrial and urban society, all the inspirational elements, and the motivations of its language. But one must consider that pure pigment is also an object. The immaterial is a sur-objet; it is energy.⁶²

Like Robbe-Grillet, Restany prioritized objects and gestures and established a theory to enclose them in a series of references.⁶³ In contrast to Jill Carrick’s view that Restany was “duped by enthusiasts of capitalist consumption,”⁶⁴ and Kristin Ross’ assertion that Robbe-Grillet was “complicit and refused to dismantle the historical narrative,”⁶⁵ both critic and writer embraced this new reality as a means out of the past. The role of industrially made objects in defining the modern personal and social space was increasingly evident. Jacques Tati’s *Mon Oncle* (1960) is a hallmark film of the era that satirizes the modern housewife Mme. Arpel who describes her home in terms of relationships between space and objects: “Everything communicates!” Restany recognized the ability of the prosaic object to communicate directly. Ross described this system of communication as an “ideology without enemies.”⁶⁶

Restany likely recognized consumerism as a means of transcending political and social ideologies. He may have also borrowed a political strategy associated with the de Gaulle administration characterized as an “eclecticism of means”⁶⁷ This tactic was based on piecing together ideas from the left and the right, which allowed for initiatives that were broad and elastic enough to incorporate diverse views. Likewise, Restany formulated his aesthetic position as one that resonated with diverse aesthetic and the social phenomena that defied an easily discernable position. The artists affiliated with Nouveau Réalisme shared little aside from their common strategy of appropriation. By creating a broad net to define them, Restany softened their aesthetic and ideological differences, which allowed him to find common ground for Klein’s monochromes, Arman’s accumulations, Raysse’s appropriation of mass culture images, Tinguely’s neo-dada machines, Hains’ Lettrist poetics, and Villeglé’s decollage. Restany took a sociological approach to his environment and rather than attempt to produce a single landscape of the contemporary social reality, he appropriated the role of the sociologist who, according to Diana Pinto, “set out to produce ‘topographical maps’ that might guide social change.”⁶⁸ The Nouveau Réalistes perceived, identified and collected evidence of the new social reality. It was Restany who provided the lexical meanings for their work.

Pinto argued that social science offered an a-historical and non-elitist alternative to historical culture and traditional humanism.⁶⁹ Postwar sociologists such as Aron wanted France to examine itself through observation and verification.

This meant pulling intellectuals down a peg from their illusion of representing universal knowledge and values.⁷⁰ With the emergence of consumerism and mass culture, in particular, these new methods seemed more consistent with Americanization.

The infusion of American consumer items and mass culture crested in 1953, and, notwithstanding distaste for American foreign policy, the younger generation of France eagerly adopted American materialism.⁷¹ This enthusiasm spread to French business and government officials who actively sought out new management methods, production techniques and equipment, and academic relations. Statistics illustrate the success of American efforts to sell the American lifestyle to the French. Between 1949 and 1958, the average income rose by one-third, consumption grew 40%, and there was a 400% increase in purchases of household appliances.⁷² Spending patterns changed too, as the result of American marketing strategies and the role social science played in informing business and government about public opinion.⁷³

According to Kuisel, Aron did not believe that consumerism would strip the French of their sensibility; French culture would survive because of Gallic *bon goût*.⁷⁴ In contrast the cultural elite warned that American influence on Europe would endanger good taste.⁷⁵ Aron re-directed the argument that set up an opposition between French values with American culture by suggesting that it was not America that threatened French society but rather, a greater universalizing material process.⁷⁶ The Americanization argument that separated the Left from

the centrists and the Right lost even more focus when Soviet domestic and foreign policies became public in 1956. With the greater economic health of France evident, even those on the left recognized the futility of opposing the West. In the words of Jean-Marie Domenach, a progressive Christian writer for the review Esprit: "Try a Left wing critique of American society and in the end you will realize that it becomes a right-wing critique; that you attack democracy, popular culture [and] mass consumption and you call into question your own ideology."⁷⁷

Restany's position may be described as analogous to the position of the "Atlanticists," a group that urged the French to recognize that America had turned to the future.⁷⁸ This position was supported by influential figures such as de Gaulle and the RAF (until 1953), Aron, François Mauriac, and Paul Claudel, then head of the Association France-États Unis.⁷⁹ America was viewed as a progressive, technologically oriented, consumer society with a high standard of living. Americans came to be viewed as young, dynamic, practical and modern, and the French no longer saw itself as a mirror image, poor, old and traditional.⁸⁰

The "Atlanticist" drew critics from both the Left and the Centrist positions. Louis Aragon considered America "a civilization of bathtubs and Frigidaires," and de Gaulle's Minister of Culture, Malraux, considered America simply a cultural wasteland. But even Malraux's grandiose cultural strategies for the preservation and rebirth of French civilization and culture had a place in Restany's formulation of Nouveau Réalisme. Malraux continued the policy of decentralization in the immediate postwar years, a legacy of regionalism initiated in the Vichy era. As

discussed in Chapter 1, this led to a government support of new French cultural institutions in regions such as the Midi. Malraux's aim was not to promote regionalism but rather, to situate provincial culture (and colonial culture) into a totalizing view of French culture. This effort was to increase and diversifying French art to insure a strong competitive position internationally. Malraux envisioned an absolute French culture. Herman Lebovics describes Malraux in these hyperbolic terms: "God is a formalist of the international school to whom no art is alien."⁸¹

Malraux bolstered Restany's argument with his unifying trans-temporal and trans-national view of French culture, even while he considered American high culture as non-existent and needing French guidance. Kennedy poked fun at Malraux by comparing the way Americans saw the military with the way he saw French culture. Malraux nonetheless failed to recognize that the impact of consumerism and mass culture on contemporary visual arts in France had already taken place.

Restany tied his group to Marcel Duchamp, who became an important link between the American and the French. In 1961, he wrote the second manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme. "40 Degrees above Dada":

After the [Dadaist] NO and ZERO we have here a third position – Marcel Duchamp's anti-art gesture becomes charged with positivity. The Dadaist spirit becomes identified with a more of appropriating the external reality of the modern world. The readymade is no longer the apogee of negativity or polemics but becomes the basis for a new expressive repertoire.³²

Duchamp returned to Paris often after becoming a naturalized American citizen in

1955. In 1954, the Musée National d'Art Moderne acquired his Chess Players of 1911, the first of his works acquired by a public collection in France. His work became topical with the publication of Marchand du Sel. écrits de Marcel Duchamp (1957), published in Paris by Michel Sanouillet. The following year, Duchamp collaborated with Robert Lebel on a comprehensive publication of his oeuvre, Sur Marcel Duchamp. And in December of 1959, Duchamp co-organized the International Exposition of Surrealism at Galerie Daniel Cordier with André Breton, which included the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.⁸³ He publicly supported the works of Jean Tinguely⁸⁴ and Arman,⁸⁵ in particular, and he became the link between artists in France and Neo-Dada in New York especially Rauschenberg and Johns.⁸⁶

Restany reasoned that readymade, mass-produced functional objects provided an appropriate strategic mode in a rapidly Americanized urban Paris. He described the change as a shift from "evasion into imaginary worlds" to a willingness to take part in the contemporary world. This outlook was inspired by a sense of "modern nature" which embraced the factory, and the city, advertising and mass media, science and technology.⁸⁷ For Restany, Nouveau Réalisme was an urban sensibility in contrast to Klein's more encompassing vision of "grand nature" with its imaginative base in the space and color of Nice. What interested Restany, aside from the inherent qualities of objects, was the quantity of industrially made objects, which provided a readymade basis of communication. They could be subjected to the same systems of exchange and meaning, or they

could generate a range of responses not unlike those represented in the general public about mass-production and consumption. Nouveau Réalisme could be situated with the “new” visual culture as a means to re-engineer aesthetic/social vision. The Nouveaux Réalistes aimed to create a visual language that crossed the divide between art and the everyday experience. They honed the audience vision by reconciling two distinct realities. Paris was Restany’s base from which he promoted Nouveau Réalisme to a network of galleries in Europe and New York.

Restany repudiated the cultural elite’s fear of American mass culture (the only sector of society concerned with this) by appropriating the very evidence of Americanization as the manifestation of a new French art. He provided a framework with the readymade that absorbed everything into a system of temporal communication. Ross described communication in terms of an “ambiance,” one that ushered in a “kind of neutral, consensual norm in social relations.”⁸⁸ Restany described Nouveau Réalisme as a metaphoric approach to the consumer society prefigured by Duchamp. Consequently, as Jill Carrick points out, the reception of Nouveau Réalisme was viewed as a “form of politically charged Duchampian Neo-Dada.”⁸⁹ which led to the group being celebrated or condemned in the shifting political terrain of 1960s France.

Restany recalled that when he, Klein, and Arman began to formulate the basis of New Realism, he “wanted to return to a concrete vision of the real world.”⁹⁰ And artists and critics wanted to put their feet on the ground after the evasion of the reality precipitated by the post-trauma of the war seen in abstract

art. Klein suggested they call their work "réalisme d'aujourd'hui." Restany objected on the basis that it was not "operational." It did not imply the broad set of references connoted by the word realism, and it did not reflect a desire for the "new," a process and an aesthetic linked with change and the direct, unmediated experience of the environment.

In 1988, Allan Kaprow described Nouveau Réalisme as "part of a worldwide cluster of art and non-art events in the late 1950s and early sixties."⁹¹ He credited Restany for formulating Nouveau Réalisme in terms broad enough to encompass most all contemporary vanguard tendencies--Environments and Happenings, the Cage circle, the beginnings of Pop and Fluxus, among others.⁹² He made the point that the freshness of Nouveau Réalisme had less to do with the content of their work and more to do with the playfulness and irreverence with which they blended culture and consumerism. More importantly, Kaprow states that what these artists shared was not so much a rejection of abstract art but abstracted life.⁹³

Duchamp supported younger artists who made use of the readymade, and he admired the literalness of Pop Art, a category in which he placed Tinguely, Arman, and Rauschenberg. For Duchamp, Pop Art was a vivid contrast with early modernism, which "distorts things," in his view.⁹⁴ In fact, Duchamp was a complicit prototype for these artists despite their differences in attitude toward making art. In his words, "I did as few things as possible, which isn't like the current attitude of making as many as you can, in order to make as much money as

possible."⁹⁵

By the time Restany framed Nouveau Réalisme between 1960-61, the artists he gathered had long since taken a position in their own works that distanced them from traditional abstraction or realism. Rather, as a group, they represent a Gaullist "eclecticism of means" realized in terms of Duchamp's readymade. Michèle Cone considers Restany's linking of de Gaulle's grand vision of France with Duchamp's concepts to be an "an incompatible mix" that coincided with the promise of stability and prosperity in late 1950s France.⁹⁶ She argued two points to support her conclusion: the difference in attitude between Duchamp and the Nouveaux Réalistes towards work and money, and Restany's position that the Nouveaux Réalistes took a "celebratory tone" in their work.⁹⁷ But Duchamp was the target of criticism by young artists by the middle 1960s. Daniel Buren considered Duchamp to have failed to fulfill the strategic critique he initiated with the introduction of the readymade into art. "Duchamp realized there was something false about art, but he ended by increasing this instead of demystifying it. By appropriating the manufactured article and putting it outside its context he purely and simply symbolized art...and to claim the right of making you see what you can see for yourself and what you would be able to see much more accurately without his intervention."⁹⁸ Duchamp refused to take a position politically citing his lack of interest or knowledge about politics. He recalled that Paris was "dangerous" in the 1960s compared to New York. "They want you to sign petitions, to get involved, *engagé*, as they say. You feel obliged to follow."⁹⁹

Duchamp reported that in 1966, the Creuze Gallery in Paris held an exhibition of painting titled "The Tragic End of Marcel Duchamp." Arroyo, Aillaud, and Recalcati painted this series of works accompanied by a manifesto sentencing him to death for "being bereft of the spirit of adventure, the freedom of invention, the sense of anticipation, and the power of transcending..."¹⁰⁰ The last painting in the series depicted Duchamp's burial with pallbearers Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, Raysse, Warhol, Restany, and Arman dressed as American Marines. When pressed about De Gaulle, his contemporary, Duchamp had nothing to say about his political views only that "there were times when he was a hero, but heroes who live too long are doomed to a downfall."¹⁰¹

Cone's description of Restany's mix of Gaullist politics and Duchamp's readymade as an "incompatible" foundation for Nouveau Réalisme reflects a post 1968 view. While Duchamp was the focus of political attack before the events of 1968, his readymade was evoked having a more revolutionary potential during the riots of 1968. "The most beautiful sculpture in the world is a paving stone, the heavy paving stone thrown in a policeman's face."¹⁰² After the era of 1968, a change in critical perspective enabled Duchamp to become a key figure again in concept-based art. While de Gaulle's demise was final with the near revolution of Mai '68, Duchamp was resurrected.

So, does the Nouveau Réalisme in the works of Klein, Arman, and Raysse constitute the Ecole de Nice? Yes and No. In "Language and Communication," Rivière, like Restany, described these artists in sociological terms. However, she

stressed the centrality of Nice in their work, while Restany identified the Nouveaux Réalistes as "poised around Paris." In contrast to Restany's all embracing "eclecticism of means" Rivière emphasized a more provincial position where loyalty to place produces its own eclecticism of forms. For her, the Ecole de Nice was regional even though the region has a history of internationalism because of its renown as a tourist destination. Daniel Abadie called Nouveau Réalisme a "gift to the art historian."¹⁰³ Although the Nouveaux Réalistes did not constitute a cohesive group in Abadie's view, Restany is credited with formulating a theory and organizing exhibitions to support the similar aims of these artists of diverse backgrounds and nationalities.¹⁰⁴ The Ecole de Nice is its apposition. However, no critic on par with Restany managed to define the Ecole de Nice in a way that approached the historical recognition given Nouveau Réalisme. Despite the role of Klein as central to both groups, and despite his greater loyalty to the Ecole de Nice, the Ecole de Nice remained ill-defined and historically marginal. Nonetheless, it was the Ecole de Nice that recognized the importance of the everyday experience as a means of social and personal transformation. For these artists, it was the ambiance of Nice, with its aesthetic eclecticism and social diversity, which best characterized the "marvelous" component modernity. Their work is distinguished by this visual link to place and the construction of encounters with qualities linked to the tourist experience.

Klein made the important distinctions between the two groups by rejecting the label of neo-dada on the basis of its nihilistic and political connotation, and

emphasizing the importance of art as a means to enjoy freedom from social constraints, that is, imagination and leisure. Klein made repetitive images with a patented industrially made color on pre-fabricated supports. His approach is related to modern notions of production, but his subject is the leisure that modernity promises. The role of art that he promoted in relation to education and technological initiatives reflect a modernist belief in the future, but his objective was to liberate the "new man" from the gravity of modernity. The metaphor of liberation was Nice where the independent spirit of man was celebrated.

Arman described the Ecole de Nice in Klein's terms, a "realism of today" practiced by *rentiers* (of independent means).¹⁰⁵ Their work advertised leisure and freedom in what was called at the time France's Tahiti, now available to the working public for short-term vacations. But as Klein put it, the Ecole de Nice was the result of living on vacation with little care for anything more than *mauvais goût*. This generation of artists from Nice embraced bad taste as a distinguishing feature that separated them from Parisian culture. It exemplified the new reality of consumer goods and tourism that was more seductive to the public.

Duchamp observed that society builds up a language of good or bad tastes. Consequently, if an object does not echo that society's language, then it is not even really worth looking at it.¹⁰⁶ Since the Nouveaux Réalistes and Ecole de Nice sought a new language to communicate with the public beyond the limited number in the arts, they recognized the importance of common objects, derided

for eroding cultural taste, as a new means of social communication and a challenge to conventions of taste.

While Aron reassured the French cultural audience that French good taste would save the country from the mediocrity of American culture and Malraux brandished the standards of French culture nationally and internationally, the artists of the Ecole de Nice dismissed the Paris-based goals of high culture. They embraced Restany's definition of the *new* as a means of communicating in a language that reflected their new social reality. Restany emphasized the urban space where cycles of production were most apparent. The Ecole de Nice displayed a taste for a leisurely lifestyle, and for promoting art as an activity that reflected leisure-time.¹⁰⁷ Following Duchamp's remark that the Ecole de Nice was "funny" as a significant school,¹⁰⁸ and parodying Duchamp's admission that he did nothing all day long, Klein pointed out that they were "cons" as much as they were artists: their real interest is in bad taste and kitsch, "new ideas" in French art.

¹ "Les Nouveaux Réalistes." Preface for the exhibition "Arman, Dufène, Hains, Yves le Monochrome, Tinguely, Villeglé (Milan: Galeria Apollinaire, April, 16, 1960); "40 Degré au-dessus de Dada" (Paris: Galerie J, May 17 – June 10, 1961); "Nouveau Réalisme: Que Faut-il Penser?" for exhibition "Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Munich: Neue Galerie im Kunstlerhaus, February 1963). Reprinted in Catherine Francblin, Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Editions du Regard, 1997), 178-180. "Que nous propose-t-on par ailleurs? La passionnante aventure du réel perçu en soi et non à travers le prisme de la transcription conceptuelle ou imaginative. Quelle en est la manque? L'introduction d'un relais sociologique au stade essentiel de la communication..."

² This group manifesto issued on October 27, 1960 in Paris. The brief statement was formulated at Klein's Paris apartment. It was recently reprinted by Zabriski Gallery as the cover of a catalogue of Nouveaux Réalistes for an exhibition held in New York, May 17 – July 8, 1988.

³ Pierre Restany, "Les Nouveaux Réalistes." (Milan: Galleria Apollinaire, April 16, 1960). Preface for exhibition Arman, Dufrène, Hains, Yves Le Monochrome, Tinguely, Villeglé. This is considered the first manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme written by Restany. Reprinted in Catherine Francblin, Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 1997), 178.

⁴ Diana Orvieto Pinto. "Sociology as a Cultural Phenomenon in France and Italy: 1950-1972." PhD. Dissertation, (Harvard University, 1977), 148.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹ Jacques Soustelle, reported in NARA, 611.51/12-456 (December 4, 1956), as quoted in Richard F. Kuisel, Seducing the French: the dilemma of Americanization (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 24.

¹⁰ Tony Judt, Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 191. Originally published as Passé imparfait: Les Intellectuels en France, 1944-1956 (Paris: Librarie Arthème Fayard, 1992), 1.

¹¹ Tony Judt, The Burden of Responsibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 152.

¹² Pinto (1977), 173.

¹³ Judt (1992), 191.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

¹⁵ Raymond Aron. "A propos de la théorie politique, Revue française de science politique 12, no. 1 (1962) as cited in Tony Judt, The Burden of Responsibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 141.

¹⁶ Frances Morris, Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism 1945-1955 (London, Tate Gallery, 1993). This catalogue aims specifically to examine the relationship between art, literature and philosophy. It includes Sarah Wilson's essay "Paris Post War: In Search of the Absolute." Other exhibitions that examine this era include: "Westkunst," (Cologne, 1980) and Paris-Paris, (Paris: Centre Georges

Pompidou, 1981). In 1982, the Barbican Gallery organized Aftermath France, 1945-1954: New Images of Man, (March-June 1982) which owed a debt to Paris-Paris.

¹⁷ Henry-Claude Cousseau. "The Search for New Origins," Aftermath France 1945-1954: New Images of Man (London: Barbican Center 1982), 15.

¹⁸ Sarah Wilson. "Paris Post War: In Search of the Absolute." Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism 1945-55 (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), 25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰ Claude-Helene Sibert. "Malaise de la peinture contemporaine," Cimaise no.2 (November – December 1954). 14-15.

²¹ Wilson (1993), 26.

²² Peter Wollen. "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," On the Passage of a Few People through a rather brief moment in time: the Situationist International, 1957-1972, Elizabeth Sussman, ed (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 20.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁵ Henry Périer. Pierre Restany: L'alchimiste de l'art (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 1998), 77.

²⁶ Morris (London: Tate Gallery, 1993), 212.

²⁷ Michel Tapié, Un Art Autre où il s'agit de nouveaux dévidages du réel (Paris: Gabriel-Giraud et fils, 1952), 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁹ Germain Viatte, "Aftermath: A New Generation," Aftermath France, 1945-1955: New Images of Man (London: Barbican Gallery March-June 1983), 13.

³⁰ Henry Périer. Pierre Restany: L'alchimiste de l'art (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 1998), 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² Herman Lebovics, Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture (NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 78.

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- ³³ *Ibid.*, 77. Georges Pompidou later named Chaban-Delmas Prime Minister in 1969.
- ³⁴ Kristin Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonialization and the Reordering of French Culture (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 8.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ³⁶ Périer (Paris, 1998), 67-68.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo "Nuclear Painting Manifesto" (Brussels: Bebruary 1, 1952), reprinted in Tristan Sauvage. Nuclear Art, trans. Johns Stephens, (NY: Marcello Maestro 1962), 21.
- ⁴⁰ Arte Nucleare, Exhibition catalogue, 12-30 octobre, 1957. Galeria San Fedele. Milan. This exhibition included: Baj, Bemporad, Bertini, Dangelo, Yves Klein, Manzoni, Arnoldo Pomodor, Gio Pomodoro, Rossello, Sordini, Berga, Jorn, Vandercam. The catalogue included a reprint of the Nuclear Manifesto, "Against Style" which was signed by the following artists: Armand, Enrico Baj, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Pierre Restany, D'Angelo. It is dated Spetmeber 1957, Milan. Tristan Sauvage. Nuclear Art. Translated by Johns Stephens, (NY: Marcello Maestro 1962) 39-40.
- ⁴¹ Pierre Restany, Espaces Imaginaire (Paris: Galerie Kamer, 1957).
- ⁴² Périer (Paris, 1998), 50. Pierre Restany, interview with Périer, n.d., Arman, interview with Périer, n.d.
- ⁴³ Pierre Restany, "Les Nouveaux Réalistes," (Milan: Galleria Apollinaire, April 16, 1960), repinted in Francblin (1997), 178. "C'est la réalité sociologique tout entière, le bien commun de l'activité de tous les hommes, la grande république de nos échanges sociaux, de notre commerce en société, qui est assignée à comparaître..."
- ⁴⁴ Pierre Restany, "La Prise en compte réaliste d'une situation nouvelle," interview, 1960: Les Nouveau Réalistes (Paris: Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986), 18.
- ⁴⁵ Pierre Restany, "Les Nouveaux Réalistes" (April 16, 1960), preface for exhibition, "Arman, Dufrière, Hains, Yves le Monochrome, Tinguely, Villeglé," (Milan: GalerieApollinaire, 1960), reprinted in Francblin (Paris, 1997), 179.

⁴⁶ Arman, interview with the author, New York, May 1991. He stated that immediately after the signing of the Nouveau Réalisme manifesto, a fistfight nearly broke out.

⁴⁷ Pierre Restany made the connection with Duchamp in his exhibition statement "40 Degrees above Dada" considered the second manifesto Nouveau Réalisme. It was published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title at Paris' Galerie J (May 17-June 10, 1961). Klein rejected the connection with Duchamp. Stich writes that Klein and Arman remained more interested in Surrealism. Sidra Stich, Yves Klein (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag 1994), 206.

⁴⁸ Pierre Restany, quoted in 1960: Les Nouveau Réalistes exh. cat. (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986), 18.

⁴⁹ Pierre Restany, "The Late Fifties in Europe," interview by Michèle Cone, Arts Magazine (January 1990), 67.

⁵⁰ Hélène Lassalle, "Art Criticism as strategy: the idiom of 'new realism' from Fernand Léger to the Pierre Restany group." (trans. Ann Cremin) Art Criticism since 1900 Malcolm Gee, ed. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 203.

⁵¹ Périer (Paris, 1998), 159.

⁵² Lassalle (1993), 207.

⁵³ Janet Flanner, Paris Journal 1956-1964 ed. William Shawn (NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), 127.

⁵⁴ Ross (MA 1995), 2-5.

⁵⁵ Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, trans. Richard Howard (NY: Grove Press, 1965), 158.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁷ Roland Barthes, Essais Critiques (Paris: Seuil, 1964) as cited in Ross, 181.

⁵⁸ Robbe-Grillet, (1965), 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10, 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶²Pierre Restany, as quoted in Périer, 172-173. "Le Nouveau Réalisme est une vision du monde où l'objet a une place centrale. C'est une volonté délibérée de prendre dans ce que produit la société industrielle et urbaine tous les éléments d'inspiration, toutes les motivations du langage. Mais on peut considérer que le pigment pur c'est aussi l'objet. L'immatériel, c'est un sur-objet, c'est l'énergie."

⁶³Robbe-Grillet (1965), 21.

⁶⁴Jill Carrick, Le Nouveau Réalisme: Fetishism and Consumer Spectacle in Post-War France (Ph.D. Dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1997), 1.

⁶⁵Ross (1995), 13.

⁶⁶ Ross (1995), 191-192. Ross discusses how this film exemplifies structuralism and its language as a system of communication and an "ideology without enemies."

⁶⁷Lebovics (1999), 78.

⁶⁸ Diana Orvieto Pinto, Sociology as a Cultural Phenomenon in France and Italy: 1950-1972 (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), 95.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁷¹ Kuisel (1993), 34.

⁷² Ibid., 104.

⁷³ Ibid., 105.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁷ Jean-Marie Domenach, "Le Modèle Américain," Esprit (July-August 1960), 1231 and (October 1960), 1534, as quoted in Kuisel (1993), 130.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰Ibid., 30.

⁸¹Lebovics (1999), 81.

⁸² Pierre Restany. "À 40° au-dessus de Dada." (May 1961) reprinted in 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, May 15-September 7, 1986), 267.

⁸³ Lewis Kachur. Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist exhibition installations (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 206. Kachur points out that this is a direct connection between these artists and Surrealism. He also mentions the role of Duchamp as a "bridge" with a younger generation of installation artists.

⁸⁴ Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lecombe. "Chronologie." 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes (1986), 65. Duchamp attended Jean Tinguely's "Les Métamatics" exhibition at Galerie Iris Clert in November 1959. He was photographed collaborating with Tinguely's Meta-matic no. 8 drawing machine.

⁸⁵ Pierre Cabanne. Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp trans. Ron Padgett (NY: Da Capo Press, 1979), 95. Originally published as Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp (Paris: Editions Belfond, 1967). Duchamp admired Arman's intelligence and knowledge of culture. He referred to his works as "personal expressions."

⁸⁶ Robert Rauschenberg, interview with Barbara Rose, Rauschenberg stated that he met Klein in Paris through an introduction by Marcel Duchamp.

⁸⁷ Pierre Restany, "Le Nouveau Réalisme," Flash Art no. 105 (December-January, 1981-1982), 27.

⁸⁸Ross, 192.

⁸⁹Carrick, 47.

⁹⁰ Pierre Restany, "La prise en compte réaliste d'une situation nouvelle: un entretien avec Pierre Restany." Musée National d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, (1986), 19.

⁹¹ Allan Kaprow. "Horse Feathers Still," Nouveau Realistes. Exh, cat. (New York: Zabriski Gallery, 1988), 7.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Marcel Duchamp, as quoted in Cabanne (1987), 94.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁶ Michèle C. Cone, French Modernisms: Perspectives on Art Before, During, and After Vichy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 169.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 166-167. She supports the latter by using César's compressions that he had issued in multiples as an example.

⁹⁸ Daniel Buren, interview with Georges Boudaille, Les Lettres Françaises (May 13, 1968), as cited in Art and Confrontation: The Arts in an Age of Change, Jean Cassou, ed., trans. Nigel Foxell (Belgium: La Connaissance and NY: New York Graphics Society, 1968), 55.

⁹⁹ Marcel Duchamp, as quoted in Cabanne (1987), 102.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰² Ibid., 52, 62, f/n6.

¹⁰³ Daniel Abadie, "Le Nouveau Réalisme." in Alfred Pacquement, Les Nouveaux Réalistes: The Renewal of Art in Paris around 1960. Published in 25 ans d'art en France, 1960-1985 (Paris: 1986), 214.

¹⁰⁴ Raphael Meyer Rubinstein, "Les Nouveaux Réalistes," Arts Magazine no. 10, vol. 63 (September 1988), 74. "Luckily, many of these sorts of activities were recorded by the American photographer Harry Shunk, whose persistence and ubiquity made Nouveau Réalisme one of the best documented movements in art history."

¹⁰⁵ Sosno (1960) interview with Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, and Arman, published as "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes," in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982), 264.

¹⁰⁶ Marcel Duchamp as quoted in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (1987), 94.

¹⁰⁷ Rubinstein, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Marcel Duchamp as quoted in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (1987), 96.

Chapter 3

Yves Klein: Imagining the Unseen

Imagination is the vehicle of sensibility. Transported by imagination, we attain life, life itself, which is the absolute art.¹

According to Pierre Restany in 1967, Klein wanted “to succeed in Paris against Paris.”² Restany claimed that the idea of an Ecole de Nice was dear to Klein, and he cultivated it as a family paradox. The critic was referring to the Klein and the Ecole de Nice in relation to Marie Raymond, Klein’s mother, and a well-known painter of the Ecole de Paris. For the purpose of this study, I emphasize how Klein highlighted Nice as a place *and* a concept at the base of his work. Klein introduced sensibilities associated with the Côte d’Azur—freedom, health, and imagination—into an environment that he perceived as opposite—tightly regulated and oriented to productivity. His prevalent theme was the dialectic between confinement in the urban space and the open landscape of Nice. In his diverse body of work, which includes paintings, sculpture, installations, architectural proposals, concept art, theater proposals, music scores, and performance, Klein returned again and again to the blue color of the Mediterranean sky and sea; he foregrounds the landscape of the region as a symbol for imaginative leisure with the potential to offer release from social constraints.

This chapter will also demonstrate how Klein used metaphoric references to Nice in an effort to de-throne Parisian high art, and especially the prevailing trends

in abstraction. Klein believed that style-based painting was outmoded and failed to respond to international tendencies, which were more pluralistic. He wanted to resuscitate art from a position he considered increasingly marginal because it failed to communicate contemporary aspirations and ideals. To accomplish this, Klein employed theatrical modes of expression to make direct connections with his audience.

Klein claimed that his work (and that of the Ecole de Nice) was the product of living on vacation – “we are not tourists.”³ He was a visionary idealist who believed that once released from the demands of ordinary existence, one could enjoy life as a “realistic-imaginary voyage.” Klein wanted to infuse the reality of the Côte d’Azur lifestyle –physical beauty, youth, classical landscapes, exotic nature--with metaphysical associations. He considered his work a form *and* vehicle of communication, which had the potential of reconciling art with a changed society. The basis of Klein's language was the single blue monochrome and its elaboration into the spectrum of visual and experiential modes.

Restany characterized Klein as the bridge between Parisian Nouveau Réalisme and the Ecole de Nice.⁴ The former, a manifestation of the urban culture of Paris, while the latter, heterogeneous in itself, synthesized international vanguard tendencies with local references. Restany described the difference recently: “the Nouveaux Réalistes belong to several families. L’Ecole de Nice is a label for the cultural scene of Nice, Yves Klein and Arman are considered as its honorary references.”⁵ Both groups were linked with Duchampian Dada, but the visual link to place, the emphasis on freedom from Paris, and experience-based encounters

distinguished Klein and his colleagues from other in Nouveau Réalisme. Klein situate his work in relation to Nice and advocated a school of Nice to counter that of Paris, yet beginning with Restany, Klein's most influential advocate and critic, the link with Nice has been minimized. Restany's influence is evident in general studies of the period⁸ and important monographic studies.⁷ This chapter will argue that despite his reputation in Paris, Klein considered himself an artist affiliated with Nice who aimed to establish Nice as the successor to a de-spirited Paris, and he used Nice as a direct reference and significant metaphor in his work.

When mention of the Ecole de Nice was first published by critic Claude Rivière in her August 1960 article, "La Charge Solaire de l'Artist: y-a-t'il un Ecole de Nice?" it was especially with regard to Klein and his series titled the Anthropometries. Rivière wrote that Klein was "emblazoned" in Cagnes-sur-Mer, after having conquered the public with these sensuous body prints.⁸ This was the first time that Klein introduced the figure into his monochrome-based repertoire. Kynaston McShine pointed out that by introducing the figure into this scheme, Klein closed the gap between abstraction and figuration and ultimately brought Art Informel to a close.⁹ McShine's remark suggests that Klein did succeed in his assault on Paris, which had struggled for over a decade to define itself amidst divisive postwar style wars. Rivière did not associate Klein with Nouveau Réalisme, already proposed by Restany in the Milan exhibition the previous April.¹⁰ Instead, she suggested that Klein created a substantive visual language that was linked to the Côte d'Azur, which the artist demonstrated in the Anthropometry series first presented to a Paris audience in March 1960.

The Anthropometry series was presented as theater in an event hosted by Maurice D'Arquain of the Galerie International d'Art Contemporain. Klein's "Anthropometries of the Blue Period" (Fig. 8) was a highly orchestrated performance in which Klein assumed the role of a maestro rather than a working artist. He opened the program with a performance of his Monotone Symphony, a score comprised of a single note repeated for a duration of time followed by silence of the same length. It was the musical analogy to the blue monochrome painting on which his work and identity were established.

Klein created a stage on which he and the "ballet of girls" collaborated in the realization of figurative images on paper attached to the walls and the floor. Klein synthesized the visual, auditory and physical components of the piece into a hybrid art form. Two distinct types of visual images resulted from the performance. On the wall, models pressed their ultra-marine colored bodies onto the paper, which created static prints; on the floor, the movement of their bodies created dynamic and expressive markings. The works that resulted are lyrical and refined, but the event had the tone of a live burlesque of the nude in art.¹¹

Thomas Crow recently described Klein's role in this performance as that of a "sex-club master of ceremonies."¹² Crow was critical of Klein's use of the woman as paintbrush viewing his performance and "using the bodies of women as instruments suited to soil themselves and surrender their dignity in the actual production of the work."¹³ In contrast, the critic believed that the Americans, especially those around the Judson Dance Theater (Robert Morris, Carolee Schneeman, e.g.) displayed a more egalitarian approach with women participating

in exhibitionistic performances along with men.¹⁴ However, Carolee Schneeman's performance Meat Joy was first shown in 1964, the same year as Yoko Ono's Cut Piece was performed in Kyoto. The proto-feminist inflection in these works is evident, but they were done four years after Klein's performance and seven years after he first made body prints in his studio. Niki de Saint-Phalle's Tir paintings (shooting paintings) were a more contemporary proto-feminist example, and her work was well-regarded within the Klein circle.¹⁵

With the Anthropometry performance, Klein also parodied the classical nude in the blue atmosphere of Mediterranean space; a fine art genre associated with cultivated male pleasure and escapism. The series also makes reference to one of Matisse's most well-known motif, the blue nude.¹⁶ In more contemporary terms, the uninhibited young women certainly would have called to mind the hedonism of the Côte d'Azur, and the freedom the models suggested. As Simone de Beauvoir pointed out, the first scene of And God Created Woman, opens with Bardot lying naked in the sand – she is exposing her nakedness to the sun.¹⁷ but she also impressed her body into the sand.

Klein knew that this work would be compared to "action painters,"¹⁸ particularly that of celebrity artists Pollock and Georges Mathieu (who was in attendance). Klein hired the photographer Harry Shunk to document the session; these photographs capture Klein alternately directing and observing the event, rather than producing work as his predecessors in action-based art had done. The visual impact was also different. The Anthropometries are light, a counterpoint to the aggression evident in the works of the American and French expressionists.

In "Truth Becomes Reality," published in Zero, 1961, Klein wrote that his interest in the body was rooted in the "non-thinking" flesh – the flesh that "functions without reflection and operates without direct awareness."¹⁹ These images pointed to possibility of a "resurrection of the body and of the flesh" once freed from the constraints of gravity. This series is a testimony to Klein's belief in the regenerative power of nature linked to physical beauty and spatial freedom.

Arman pointed out that Klein had the idea of blue imprints when they studied Judo together in Nice in 1946-1947. It was then that he first made imprints of bodies and handprints on paper and fabric.²⁰ Klein was photographed wearing a shirt imprinted with his own hands and feet. He later experimented with printing objects during the summer of 1959 in Nice. He reportedly used machine parts, pins, glass, and rocks to make imprints similar to Arman's Allures series.²¹ But Klein never pursued the use of objects in this series. Again, during the summer of 1961, he made imprints on the beach in Nice with Rotraut Uecker, his companion and muse; Sosno filmed the sessions.²² When he imprinted images that were not human forms, he used wind, rain or plants and reeds made at the Loup River in Cagnes-sur-Mer, or the effect of the elements on canvases as he drove from Paris to Nice. These traces of nature constitute the Cosmogony (identified as COS) series also begun in 1960.²³

Klein described the origin of his work in the April 1961 "Chelsea Manifesto," written while he stayed at the New York Chelsea Hotel on the occasion of his first exhibition in New York at the Leo Castelli Gallery.²⁴ The

source of his work was Nice, specifically the moment when he recognized the expansiveness of the blue space above:

While still an adolescent, I was to sign my name on the other side of the sky during a fantastic 'realistic-imaginary' journey. That day, as I lay stretched upon the beach of Nice, I began to feel hatred for birds, which flew back and forth across my blue, cloudless sky, because they tried to bore holes in my greatest and most beautiful work.

Birds must be eliminated.

Thus, we humans will have acquired the right to evolve in full liberty without any physical and spiritual constraint.²⁵

Klein wrote this manifesto to clarify his work for a skeptical New York audience.

His show received a cool reception from critics and artists alike.²⁶ Klein's work appeared derivative after American audiences had already seen earlier works by Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt. Klein admired the work of Rothko, in particular, but the artist ignored Klein's efforts to engage him.²⁷

According to Irving Sandler, Klein was incomprehensible to the Americans.

They had little knowledge of the French scene and Klein's bravado and esoteric interests further alienated him from New York artists.²⁸ The competitiveness of younger American artists he knew, Rauschenberg in particular, did little to aid Klein. Restany believed that the exhibition was simply ill-conceived because it included only Klein's blue monochrome paintings, then already four years old.

Virginia Dwan, who scheduled an exhibition just after the Castelli show, suggested that Castelli might have wanted to establish a signature for Klein in New York with the monochromes.²⁹ The Castelli show did not establish Klein's connection with Nice nor did it succeed in communicating the link between the blue monochrome and its link with Klein's conceptual appropriation of the expansive Mediterranean sky.

Klein was relieved to move onto his Los Angeles exhibition at Dwan Gallery scheduled for May 29-June 24, 1961. This exhibition was more representative of Klein's work to date. Dwan wanted a "complete IKB (International Klein Blue) show;" she was making reference to the ultramarine blue color that Klein patented in 1960, a unique paint fixative formula that created a dry textured surface.³⁰ The exhibition included the monochromes, sponge relief sculpture, Anthropometries, and obelisks.³¹ He also showed the film of the Anthropometry performance of March 1960. Klein's work received more supportive response from collectors, if not artists.³² Among artists, it created a "furor" because he was French, not because of his work.³³ Dwan found Klein and his work absorbing. She appreciated the undeniable energy of his work and his methods as a "kind of hyper-reality," a real energy.

Dwan recalled that Larry Rivers taught Klein the word "corny" (then used interchangeably with kitsch), it was an idea he found "delicious." He defined his work in relation to life not art, and he wanted to usher in a change in daily life that would be thwarted if he limited himself to the language of high art only. Klein believed that high art had become marginal and a new means to communicate directly with the public could be through the vernacular. A study of kitsch by Matei Calinescu posits that unless there was an incentive for individuals to "condition" oneself to high art, it tended to remain apart from the daily life of most people.³⁴ By contrast, kitsch and popular culture retained a direct connection with society in a way that high art failed to do. For Calinescu, kitsch was generally considered a byproduct of modernism related to business and

technology,³⁵ but it also reflected a need for escapism in response to exhaustion. He described kitsch as a means to fill the empty time of leisure with "fun" and "excitement" and that could be hallucinatory.³⁶ It is this quality of kitsch that is relevant to Klein and the Ecole de Nice. To Klein, Paris appeared exhausted aesthetically and socially; Nice exemplified the fulfillment of leisure and excitement. Benjamin Buchloh criticized Klein for his lack of faith in avant-garde practice in favor of a reactionary cultural response.³⁷ Klein saw it as a way to break through the limitations of avant-garde activity, and he was not interested in maintaining the distinction between good and bad taste. In the Chelsea Manifesto, Klein included passages on "bad taste," a topic that required several drafts:³⁸

I have the deep feeling that there exists in the very essence of bad taste a power capable of creating those things situated far beyond what is traditionally termed "The Work of Art." I wish to play with human feeling, with its "morbidity" in a cold and ferocious manner. Only very recently I have become a sort of gravedigger of art (oddly enough, I am using the very terms of my enemies).³⁹

Klein also described his work as "bad taste" in the July 1961 issue of *Zero*:

No matter what one thinks, all this is very bad taste, and indeed, that is my intention. I howl it from the rooftops: "Kitsch, corn, bad taste," that is the new notion in art. And while we are about it, let's forget art altogether!

Great beauty is only a reality when it contains, intelligently mixed into it, "genuine bad taste," irritating and intentional artificiality, with just a dash of dishonesty!⁴⁰

Klein was more comfortable in California than New York. He envisioned a new axis of activity – Nice-Los Angeles-Tokyo – that would bypass New York and Paris altogether. He wanted the whole Ecole de Nice transported to Los

Angeles where it would find a healthy reception and a familiar climate.⁴¹ Klein interested Dwan in the work of Arman and Raysse during his stay, and she scheduled exhibitions for them shortly after his return to France.

While Klein was in the U.S., Pierre Restany organized an exhibition of the Nouveaux Réalistes at Galerie J. titled "A 40 degree au-dessus de Dada."⁴² Klein immediately rejected Restany's association of Nouveau Réalisme with Dada, despite the critic's attempt in the accompanying essay to distinguish between the "negative" appropriation of Dada and the "positive" appropriations of Nouveau Réalisme. By the fall of 1961, Klein would break his association with Nouveau Réalisme as a result of Restany's insistence that Nouveau Réalisme was a form of Neo-Dada.

However, on his return from Los Angeles in the summer of 1961, he did participate in the "Festival du Nouveau Réalisme," held in Nice at the Galerie Muratore on July 13-14, 1961. The exhibition was advertised with a poster that featured a Klein Anthropometry.⁴³ Sosno photographed the opening and published the events in the magazine Sud-Communications.⁴⁴ Sosno reported that nearly five hundred people, all of the well-informed and under-nourished population of Nice participated in this "Apocalyptic Festival" held at the Abbaye de Roseland, the estate of Klein's Paris dealer, Jean Larcade, owner of the Galerie Rive Droit. The "spectacle works" included Niki de Saint-Phalle's Feu à Volonté, Arman's Grande Colère, and Klein's silent presentation of a zone of sensitized space, which was scheduled for fifteen minutes before midnight. This "prophetic event" was staged on the eve of Bastille Day. The purpose of the event was to

"clean the vision of the provincial population."⁴⁵ Sosno suggested that the objective was to celebrate a new realism ushered in by youth.⁴⁶ Those who attended the event were polled according to age. The responses in the 5-15 and 15-30 age brackets responded with enthusiasm and anticipation. In the 30-50 and 50-90 age groups, the reactions were recorded as sympathy, hostility, and resignation. Consistent with Klein's belief that creativity was associated with youth and enthusiasm, the festival succeeded in generating the results he expected. It also suggests that a generation gap was already evident in France. This polarization was not specific to locale, but for Klein, this international phenomenon was symbolized within France by the differing ethos of an older Paris and a younger Nice.

In a 1961 interview, Klein stated to Sosno, "I propose to initiate a séance of anthropophagy on Paris."⁴⁷ His concern was not to establish himself as a Parisian artist because the Ecole de Paris was no longer relevant in his view. He argued that New York was correct in objecting to the continuation of the Parisian school. But he *did* support the Ecole de Nice because it was the first attempt to search for "actual forms of art already in the world." He believed that art was no longer a process of making objects, but instead, a forum in which pre-existing matter and pre-made objects could be fully experienced. Klein believed that the labor evident in Ecole de Paris painting weakened the impact of their art, relegating the work they produced to history. Their work was not in synch with their new society where modern production methods continuously transformed the visual experience of daily life.

Klein defined the Ecole de Nice as “vampires of the sensibility of today’s world.”⁴⁸ Klein further described them as “gangsters” and “*tricheurs*,” types of characters common in *Nouvelle Vague* films by Truffaut and Godard, for example. The Ecole de Nice represented a new sensibility and a lifestyle where art, work, and leisure were not distinct activities. However, Klein did not link their activities to support of consumerist sensibilities, but rather fully experiencing the spirit of the moment. Rotraut Uecker, Klein’s wife by this time, recalled his dismay at the materialism sweeping Europe, which he believed ushered in a period of indifference and conformity. “He wanted to counter those materialistic urges with a consciousness about the immaterial fullness of life.”⁴⁹

Klein created several works that provided a visualization of his paradigm. These works are again part of his Antropometry series and the setting is the Côte d’Azur.⁵⁰ In ANT 102. Architecture of the Air, 1961 (Fig. 9), Klein demonstrated his belief in the potential of technology to transform social space by eliminating the walls and structures that define daily existence. By harnessing the natural elements, Klein believed technology could release humans from imprisoning structures and free them to engage with the beauty of the environment. In Architecture of Air, female figures beckon the viewer to “beds of air.” Pressurized air walls and beds regulated the communal living spaces and assured optimal conditions of light and temperature for the body. This model of existence was based on physical and spiritual levitation, which coincided with the adaptation of leisure activities as the primary occupation. This encapsulated both the tone and ideals of Klein. In this state of being, he suggested, “pleasure

prevails over the useful."⁵¹ In the charcoal inscription, Klein described his vision as equivalent to an Edenic paradise.⁵²

In a second example, Klein collaborated with Arman, the poet Claude Pascal, and Restany on an Anthropometry titled Store poème (ANT SU 62) (Fig. 10), created on March 1, 1962.⁵³ This banner format Shroud Anthropometry is inscribed with poems, drawings, body prints, and stamps applied in the colors blue, rose, gold, and black. Female nudes are stenciled or imprinted on the surface. Beneath a group of two figures, under the heading "Blue, Rose Gold," his trilogy of signature monochrome colors set off by stars; Klein included a text in which he specified his allegiance to Nice.⁵⁴ He wrote, "the plenitude of the things beyond all the judgements of Paris. It is through my trinity that, fully, I breathe it."⁵⁵ At the lower end of the scroll, beneath imprints of river reeds from Cagnes, "NICE" is repeatedly stamped across 18 consecutive lines of the scroll. This is followed by the statement: "I greet the civil servant martyrs of the great bucket (sic) of the myths: 'The EQUATION OF HAPPINESS.' This sign is a poetic variant of the integral vacuum."⁵⁶ The scale of this visual manifesto substantiated the importance that Klein must have assigned to this statement in support of Nice – a poetic alternative to the sensibilities of Paris and its values.⁵⁷ Klein's free hanging canvas with its emphasis on atmosphere and sensibilities countered the "Object" theme of the "Antagonisms II" exhibition in Paris, where it was to be exhibited. His phrasing also suggests that the area of Nice was autonomous from Paris, a milieu he was now openly assaulting. Restany

described the installation of Klein's hanging un-stretched canvas – it “ran along a wooden frame like a guillotine at the exhibition ‘Antagonisms II.’”⁵⁸

Just three months prior to his unexpected death, Klein made a statement about his rejection of Paris and his allegiance to Nice. His reputation in Milan, Düsseldorf, Nice, and Los Angeles was bolstered by his exhibitions in Paris, ironically a city he believed had failed to fully understand or support his work. For Klein, art was an orientation to a world where barriers could be overcome. His socially oriented and metaphysically based oeuvre had been misunderstood since he arrived as an artist in Paris in 1954. Even then, his vision of art was not oriented to subjective expression of the isolated artist separated from the environment, that is, out of touch with contemporary nature in the broadest sense. His methods, which often included tricking his public, were nonetheless designed to advance his idealism and desire to communicate about unseen, but real, sensations generated by individuals, places, and things. He also wanted to make an issue about taste and aesthetic assumptions such as originality, authenticity, and worth.

At first he posed these challenges in Yves Peinture.⁵⁹ This catalogue (Fig. 11) is a portfolio of ten color monochrome plates, dated 1950-1954 and titled after cities where he traveled or lived – London, Nice, Paris, Tokyo, and Madrid. The color plates are paper rectangles cut from commercially inked colors. Klein's publication is a travel journal/ catalogue of monochromes based on color atmospheres metaphoric of the cities he experienced. Klein's method of publication implied the existence of original monochrome paintings, since he presented it as a

catalogue of his work corresponding to cities after which they are titled.⁶⁰ Thomas McEvelley has suggested that Klein wanted to return to Paris as an artist with credentials but the catalogue Yves Peintures involved tricking his audience into believing that he had a substantial body of work. But more likely, the catalogue was produced quickly because Klein planned to return to Paris and was faced with the pressure of producing the work in a short time.⁶¹

Nan Rosenthal concluded that the book presented evidence of an idea, not evidence of previously realized paintings.⁶² His ambitions aside, he nonetheless conveyed his impressions of places by means of ambient color rather than by sketching scenes or by collecting tourist paraphernalia. Klein's anecdote about his presentation of the book to a group of abstract painters in a Paris cafe on January 13, 1955 attests to his interest in the encounter: "their eyes lit up and in the depth beautiful and pure uniform colors seem to appear."⁶³ Rosenthal concluded that this self-promotional pamphlet is both an original with an aura (lighting up their eyes) and a book of reproductions without originals.⁶⁴ Rosenthal believed that Klein was communicating information about art.⁶⁵

There has been little discussion of this catalogue as his travel diary, a record of his international experiences realized through color. Klein provided a record of his mobility and communication skills, a hallmark of postwar modernity. He traveled internationally in preparation for his career as an artist, and he spoke several languages including English, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese. Klein recognized the importance of an image that transcended national cultural ties. He used pure color to communicate impressions rather than render images that reflect cultural biases or

personal subjectivity. Rather than expressing his feelings about these places, he allowed the sensibilities of each city to impress sensations on him. He gathered these impressions into a collection of signs. Mac- Cannell described this type of tourist as a neo-nomad, a traveler who sought experiences and took nothing but impressions.⁶⁶

Klein struggled with the reception of his work from the beginning. His first exhibition in Paris was held at Colette Allendy Gallery in February 1956. "Yves: Proposition Monochrome"⁶⁷ featured variously colored monochromes accompanied by an introduction by Restany titled "La Minute de Vérité."⁶⁸ Restany described Klein's monochromes as an antidote for those who seek refuge from the machine, reality, and time. Klein's works were described as "experiential" and may provide a "treatment of asthenic silence." The works stand as "phenomenon of pure contemplation" requiring no gesture or written line.

Klein was dismayed that his monochromes of varied colors were perceived as a decorative aesthetic ensemble within an architectural space.⁶⁹ The autonomous atmospheric essence of each piece was not effectively communicated. He was dismayed that the public did not recognize the unique color sensibility in each work, a result he considered a miscommunication with his public. This response led him to concentrate on a single color, and the "Blue Period" was announced in his next exhibition. Restany took credit for this change: "Color is a reality in itself like destiny! And this color ought to be blue. Blue like the azure of Nice..."⁷⁰ Klein made a direct connection between his Blue Period and Nice in the Monochrome Adventure, an autobiographical journal of his ideas and experiences:

It was then that I remembered the color blue, the blue skies in Nice that was at the origin of my career as a monochromist. I started work towards the end of 1956 and in 1957. I had an exhibition in Milan, which consisted entirely of what I dared to call my "Epoque bleue."⁷¹

Klein discovered that the monochrome gave him both a signature and a sense of cultural authority. It was the visible link with his new public identity, Yves le Monochrome, and Nice. His like-colored canvases were produced by a repetitive procedure of applying the ultramarine blue paint with a roller onto standard-sized canvases. Klein used this approach to disrupt the audience tendency to see his work as an ensemble of color relationships. Klein wrote in the Monochrome Adventure: "all colors induce associations with real material and tangible ideas, such that blue recalls all the more the sea and the sky, that which is most abstract in real and visible nature."⁷² Rosenthal felt that Klein also wanted to make an issue about the monetary value of art.⁷³ He tested this idea in his first exhibition of blue monochromes organized by Restany for the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan, January 1957.⁷⁴

The blue period was "initiated" in 1957 with three conceptually linked exhibitions, one in Milan and two in Paris.⁷⁵ In Milan, Klein exhibited eleven "deep sea blue" monochromes installed on stanchions 8 inches in front of the wall. These uniform color planes offered little to "see," that is, any real differentiation in value or scale and they have no internal reference to form. For Klein, the real was the affective potential of the work, not the effort – marks, style, and expression – of the artist. An authentic work of art was one that could be produced in repetition, appropriated, produced en mass, or simply recognized in nature so long as it communicates some inexplicable sensation. Above all, it must have a "modifying presence." For Klein, the success of his individual monochromes had little to do with

authenticity, but rather the capacity to communicate directly with the viewer on the level of sensibility. To test this premise, he priced the identical canvases differently.

⁷⁶ The task for the audience was to respond to the unique energy in each one in a subjective and intuitive way.

The importance of this idea is evident in the number of times Klein referred to this issue in his writings.⁷⁷ In the German publication Zero, he writes. "...I am happy to be dealing with a problem that is so much of our time."⁷⁸ He priced what appeared to be identical works differently. Klein described the responses of the viewers to this information:

The impassioned controversy following this exhibit and the deep emotion among open-minded persons who were ready to escape the stifling effects of well-known representations and deep-rooted rules showed me the importance of the phenomenon.⁷⁹

Critical responses to the Milan exhibition, however, failed to mention any controversy over pricing. Reviews were diverse but conveyed only responses to the paintings, not the prices.⁸⁰ Rosenthal suggested that Klein may have had the idea after the exhibition, and then tested it in Paris.⁸¹ Nonetheless, Klein believed this was an important issue that had not been considered and he wanted to test the resonance of the creative act he believed remained in the matter of the painting.⁸² Klein wrote: "keep in mind that we are living in an atomic age, where everything material and physical could disappear from one day to another, to be replaced by nothing but the ultimate abstraction imaginable. For me there exists a sensitive artistic color material that is intangible."⁸³ It was the viewer's sensitivity to that intangible that was a determinant of value. Klein was not interested in money, per

se, but rather in testing and establishing systems of valuation and exchange that drew on criteria that was more esoteric than base commerce.

Klein was successful with Italian artists. Lucio Fontana, who shared Klein's interest in spatial ideas, purchased one of the three monochromes sold.⁸⁴ Piero Manzoni visited the exhibition daily and by December 1957 he began "achromatic" paintings.⁸⁵ Enrico Baj invited Klein to participate in an exhibition of the Nuclear Group in October 1957.⁸⁶ Klein signed the Nuclear Manifesto "Against Style" published in conjunction with an exhibition of the Nuclear Group.⁸⁷

The Blue Period was then introduced in Paris with two concurrent exhibitions. On May 10, 1957, Klein opened an exhibition at Iris Clert Gallery, and on May 14, 1957 he opened a second exhibition at Colette Allendy Gallery. The joint-exhibition announcement featured Klein's commercially produced ultramarine blue stamp.⁸⁸ Iris Clert reported that she tipped the postal clerks to cancel the cards precisely on the fraudulent stamp.⁸⁹ Exactly how he made these stamps is not clear.⁹⁰ John Held points out that the blue was his stamp, so to speak: "Quite like the old fashioned personalized wax seals that were used to fasten envelopes, Klein's blue stamps were 'stamps' in the traditional sense – emblems, insignia. But in the most modern sense, they were also logos, instantaneous signs, advertisements, and components of a spectacle."⁹¹ Klein used these stamps for the two years he exhibited at Iris Clert Gallery, a signature of artist and gallery that established him in Paris and beyond. Klein's stamp was also a test of value. Some stamps have a disproportionately greater value when canceled than in mint condition.⁹² In this case, Klein's fake stamp gained both value and validation with a carefully placed

postal cancellation, which pointed to its sanction by the French postal authorities, an official system of communication.

At the Iris Clert Gallery, he installed the blue monochromes in the manner of the Galleria Apollinaire exhibition. According to Pontus Hulten, the pricing of each work varied as it did in Milan.⁹³ But unlike the Milan show, these exhibitions were elaborately staged. From the announcement to the closing photograph, Klein transformed the conventional vernissage into a *fête*. The festivities at Iris Clert Gallery began with the release of 1001 blue balloons from the churchyard of Saint Germain des Prés. In the gallery, a tape recording of Klein's "Monotone Symphony" recorded by Pierre Henry, the well-known concrete/sound musician and friend of musician Eliane Radigue, Arman's wife, played during the opening.⁹⁴ The sidewalk in front of the gallery was painted blue so that the blue extended from gallery to street and sky. The gallery was to be the site of communication, a place to attract the public by means of spectacle.⁹⁵ Paul Wember, director of the Museum Haus Lange⁹⁶ and later, author of the artist's catalogue raisonné (1969), pointed out that Klein's concepts were not necessarily new, but that his surprising combination of ideas resulted in a spectacle with an emotional charge.⁹⁷ Klein merged the modern *vernissage* with the elements of regional or local festivals where religiosity and the burlesque commonly meet in a spectacle.

The traditional *fête* provided an occasion for release from the regularity of modern daily existence and the seriousness of high culture. It is a type of event that is more fun and freewheeling in comparison to those staged by the world of high culture.⁹⁸ Klein used elements of this tradition to attract an audience. It was further

publicized by the gallery, which hired a film crew to capture the events for mass media distribution. Both popular culture and mass media communicated to audiences beyond the small milieu of art circles, reaching audiences that generally do not attend vanguard art events.

At the Colette Allendy Gallery, Klein presented "Pure Pigment," an exhibition that expanded the blue monochromes in variety and forms. Klein installed 8 blue rectangular boxes cantilevered at a 90-degree angle from the wall; a box of blue pigment groomed with patterns made by a rake reminiscent of Zen gardens⁹⁹ and Blue Rain composed of dowels dipped in ultramarine blue paint hung vertically from the ceiling. He also included portraits of his followers in the form of commercial and natural sponges saturated with ultramarine blue attached to metal rods saturated with his sensibilities. Individual installations included a wall screen, Paravant, IKB #62, his first "zone of immaterial space" situated in the room where Dr. René Allendy treated Antonin Artaud,¹⁰⁰ and Bengal Flares- One Minute Blue Fire Painting. At the close of the evening, Klein ignited the 16 Bengal flares inserted into the surface of a blue wooden panel, to produce an intense blue flame for one minute, charring the surface. The work was completed after Klein was photographed adjacent to the burnt panel. In his own words:

I was able to envisage the immense possibilities of the Ultra Living element. If all that changes slowly is explained by life, all that changes quickly is explained by fire...The visible duration: one minute. The observer, visually illuminated, carried away his vision in recollection - but not in the past - because the affective impression, the sensual image of the tablet of fire, became more and more present and increased the visual memory. You might as well say that the duration of a minute plus the sensation of the immobile speed of fire suppressed the phenomenology of time.¹⁰¹

Klein used the vocabulary of the blue monochrome to stage sensational events in spaces associated with art and festivals (churchyard, street, home, gallery, and garden) which referenced nature and its forces. He used the elements to make them sensationally vivid in an effort to retain a sense of presence in time in the mind of the viewer. He wanted to engage the largest audience, and to assure an immediate recognition by association with the Nice-inspired color of his work.

Klein used monochrome painting as a means to attack Parisian abstraction on its own ground since his arrival in Paris as a painter. In 1955, soon after his arrival in Paris, he submitted an orange monochrome to the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles. It was rejected because Klein refused to add a line or mark to the monochrome surface. The committee failed to understand his view that the monochrome was an image of space stabilized as an ambience on the canvas, not a surface prepared for application of line. Once he established his artistic identity with the ultramarine blue monochrome, he then planned to exhibit the space that had been sensitized by the paintings. He removed his paintings in order to contain their energies in the empty gallery as an atmosphere.

In 1958, Klein's exhibition, "The specialization of sensitivity in the site of prime matter as stabilized pictorial sensitivity," referred to as Le Vide, opened at Iris Clert Gallery on his thirtieth birthday, April 28 (Fig. 12). Klein emptied the gallery space in preparation for his exhibit of a zone of pure space modified by the blue monochromes previously installed. Though the exhibition lasted just one week, Klein's preparation lent an air of crucial import to this event. He first took a "pilgrimage" to the convent of St. Rita of Cascia, the patroness of lost causes, who

had a devotional following in Nice. This detail is most often considered as simply a manifestation of rural piety, part of the esoteric mix of spiritual influences Klein drew upon. However, St. Rita of Cascia is also the patroness of reconciliation,¹⁰² a theme that resonates in Klein's work. Klein wanted to restore the social and aesthetic environment to health. This idea links his work with both the historical religious pilgrimage and its secular reincarnation in modern tourism. Klein idealized the medieval world and urged his followers to adopt the codes of chivalry as a means of self-edification. The pilgrimage, in its historical or modern version, aimed to replenish the spiritual and physical health of the participant and it enabled the traveler to experience the diverse cultures and regional tastes. This was the first in a sequence of events that constitute Le Vide.

The exhibition was announced with the invitation penned by Restany.¹⁰³ Restany described the event as Klein's "quest for an ecstatic and immediately communicable emotion." The invited will bring their presence to "the lucid and actual event of a certain reign of sensitivity." Restany included numeric details in the invitation, 3,000 Parisians and 500 outside the city who receive the invitation will receive complementary admission; all others will pay a 1,500 francs price. By including the price, Klein suggested to those with invitations the value equivalent of the experience, had they not received the invitation gratis. Klein knew that the number of invitations sent in Paris precluded exclusivity, and crowds jostled outside the modest gallery space.¹⁰⁴ The exhibition was also announced on posters placed in the area of St. Germain des Prés and advertised in two European and one American

art magazine.¹⁰⁵ Klein explained the admission price was a necessary precaution that mediated the connection between artist and audience:

This ploy is necessary because, although the pictorial sensibility I am exhibiting is for sale either piecemeal or in a single block. Visitors endowed with a vessel or body open to sensibility will be able, despite me – notwithstanding the fact that I will exert all my strength toward keeping the entire exhibition together – to steal from me by impregnation, whether consciously or not some degree of its intensity. And that, that especially should be paid for. After all, 1,500 francs is not really very much.¹⁰⁶

Restany's engraved blue and white invitation offered a "foretaste" of the exhibition. Like advertising, it created anticipation based on some notion of the predetermined goal. As Klein anticipated, throngs of visitors converged on Iris Clert's Gallery seeking to partake of the experience. The space was delimited initially by having the street closed, again by painting the gallery window Klein's signature blue and draping the entrance in the same color, and again, by the hallway walk. Finally, they were offered a ritual drink, which guests later realized stained their body fluid blue for the duration of the exhibition. Once inside, Klein rushed the invited through the "sacred space," in order to limit their visit to 2-3 minutes to accommodate the crowds.

Klein seemed intensely interested in the relationship between an experiential art and encounters that could be related to cultural tourism. In Mac Cannell's study, he pointed out that tourist spaces are not empty as they are often described, but vital and full of tension and repression. Tourism enables a release from society that "cannot contain everything that it currently does contain." It is a condition of absolute fullness that precipitates a need for emptiness.¹⁰⁷ In his work, Klein created a state of emptiness as a prelude to a new state of consciousness generated by a

momentary release from the fullness of duties and routines. He constructed an environment of unrestricted space as a moment free of references to ordinary life, and in the context of art, a space without any suggestion of line, which he associated with expressionistic painting and imprisonment.¹⁰⁸

Mac Cannell described the tourist-based encounter as one of contact, propertylessness, and fakery.¹⁰⁹ In Klein's case, the contact was established by the meeting of the cultural tourist (urban audience) with the Klein, the "other" – a classical humanist/ex-primitive. (Klein has been variously described as an "old spirit," "a man from another age.") Klein played the role of both entrepreneur and spiritual resource. This type of encounter has analogies with the dynamic MacCannell referred to as "cannibal economics." MacCannell used the term to describe the tourist encounter with exotic populations, which are maintained to assure a mainstream culture that capital has not destroyed more primitive, meaning more spiritually alive, populations still regarded as a cultural resource. The tourist willingly spends capital to experience first-hand a people and locale more closely connected to spirituality and nature than is possible in the modern urban space. However, for the most part, these encounters are theatrical and geared toward commerce. The ideal outcome is assurance that another mode of living, one more primitive and spiritually-based, is still extant.

Klein planned to support Le Vide with another public demonstration, illuminating the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde with blue light. But to Klein's disappointment, city authorization was denied.¹¹⁰ Klein described this work as a demonstration of gravity-free sculpture, first demonstrated when he released 1,001

blue balloons in the churchyard of St. Germain des Prés a year earlier. The Place de la Concorde also symbolized the reconciliation of the *ancien régime* and modern France. The obelisk of Rameses II is situated at the center of allegorical representations of the eight major cities of France.¹¹¹ Since Nice belonged to the House of Savoy until the 1880s, it could have no allegorical representation but could be present, as Klein believed he would be, by the blue illumination, a metaphor of Nice (and Klein) now at the center of France's major cities in the country's capital city.

At the close of Le Vide, Klein delivered his "revolutionary speech," titled "Le Dépassement de la problématique de l'art," at the café La Coupole. In this, he maintains that painting is about constructing life and it represented a paradigm for a new state of affairs.¹¹² He wanted to clean the poisonous atmosphere of the present by calling for a new order based on chivalrous ideals brought to the arts, religion and science.¹¹³ In protest against "quantity," he called for "quality."

Klein later tallied public response to his event. Klein used statistics to gain insight about his success with his audience ("40 percent of the visitors are positive"¹¹⁴) and he quoted comments about their "sensibility" ("With full powers, the Void." or "Seize this man and eject him forcibly!") entered in the exhibition log placed in the gallery.¹¹⁵ According to Rosenthal, the complexity of Klein's work resides in his analysis of it, not in the events themselves.¹¹⁶ Klein wanted to incorporate the sensibilities of his audience into the understanding of his work. In this sense, he touched on an important component of popular culture. As Emmanuel Mounier describes it, popular culture is powerful because it makes contact with

individuals on a personal level. Popular culture was thought to contribute to the moral, spiritual, and cultural development of the individual despite the forces of mass culture.¹¹⁷

Klein's frustration with the French political situation was evident in a letter he sent to President Eisenhower on May 20, 1959, just after the closing of Le Vide, in which he explained his desire to stimulate revolutionary reform through his work. He proposed abolishing the French government: "This solution seems to us the most likely to resolve most of the contradictions of our domestic policy."¹¹⁸ Klein was likely reacting at least in part to de Gaulle's Fifth Republic elected to power in 1958. De Gaulle wanted to resurrect France's international prominence even while France was becoming more Americanized under his sanction. He saw France's international strength linked to a strong national culture supported by the newly appointed minister of culture André Malraux. Specific political issues are not mentioned in his writing, his appeals for "liberty, equality, and fraternity," which are the emblem of the French Revolution of 1789, paper over the growing conflicts over the Algerian War and colonial policy, as well as cultural policies. While cultural policies to expand French national culture by incorporating colonial culture were planned,¹¹⁹ reports of military atrocities in Algeria demonstrated the potentially devastating implications of blind faith in cultural purity. Klein described the period as an age of cannibalism, a prelude to the "blue age of peace." In his words, "What an immense, great human body it (Europe) represents. Europe is truly made of pure 'flesh,' gorged with the blood of past civilizations and speechless from inner joy.

We will rapidly become anthropophagites."¹²⁰ His vision of a "blue age of peace" required the removal of boundaries from the domestic to the global.

Klein furthered his ideas in collaboration with German architect Werner Ruhanu and designer Norbert Kricke, whom he met when he received his only public architectural commission for the lobby of the Gelsenkirchen Theater in Germany, a project completed in October 1959.¹²¹ Paul Kierkes constructed the semi-circular partitions at the entrance to the auditorium, and Kricke designed the facade of the small theater and the water sculpture in front of the theatre. The British sculptor Robert Adams completed a relief on the main entrance; and Jean Tinguely completed kinetic sculpture for the interior of the theater. Klein saw an opportunity to realize "his entire visionary plans for air architecture" in collaboration with an international team of architects and designers who worked at Gelsenkirchen.¹²² The foundation of this project was universal climate regulation aided by advanced engineering technology, which would lead to the ideal state of a future Eden. Klein wanted to eliminate architecture of containment and replace it with continents of open space where detached beings (released from personal and national ties) would engage in the physical and spiritual leisure. He did not want to return to raw nature but to eliminate the spatial "obstacles" inherent in conventional architectural design.¹²³ Thus, he suggested a means to release architecture from the practice of planar organization just as previously he proposed the elimination of lines in painting. Technology would be used to harness the four elements and employ them in support of physical and spiritual comfort. By using natural forces instead of man-made

structures. a fluidity of movement could be achieved, and with it, a sense of freedom. His ideas contrasts with Le Corbusier's functionalist model of architectural machines for living based on planar walls, exemplified in the Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles. Klein knew this structure because he exhibited in a group exhibition held on the garden roof of this building in 1956.¹²⁴

The preliminary plans and maquettes for Gelsenkirchen were exhibited at Iris Clert gallery in May 1959. In conjunction with the exhibition, Clert organized two lectures at the Sorbonne featuring Klein and Ruhnau.¹²⁵ The engraved invitations were subsidized and sent out under the auspices of the German ambassador to France and the German cultural attachés in Paris.¹²⁶ Klein's lecture took place on June 3, 1959 at the Amphitheater Turgot.¹²⁷ His 80-minute speech began with the declaration that he wanted to break with the past and move beyond the "problematics" of art into life. The new "immaterial reality" would be free from history, personality and psychological vertigo, qualities he described as "counter-space." He then describes his vision of architecture based on the elements – air, water, fire and earth. These elements, supported by (invisible) technology, would precipitate a flexible, spiritual utopia.¹²⁸

Klein proposed a Center of Sensibility – a cooperative school dedicated to "Architecture of Air" that is founded on imagination, cooperation and responsibility.¹²⁹ He explained that the structure of the school was inspired by the Bauhaus, but his School of Sensibility would focus on the "space of time."¹³⁰ Politically, the Left considered Klein a fascist, especially given the time he spent in Franco's Spain teaching Judo to law enforcement officials.¹³¹ He was insulted

that his lecture was seen as a Neo-Dada statement within art circles.¹³² His plan was to revive the notion of a "Grand Art," not in the tradition of Poussin, but as a cooperative model of existence. He considered the focus on individualism and celebration of personality a moral scourge that diminished the possibility of a real sense of dynamism and joy in life. His Futurist-inspired description no doubt supported the Left's view of him, especially since he felt that art needed to reinsert itself into the fabric of ethics, economics, politics and urbanism.

In support of his vision, Klein played a tape of "Blue Cries," the recorded screams of François Dufrêne, Charles Estienne and "un très beau cri d'Antonin Artaud" in support of his Blue Period.¹³³ He readily admitted that the Artaud cry was a fake, but Artaud was already an important reference in his work. He would likely have known about Artaud's final performance at the Vieux Colombier in Paris, in which the poet's articulation of poignant screams was legendary. Stich pointed out: "Dufrêne's poetry, which rejected the constraints of words in favor of poly-phonetic verse based on arbitrary improvisations, and Dufrêne's *crythmic* (scream-rhythms) recalled the subversive modes of communication acclaimed by Artaud."¹³⁴ Dufrêne was Klein's link with Lettrisme and Artaud, a connection that dated back to 1950 when Klein first met Dufrêne and saw his films in Paris.¹³⁵ According to Arman, when Klein returned from Japan in 1953, he belonged to the Lettrist group: he traveled often to Nice where he was the "soul of the group."¹³⁶ He continued: "We always had a kind of festival, we had a lot of sessions, we were making theater and a lot of things; and we started a "symphonie monotone:" we were screaming from many houses on the same note." Stich

pointed out that Klein was drawn to Artaud because of his interest in primal energy and the power of rituals.¹³⁷

Klein linked the poets and critic, though they represented distinct interests. For example, Estienne was a supporter of postwar painting and the Galerie Denise René, where Klein's mother and other artists associated with the Salon des Réalités exhibited. Artaud's drawings were exhibited at the Galerie Pierre in 1947 and he maintained connections with the Surrealists. Breton opened a benefit performance held to financially support the writer in 1946 at the Sarah Bernhard Theater.¹³⁸ Klein drew from many sources, which suggest that he wanted his ideas to bridge or transcend diverse positions. Like Restany, his approach could be characterized as "eclecticism of means."

His visions of utopia had resonance with both the Left and the Right. The obstacle to his proposals was "counter-space," memories of the past that bore holes into his future paradise like the birds bore holes into his perfect monochrome, the sky over Nice. But his emphasis on his ideal future shaped by a few "quality" individuals is a view that would have troubled the Left.¹³⁹ Klein was not political in a conventional sense. Tinguely reported: "He was neither left nor right. He was nothing at all. He was above all that. He was a true poet, who was living a trance of total dream."¹⁴⁰

Benjamin Buchloh recently argued that Klein and Arman disrupted the modernist paradigm of critical opposition between mainstream society and vanguard modernism. He posited that their success lay in abandoning this dialectic mode and maintaining a position of detachment, one that allowed them to achieve legitimacy

that surpassed that of more committed artists and those who engaged in discursive debates with political ramifications.¹⁴¹ Buchloh further suggested that the artistic paradigms upon which Klein and Arman modeled their work involved “unusual pairings” derived from artists “silent” on history (Duchamp) or overlooked critically (Malevich and Mondrian). In his view, this tendency signaled a desire to repress history in the aftermath of the postwar years, a response to an accelerated consumerism characteristic of the period. In Buchloh’s view, Klein created only spectacle and Le Vide simply revived obsolete modes of spirituality.¹⁴² He characterized Klein’s efforts as a “callous enactment of insight” that exploited shock value, audience reception, and the manipulation of exhibitions to achieve “consensus.”¹⁴³

I argue that Klein’s work illustrated new discursive possibilities, closer to theatrical modes of presentation, aimed at revitalizing art from a role he considered peripheral to a changed society that meaningless abstraction failed to address. He also wanted to engage the public and to afford his audience an opportunity to recognize concepts or aspirations relevant to their daily lives. Most evident to Klein was the spiritual vacuum and oppressive ideology of productivity. Klein’s interest in the aesthetic paradigms of Malevich and Duchamp was a response to the fact that the former envisioned the monochrome as a vehicle of social/spiritual transformation and the latter introduced the concepts of appropriation and production of art as critical strategies. So, Malevich and Duchamp are not simply relevant because of their absence from or silence about recent history. Instead, they represented alternatives to meaninglessness in abstraction and the importance of free time to

construct a creative life. Not only did both of these artists situate their works in the social sphere; they touched on ideas that Klein was interested in – a utopian future released from the weight of history as well as alternate modes of artistic production necessitated by consumerism.

The acquisition of Malevich's works was a triumph for Stedelijk Museum director Willem Sandberg, who began negotiating to buy them from German architect Hugo Häring in 1951. Klein accompanied his mother, Marie Raymond, to the museum in January 1957 for a retrospective of her abstract painting. At that time, the Stedelijk Museum was already preparing for the Malevich exhibition scheduled for December 1957, and at least 20 of the artist's paintings were already there.¹⁴⁴ The museum's assistant director Hans L.C. Jaffé had also just published De Stijl: The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art (1956), a monographic study of the movement that established the museum's reputation. While there, Klein toured the museum and was "bowled over," in the words of his mother.¹⁴⁵ Since Klein's father was Dutch and his mother had good relations with this museum and wrote for Dutch publications, it is certain that Klein knew this work. Klein often wrote of Malevich, including observations about the formal differences that distinguish their works.¹⁴⁶

It was not only Klein's artistic precedents that signal a change in the way he attempted to resuscitate art from what he saw as its marginal position in postwar society. It was also the paradoxical way he evoked Nice in his work. Nice was emblematic of two paradigms of discursive utopia: the classical and the primitive. Klein even defined himself as both a classical artist and a cannibal. Postwar Nice cultivated these paradigms – the classical in modern art, Matisse and Picasso, and

return to a more primitive environment, albeit promoted by tourism, which enabled Nice to retain its classical associations and to emerge as Tahiti located in the hexagon.

Klein even devised a means to enable his supporters to invest in his ability to advance his conceptual proprietorship of space. His only formal performance in Nice was the presentation of a "zone of immaterial space" at the Festival of Nouveau Réalisme in July 1961. Klein had already exhibited space in Paris and after Le Vide, he exhibited another sensitized space at a third exhibition, Vision in Motion, organized by the German Zero Group¹⁴⁷ for the Hesseshuis museum in Antwerp (March 1959).¹⁴⁸ Klein was photographed standing in a spotlight with his name stenciled on the floor in front of him (Fig. 13). His head is slightly bowed in thought, and a ring of guests surrounds him. When he spoke briefly, it was to quote the philosopher Gaston Bachelard. "At first, there is nothing, then there is a profound nothing, then a profound blue."¹⁴⁹ Bachelard's words established the tenor of Klein's ambient space. The visitor acquired nothing more than an impression prompted by his name. Klein exhibited space in five other exhibitions after Hesseshuis, attesting the importance he ascribed it. Klein wanted to resurrect ritual as a powerful form of aesthetic encounter.¹⁵⁰

Klein also created individual counterparts to Le Vide in carefully orchestrated sales of zones of immaterial space. He made eight transfers between 1959 and 1962. He designed seven books of receipts, with each composed of 10 commercially printed slips. The cost of these "Zones" of undefined dimensions range from 20, 40, 80 and 160 grams of gold.¹⁵¹ His choice of gold is resonant

with symbolism beyond daily fluctuation of value, but in fact it also insured Klein would not be compromised by the instability of franc. The government re-issued a new French franc in 1959, not long after the value of the franc dropped nearly twenty percent. The "zones" were priced according to the market price for gold and based on the premise of Klein's capacity to advance Le Vide.¹⁵²

Klein exchanged his access to sensational space for market value using the international gold standard. The ideal transfer left nothing in the hands of the buyer only the impression of the experience. Michael Blankford, a Hollywood writer and collector, found the ritual genuinely moving. He secured this "Zone" several months after the Klein exhibition at Dwan Gallery in 1961. Klein retained half the gold and returned half to nature (rivers, oceans, fire, etc.) He became the "proprietor" who set up the encounter between the collector and the actuality of space.

As a result of Le Vide, sales of zones of immaterial space, and the demonstration of the Anthropometries, he established himself as the painter of space. Klein's submission to the theater section of this festival was Dimanche (Sunday), and as his work he created a newspaper called Dimanche in which he reported on his conceptual events called Theater of the Void. Klein appropriated Sunday, November 27, 1960, and he declared it "a holiday, a veritable spectacle of the void, the culmination of my theories."¹⁵³ Klein produced the paper in an edition of several thousand on the presses of Combat and La Presse de France. The newspaper contains excerpts from his Monochrome Adventure, new proposals for theater, and four photographs. The most well known is the photomontage of

Klein, Le peinture de l'espace se jette dans le vide! (Fig. 14), fabricated by Klein and photographers Shunk and Kender.¹⁵⁴ To promote his appropriation of a single day, he held a news conference at the Galerie Rive Droit that morning at 11:00 AM. By this time, the newspaper was distributed to selected newsstands around Paris; it was nearly indistinguishable from the mass circulation Journal du Dimanche.

Beneath the masthead, the headline "A Man in Space!" shows Klein dressed as a bourgeois gentleman leaping from a two-story high stone property-line into the space over the street. In this era of early space exploration, he wanted the headline to signify the winner in the Cold War space race, the presumed outcome determined by technological might that supports the ideological triumph of one or the other superpower. Klein appeared as the "new man" aspiring to liberation, and he described himself as the painter of space -- one that is figurative and realistic, not abstract. He gave the metaphoric sign of release from the confinements of daily life. On the day of the week dedicated to leisure, Klein proposed a course of action, a radical exit.

Rosenthal believes this photomontage is an example of Klein's penchant for disingenuousness, but that he is transparent in allowing his fraudulence to be seen.¹⁵⁵ He is authentic in aspirations but cannot communicate that indescribable condition without a contrived framework. The real impact outdistances the rational awareness of its artificiality. In the end, Klein subverts the aim of journalistic information, replacing it, somewhat paradoxically, with the immediacy of real communication. The final photograph shows a crowd riveted

with anticipation, and the caption below reads: "The spectators seated on the street curbs are contemplated by the actors on the roofs!"¹⁵⁶ He suggested that the broad public awaited a social and religious epiphany, a "glorious day of realism and truth."¹⁵⁷

Klein hurriedly composed fifteen theater scenarios indebted to works by Shakespeare, Molière, Stanislavsky, Cocteau, and Artaud as examples.¹⁵⁸ Klein admitted there was little to see in his theater; it was without actors, sets, or even an audience. Moreover, it did not include any "artificial construction of words." But participation allowed the actor to become "a visitor in the gigantic museum of passing time," which he called, "the modern society of today!"¹⁵⁹ Klein regularly indicated his dissatisfaction with a culture oriented to the past *and* a society that participated in the present by collecting its artifacts. In his figurative work and readymades, he appropriated classical and spiritual visual codes to align his work with these models deeply imbedded in western culture.

In 1962, Klein began portrait-reliefs of his friends from Nice – Arman (Fig. 15), Martial Raysse, and Claude Pascal – that illustrate his combination of the classical with the more primitive images of the Anthropometries, which he described as the "pagans" in his oeuvre. Klein cast their bodies from the mid-thighs to the head, which resulted in works that appear as both portraits and types. They convey a detachment yet also full disclosure. They recall the Greek *kouros*, frontal standing nude male figures with arms adjacent to their thighs, but they are mounted on gold-leaf monochromes reinforcing their connection to spiritual icons.

Klein also appropriated readymade objects and transformed them with his signature International Klein Blue. The choices of the Venus de Milo and the Nike of Samothrace (Fig.16) indicated his loyalty to place and a reminder of their reference to the Mediterranean for a Paris audience. In Nice, classical sensibilities merged with kitsch in the 1960s producing a pastiche of cultural references. In this sense, Klein bridged the modern and postmodern, as does Nice. Nice was a place where the synthesis of the natural and artificial contributed to the realization of a constructed paradise for the productive world. Klein focused on experiences that made tangible the value of imagination, and the need to escape the confinement of modernity. The Ecole de Nice became a branch of the Ecole de Klein.

Consumerism and the desire to restored national pride deflected attention from recent historical trauma. Klein's projects attempted to puncture the veneer of the present, a climate he believed had become impervious to self-reflection. His definition of art as health underscored his belief that France was suffering from a psychic and physical malady. Klein rejected conformity as a mode of being linking their state to national culture and consumerism. Nice represented the independence of spirit needed to contest normalization based on French history or on Americanization. He envisioned Nice as the salvation for the senses and antidote to indifference to life.

Klein was misunderstood in Paris and only able to renew himself in Nice. It was the region that signified healthful restoration, and allowed space for the pursuit of imagination. Klein recognized that Nice was the paradise of the present

with its mix of beauty and banality. His work needs to be situated and read in this context because it was this locale that connected France with the optimistic possibilities of modernity, and yet it was able to retain its sense of autonomy and regional spirit. It was this atmosphere that provided Klein and his work with a strong presence in Paris, Nice, and internationally. In the single image of the monochrome, Klein demonstrated the breadth of his concept generated in close contact with the nature of the Côte d'Azur. He generated a sign of the Ecole de Nice with his signature International Klein Blue. Klein provided an entry for Nice, and its artists, to participate in the discourse of international art by championing the color and space of the Mediterranean, which he linked to imagination, release from social constraint, and regional allegiance.

¹ Yves Klein, "Discourse on the Occasion of Tinguely's exhibition in Düsseldorf, January 1959," originally printed in "Le Dépassement de la problématique de l'art." (La Louvière, Belgium: Editions de Montbliart, 1959), 19, cited by Pierre Descargues, "Yves Klein," Yves Klein (NY: The Jewish Museum, 1967), 24.

² Pierre Restany, "Ecole de Nice?" (Vence: Galerie de la Salle, 1967), unpaginated.

³ Sosno, 1960 interview with Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, and Arman, published as "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes," in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982), 264.

⁴ Restany (Vence, 1967), unpaginated.

⁵ Fax from Restany to John Held, Jr. 12/20/95, as cited in John Held, Jr., The Blue Stamp of Yves Klein (San Francisco 1996), n.p.

⁶ Jonathan Fineberg, Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 222-228.

⁷ See for example, Thomas Mc Evilly, "Conquistador of the Void," Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), Nan Rosenthal, "Assisted Levitation," Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), and

Sidra Stich, Yves Klein (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994).

⁸ Claude Rivière "La Charge Solaire de l'Artiste," Combat (Paris: August 22, 1960), 9.

⁹ Kynaston McShine. "Yves Klein." Yves Klein (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1967). 8.

¹⁰ Pierre Restany. "Les Nouveaux Réalistes." preface for exhibition. (Milan: Galerie Apollinaire, May 1960). Reprinted in 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, May 15 – September 7, 1986). 265-265.

¹¹ Sidra Stich, Yves Klein (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994), 174, 191, 269 fn.9, 274 fn. 274. Pincus-Witten characterized the space as a fashionable Right Bank Gallery with a socially elite clientele. Only a small number of guests saw the performance; the public knew it from film re-staging. The most widely seen of the filmed performances took place in mid-July 1960, in Paris. Klein conducted an Anthropometry performance for Paolo Cavaro, a scene in his 1961 film Mondo Cane directed by Gualtiero Jacopetti. Klein was horrified that his session was presented as grossly sensational as directed by Jacopetti. Klein first saw the film when it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1962.

¹² Thomas Crow, The Rise of the Sixties (NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1996), 122.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Niki de Saint-Phalle's performance of the shooting paintings was the key performance at the Festival of Nouveau Réalisme in Nice in July 1961. Klein was a participant in her performance along with Tinguely, Rauschenberg, and Johns.

¹⁶ Klein did not specifically mention Matisse in relation to his work, but his blue nudes, that follow his blue monochrome period, certainly reference Matisse and Picasso. The impact of his nudes is similar to Matisse's. John Elderfield description of Matisse's cut-outs could easily apply to Klein's series. "One is invited to imaginatively enter their separate worlds, worlds other than the one we inhabit, parallel to our own but set apart and exhilarating in their apartness...one must take care not to 'weigh down the walls' with expression...In this case, it is the spectator who becomes the human element of the work." He concludes that these works of Matisse are "situational art." John Elderfield, The Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse (NY: John Braziller 1978), 37.

¹⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome (NY: Reynal and Company Inc. 1960), 28.

¹⁸ Yves Klein. "The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto," Yves Klein: Sponge Reliefs, Oct. 3-28, 1989 (Gagosian Gallery 1989), 17. Originally published as "Manifeste de l'Hôtel Chelsea, New York, 1961" (Paris: Galerie Iolas, 1965). In the Klein makes clear that his detachment from the actual painting is a crucial distinction between his work and others associated with "action events" including Gutai.

¹⁹ Yves Klein, "Truth Becomes Reality", Zero, no. 3 (Dusseldorf, July 1961). Reprinted in facsimile edition of the journal, Zero, edited by Otto Peine and Heinz Mack, trans. Howard Beckman. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973), 91-95. Also reprinted in Yves Klein, 1928-1962: A Retrospective (Houston 1982), 229-232.

²⁰ Arman. "L'Esprit de la Couleur" (October 1960) published in Yves Klein (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), 260. Arman identifies Klein's domain as "color, the spirit of color and the possession of space by the impressions of hands and bodies." He further states that by 1947, Klein had already made prints of hands and bodies on paper and tissues. He was lost in the contemplation of the blue, the azure blue of the sky.

²¹ Paul Wember, Yves Klein (catalogue raisonné) (Cologne: Du Mont Schauberg, 1969), 139. Wember identified a collaborative stamped work made by Klein and Arman titled EMPI, 1959, Allures. Signed recto, "Yves le Monochrome 59" and "Arman Nizza"

²² "Chronologie: 1945-1962." Chroniques Niçoises: Genèse d'un Musée tome 1: 1945-1972 (Nice: Musée National d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, 1991), 188. Sosno confirmed that he filmed this session in a mid-July 1998 interview with the author at the studio of artist Bernar Venet in New York City. Sosno believes that he still has the film but has moved consequently, the exact location of the film could not be confirmed.

²³ Wember (1969), 120. The Cosmogony imprints are identified in the catalogue raisonné as COS followed by the number in the series. COS 18 (1960) was made by Klein in March 1960. Signed recto: "mise dans les roseaux au bord de la Riviera."

²⁴ Robert Pincus-Witten. "Phoebus/Deimos." Yves Klein: Spong Reliefs (NY: Gagosian Gallery, October 3-29, 1989), 10. Klein's exhibition at Castelli was titled "Yves Klein le Monochrome." (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery, April 11-29, 1961).

²⁰ Yves Klein. "The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto," translated by Neil Levine and John Archambault, Klein Archives. AZ. reprinted in Yves Klein: Sponge Reliefs. Exhibition catalogue (New York: Gagosian Gallery, October 3 - 28, 1989) 20. Originally published as "Manifeste de l'Hôtel Chelsea, New York, 1961" (Paris: Galerie Iolas, 1965).

²⁶ Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lecombe, "Chronologie, April 1961." 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes (1986), 79.

²⁷ Pincus-Witten, (NY: Gagosian Gallery, October 1989), 9, Fn. 1, 11. According to Pincus-Witten, "Larry Rivers, Barnett Newman, and Marcel Duchamp welcomed him; others were put off...Most New York artists pointedly boycotted the show. Nothing sold."

²⁸ Panel with Irving Sandler, Pierre Restany, and Willouby Sharp at White Box, New York City on March 31, 2001.

²⁹ Virginia Dwan Archives, Interview with Charles Stuckey (NY: Archives of American Art, March-June, 1984), 21.

³⁰ Klein began using the designation "I.K.B." around 1957-58. On May 19, 1960, he received a patent (no. 63471) for I.K.B., see Stitch, 259, fn95.

³¹ Virginia Dwan Archives (NY, 1984), 7.

³² Bodet and Lecombe, 1960: Les Nouveau Réalisme (Paris 1986), 79. Roland Pease and Dore Asthon (sic) published a positive review in Art International (June-August, 1961). In this review the space and silence of Klein's work is compared to the Grand Canyon. Jules Langsner also published a positive review of the Los Angeles show.

³³ Virginia Dwan Archives (NY: 1984), 22.

³⁴ Matei Calinescu, Five Faces of Modernism (NC: Duke University Press 1987), 7-8. Originally published as Faces of Modernity (Indiana University Press, 1977).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 251-252.

³⁷ Like Dore Ashton in her article, "Art as Spectacle", Arts Magazine no.5, vol. 41 (March 1967), Buchloh sees Klein as reactionary. He writes: "In the transition from it (Rauschenberg and Weil's blue print images of the early 1950s) to Klein's Anthropometries, we witness an extraordinary recoding of avant-garde terms for a culture of reaction... Klein's vindictive certainty that the reality principle of capitalist patriarchal power will ultimately prevail against the liberation potential of esthetic practice and utopian thought aligns him historically on an axis that leads from Francis Picabia right down to the later Andy. It seems that what generates Klein's lifelong infatuation with power (and inevitably also with its derelict visuality, kitsch) is the travesty of esthetic aspiration itself." See Benjamin Buchloh, "Klein and Poses", Artforum (summer 1995), 136.

³⁸ Pincus-Witten. "Phobos/Deimos." Yves Klein: Sponge Reliefs (New York:

Gagosian Gallery, 1989), 11, fn.2.

³⁹ Yves Klein, "The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto," Reprinted in Yves Klein: Sponge Reliefs (1989), 16.

⁴⁰ Yves Klein, "Truth becomes Reality." *Zero* (Düsseldorf) no. 3 (July 1961). Reprinted in Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 231.

⁴¹ *Dwan Archives* (NY, 1984), 28.

⁴² Pierre Restany, "A 40° au dessus de Dada." (Paris: Galerie J. 17 May – 28 June 1961). This is the second manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme written by Restany.

⁴³ The poster also features the names of the Les Nouveaux Réalistes (Arman, Cesar, Dufrène, Hains, Klein, Martial Raysse, Rotella, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Spoerri, Tinguely, Villegle). The Galerie Muratore is located 19 bis, Boulevard Victor-Hugo, Nice. The Festival was held on July 13 and 14, 1961 at the L'Abbaye Roseland, Avenue de Fabron in Nice.

⁴⁴ Sasha Sosno, "Encore Le Nouveau Réalisme...." Sud-Communications no. 110 (August - September, 1961), 20-21. Reprinted in Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice (1991), 200.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Sosno, 1960 interview with Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, and Arman, published as "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes." in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982) 264. "Je propose d'effectuer une séance d'anthropophagie sur Paris."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Rotraut Klein, "Interview with Rotraut Klein," interview by Hannah Weitmeier, Yves Klein: Le Dépassement de la Problématique de l'Art (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, October 29-January 28, 1995), 42, 47.

⁵⁰ Both are large-scale work measuring 102 3/4 x 83 7/8 and 582 1/2" x 39".

⁵¹ Yves Klein, quoted in Pierre Restany, Yves Klein: Fire at the Heart of the Void (New York: Journal of Contemporary Art Editions, 1992), 100.

⁵² The inscription on ANT 102, *The Architecture of Air*, c. 1960, is written in two columns beginning on the right side. It reads as follows:

"La climatisation de l'atmosphère à la surface de notre Globe/...La conclusion

technique et scientifique de notre civilisation/est enfouie dans les/entrailles de la terre et assure/le confort par le contrôle absolu du/Climat à la surface de tous/les continents, devenus vastes/salles de séjour communes
 ...C'est une sorte de retour à l'eden/de la légende. (1951)/...Avènement d'une société nouvelle, destinée à/subir des métamorphoses profondes dans/condition même. Disparition de l'intimité/personnelle et familiale. Développement/d' une ontologie impersonnelle./La volonté de l'homme peut enfin/réguler la vie au niveau d'un 'marveilleux' constant;

l'homme libre/l'est à tel point qu'il/peut même léviter!/Occupation: les loisirs?...Les obstacles autrefois subis dans/l'architecture traditionnel sont éliminés.

Soins du corps par des méthodes nouvelles, telles "le lit d'air."

This Anthropometry is not signed or dated. In the Houston catalogue the date is listed as 1961. In the Pompidou catalogue, the date is c. 1960.

⁵³ The location where the work was made is not clear. However, it was destined for the "Antagonisms II" exhibition which opened March 7, 1962 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

⁵⁴ Wember (1969). Klein used the "star" mainly on his Shroud Anthropometries beginning in 1960.

⁵⁵ The French reads: "La plénitude des choses au delà de tous les jugements de Paris {.} C'est à travers ma trinité que, pleinement, je la respire. ..."

⁵⁶ "Je salue les fonctionnaires martyrs du plus seau des mythes: 'L'EQUATION DU BONHEUR.' "Ce poème-store est un variante poétique du vide intégral."

⁵⁷ It is 1,48 X 78 meters.

⁵⁸ Pierre Restany, Yves Klein: Fire at the Heart of the Void (NY: Journal of Contemporary Art Editions, 1992), 98.

⁵⁹ Stich (1994), 43, 256 fn.26. The father of Franco De Sarabia published Yves Peintures and Klein's book on Judo in editions of 150 in November 1954. Sarabia owned the Kodokan Judo Club in Madrid.

⁶⁰ These monochrome plates are yellow, pink, yellow, orange, green and red. See Pierre Restany, Yves Klein, translated by John Shepley (New York: Abrams, 1982), 20. Also see Nan Rosenthal. "Assisted Levitation." Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 98.

⁶¹ Thomas Mc Evilly. "Conquistador of the Void." Yves Klein (Houston: Institute

for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 42-43.

⁶²Rosenthal, (Houston, 1982), 97.

⁶³ Ibid. Rosenthal quotes from a posthumously typed Paris journal entry, January 13, 1955, Klein Archives, Paradise Valley, AZ.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Rosenthal situates Klein's publication of Yves Peintures in the context of André Malraux's Voices of Silence and Walter Benjamin's essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.

⁶⁶Mac Cannell (1991), 3.

⁶⁷ Pierre Restany. "La Minute de Vérité." Yves: Proposition Monochrome (Paris: Galerie Colette Allendy, February 21-March 7, 1956), exhibition card. Restany takes credit for arranging the exhibition although Mc Evilly suggests that his mother was responsible.

⁶⁸Pierre Restany, Yves Klein, trans. John Shepley (NY: Harry A. Abrams, Inc., 1982), 23. Originally published as Yves Klein: le Monochrome (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1974).

⁶⁹ Yves Klein. "The Monochrome Adventure." excerpts, Yves Klein: Selected Writings, ed. Jacques Caumont and Jennifer Gough-Cooper, translated from the French by Barbara Wright (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1974), 30. A discussion was held on March 2, 1956 at the Colette Allendy Gallery located 67, rue de l'Assomption, Paris. The exhibition was on view from 21 February to 7 March. Klein exhibited twenty monochromes all in different colors.

⁷⁰ Henry Périer. Pierre Restany: L'Alchimiste de l'Art (Paris: Éditions Cercle de l'Art, 1998), 55.

⁷¹ Yves Klein. "The Monochrome Adventure." extracts, Yves Klein, 1928-1962: Selected Writings. (London, 1974), 31.

⁷² Yves Klein. "L'Aventure monochrome." extracts, Art et Création (Paris) no. 1 (January-February 1968). Reprinted in Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Land Art, exhibition catalogue (Torino: Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, giugno-luglio, 1970), 93.

⁷³ Rosenthal (1982), 108.

⁷⁴Galeria Apollinaire, Milan, "Yves Klein: Propose monochrome, epoca blu." (January 2 -11, 1957). Essay by Restany, "l'Epoca blu, il secondo minuto della

verita."

⁷⁵Restany, Fire at the Heart of the Void (New York, 1992), 10.

⁷⁶Restany, Yves Klein, trans. John Shepley (New York, 1982), 37. Restany writes that the monochrome blue paintings were all the same size -- 78 x 56 M.

⁷⁷ Rosenthal (1982), 132, fn.73. Rosenthal reports that, according to the Klein archives (then in Paris) that Klein edited out the section on pricing.

⁷⁸Yves Klein, "My Position in the Battle Between Line and Color," (Paris: April 16, 1958), Zero No. 1 (Dusseldorf, April, 1958), reprinted in Otto Peine and Heinz Mack, Zero (MA: MIT Press 1973), 10.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰ Dino Buzzoti, "Blu, Blu, Blu," Corriere d'Informazione (Milano), January 10, 1957. Cited in Rosthenal (Houston, 1982), 106. Buzzati described the monochromes as "lightly and regularly wrinkled like the plaster in our apartments." In his review, "Blu, Blu, Blu," he remarked that when you've seen one you've seen them all.

⁸¹ Rosenthal (1982), 108.

⁸²Yves Klein. "The Monochrome Adventure," as cited in McEvelley (1982), 46. McEvelley described Klein's approach in relation to alchemy. "An immaterial substance which Yves called 'pure pictorial,' is injected into the art work by the alchemist artist who has isolated and purified this sensibility in himself; it can be experienced in the painting, after any number of years, by a viewer whose own sensibility is sufficiently developed. Art, then, is not a sensory but an extrasensory experience. Of two visually identical painting, one possessing this substance is art, and the other, lacking it, is not. A sensitive viewer can distinguish at once."

⁸³Yves Klein, "My Position in the Battle Between Line and Color," (Paris: April 16, 1958), Zero No. 1 (Dusseldorf, April, 1958), 10.

⁸⁴ The other buyers were Italo Magliano and Count Panza de Buimo.

⁸⁵ Restany (1982), 37 and McEvelley (1982), 45. McEvelley considers Manzoni's work as a strange parody of Klein's.

⁸⁶Arte Nucleare, Exhibition catalogue (Milan: Galleria San Fedele, October 12-30, 1957). This exhibition included: Baj, Bemporad, Bertini, Dangelo, Yves Klein, Manzoni, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Gio Pomodoro, Rossello, Sordini, Berga, Jorn, Vandercam. The catalogue included a reprint of the Nuclear Manifesto, "Against Style" which was signed by the following artists: Armand, Enrico Baj, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Pierre Restany, D'Angelo. It is dated September 1957, Milan.

Tristan Sauvage. Nuclear Art, trans. Johns Stephens, (NY: Marcello Maestro 1962), 39-40.

⁸⁷ Restany (1982), 37. Restany does not specify whether Klein participated in the exhibition of the Nuclear Group headed by Enrico Baj and Sergio d'Angelo. Nor does he give any details on the location, but he does write that it was to be held in October 1957 and he does refer to the group's journal, Il Gesto.

⁸⁸ Rosenthal (1982), 109.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 110. In note 93 on page 134, Rosenthal writes that this information came from a private interview with Iris Clert on May 14, 1974.

⁹⁰ John Held, interview with Sidra Stitch, The Blue Stamp of Yves Klein (San Francisco: Stamp Art Gallery, 1996), n.p. There is speculation that he purchased stamps and painted over them or purchased blank paper and perforated it.

⁹¹ John Held, "The Formidable Blue Stamp of Yves Klein." The Blue Stamp of Yves Klein (San Francisco: Stamp Art Gallery 1996), n.p.

⁹² Frank Arnau, The Art of the Faker: Three Thousand Years of Deception, trans. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1959), 7.

⁹³ K. G. Pontus Hulten. "Pariskonst och Juijitsu." Stockholms-Tidningen (October 30, 1957), trans. Marion Dansky, as cited in Rosenthal (1982), 108.

⁹⁴ Yves Klein. Exhibition catalogue, June 30 - August 15, 1969 (Genève: Galerie Lambert Monet, 1969) Item Nos. 10-11 listed two versions of the Monotone Symphony.

⁹⁵ Restany (1982), 42.

⁹⁶ Paul Wember organized Klein's only one person museum in exhibition prior to his death in 1962. His retrospective, "Yves Klein: Monochrome und Feuer." opened in January 1961.

⁹⁷ Paul Wember, "Yves Klein-le Monochrome." Art International Vol. 2 (March 1961), 63.

⁹⁸ Rigby, 20.

⁹⁹ Stitch, 260. Stitch writes that Pontus Hilton erroneously stated that Klein provided a small rake next to the pigment for visitors to use themselves. Hulten wrote this in his article "Pariskonst och Juijitsu." Stockholm Tidningen, October 30, 1957.

¹⁰⁰ Stich (Stuttgart 1994) 96-97, 261, fn. 55-56. Dr. Allendy was a friend of many of the Surrealists and had an interest in alchemy. Artaud also made a portrait of Colette Allendy on August 25, 1947. Allendy likely opened his library to Artaud and treated him in their home. Stich interviewed Arman on April 6, 1992 in New York; he told Stich that Klein was in awe of this space.

¹⁰¹ Yves Klein. "Remarques sur quelques oeuvres exposées chez Colette Allendy." Klein Archives, as cited in Rosenthal (1982), 113.

¹⁰² Shrine of St. Rita of Casia, Philadelphia, P.A. This shrine contains a relic of the saint's skin from her hand. Photographs show her in a glass casket with her hand placed on a gold threaded pillow. Her sainthood was supported by her willingness to forgive and reconcile her family after brutal violence and murder.

¹⁰³ Pierre Restany, as quoted in Yves Klein. "Preparation and Presentation of the Exhibition of 28 April 1958," originally appeared as "Préparation et Présentation de l'Exposition du 28 Avril 1958" in Le Dépassement de la problématique de l'art (La Louvière, Belgium: Editions de Montbliart, 1959), 4-13. Translated by Nan Rosenthal and reprinted in Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 225. This invitation reads: "Iris Clert invites you to honor, with all your affective presence, the lucid and actual event of a certain reign of sensitivity. This demonstration of perceptive synthesis sanctions, in the work of Yves Klein, the pictorial quest for an ecstatic and immediately communicable emotion." (Opening, 3 rue des Beaux-Arts, Monday, April 28, 9-12 P.M.).

¹⁰⁴ Yves Klein. "Preparation and Presentation of the Exhibition of 28 April 1958." reprinted in Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 225. Klein describes the space as very small, 20 square meters; it has a show window and an entrance on the street

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Klein lists the magazines as Combat (Paris), Arts (Paris) and Arts (American edition).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁰⁷ MacCannell (1992), 1-2.

¹⁰⁸ Yves Klein. "La Guerre" Dimanche (27 November 1961), 3-4. Klein seeks to abolish line in painting. Klein re-works the "war" between Ingres and Delacroix and expands its to the broadest interpretation of the history of art. See also Houston catalogue, Selected Writings by Yves Klein, Selections from "The War: A Little Personal Mythology of the Monochrome." 218-219. "Having enslaved color, line proceeded to become writing." Klein equates this with the loss of paradise: "Paradise has been lost. The entanglement of lines became the bars of a real prison

which increasingly dominated human psychological life," 218.

¹⁰⁹ MacCannell (1992), 29.

¹¹⁰ Yves Klein. "Preparation and Presentation of the Exhibition of 28 April 1958." Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 227.

¹¹¹ In the 1830s, the Obelisk of Rameses II was sent as an official gift to the French from Egypt in the aftermath of that decade's social turmoil. The relief panels at the base of the obelisk illustrate the modern technology utilized to transport and install this monument.

¹¹² Yves Klein, Le Dépassement de la Problématique de l'Art (Paris: La Louvière, Éditions de Montbliart, 1959), 1.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 15. Klein identifies the false idols as Françoise Sagan, Jean Genet, Duhamel, and the Einsteins, Roosevelts, Nehrus and rats and waste cans. He associates them with the putrid atmosphere, equating the colors red, green and gray with leprosy.

¹¹⁴ Klein. "Exhibition of 28 April 1958," reprinted in Yves Klein (Houston, 1982), 228.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Albert Camus wrote, "With full powers the Void!" in the guest book of the gallery.

¹¹⁶ Rosenthal, 118.

¹¹⁷ Rigby (1992) 42.

¹¹⁸ Yves Klein, letter to President Eisenhower dated May 20, 1958, reprinted in Stich (1996), 144.

¹¹⁹ Lebovics (1998), 84-85.

¹²⁰ Yves Klein. "Quelques extraits de mon journal den 1957." Yves Klein (Paris: Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, 1969), 75 as cited in Stich (1994), 180.

¹²¹ Norbert Kricke had also exhibited with Iris Clert gallery in April 1957.

¹²² Stich (1995), 38.

¹²³ Yves Klein: 1928-1962 (Paris 1969), 12.

¹²⁴ Stich (1995), 122.

¹²⁵ Klein delivered two lectures at the Sorbonne. On June 3, 1959, he spoke on "the Evolution of Art towards the Immaterial," and on June 5, "Architecture of the Air."

¹²⁶ Nan Rosenthal. "The Blue World of Yves Klein." Ph D. dissertation (MA: Harvard 1976), 57.

¹²⁷ Yves Klein, Conférence de la Sorbonne, 3 juin 1959, (Paris: Galerie Montaigne, c.1996). And, according to Nan Rosenthal in a conversation on April 24, 1997 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, Klein repeatedly used the word "collaboration" in the text located in the Klein archives when discussing his view how art should be made. Restany edited the typewritten text in the archive; she believes that Restany crossed-out the word because of its association with the Occupation and replaced it with cooperation.

¹²⁸ Stich (1994), 129. The author pointed out that Klein was not unique in his proposals for technology supported utopian living spaces. The theme of the Brussels World's Fair in 1958 was the future and technology and it included the Dutch artist Constant's vision of "New Babylon" that was suspended in space and included color ambiances.

¹²⁹ Yves Klein. "Le Dépassement de la Problématique de l'Art." (Paris: Editions de Montbliart, 1959) 30-31.

Klein proposed several other departments. These include photography, criticism, history, economics, religion, press, cinema, television, politics, philosophy, physics, biochemistry, military school and martial arts. Klein proposed Moïse Dayan for the faculty of the military school. Restany was assigned to the press corps.

¹³⁰ Klein. "Le Dépassement." (Paris, 1959), 29.

¹³¹ Mc Evilly (1982), 60.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 59.

¹³³ Françoise Dufrène, the affichiste artist was associated with the Lettrists in the late 1940s. He met Klein in Paris when he attended the Monday salons of Marie Raymond. Dufrène joins the Nouveaux Réalistes in October 1960. Charles Estienne supported gestural abstraction and the work of Marie Raymond. They represent two aspects of postwar Paris. Lettrisme and its founder Isidore Isou were associated with a poetic and cinematic revolution tied to the legacy of Surrealism and Dada. Estienne was a supporter of abstraction.

¹³⁴ Stich, 31.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Arman. "Oral History Interview with Arman" by Sevim Fesci, April 22, 1968, 18. Archives of American Art, New York.

¹³⁷ Stich (1995), 214.

¹³⁸ Margit Rowell, ed., "Chronology." Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 162.

¹³⁹ Mc Evilly (1982), 60.

¹⁴⁰ Jean Tinguely, quoted in Thomas Mc Evilly. "Conquistador of the Void." Yves Klein (Houston: Rice University, 1982), 60.

¹⁴¹ Buchoh, Benjamin H. D., "Plenty or Nothing: From Yves Klein's Le Vide to Arman's Le Plein." Premises (New York: Guggenheim Museums, 1998).

¹⁴² Ibid., 91, 93.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 99.

¹⁴⁴ W.A.L. Beeren. "The Amsterdam Perspective." trans. Anthony Fudge. Malevich (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum and Culture Center, 1990), 3.

¹⁴⁵ Musée d'art Moderne et d'art Contemporain (Nice, France), Marie Raymond: A Retrospective 1937-1987 (1993), 38.

¹⁴⁶ Yves Klein. "Malevich ou l'espace vu de loin." cartoon, reproduced in Stich (1995), 75.

¹⁴⁷ Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lecombe. "Chronologie." 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes, Exhibition catalogue, May 15 – September 7, 1986 (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 1986), 62. The exhibition included the following artists: Robert Breer, Pol Bury, Klein, Mack, Mari, Burno Munari, Peine, Rot, Soto, Spoerri, Tinguely, and Van Hoeydonck.

Spoerri and Tinguely contributed Autotheatre to this exhibition; the public was at once the actors and the audience for the work. This breakdown between stage and audience is basic to Klein's theatrical projects in his November 27, 1960 Theater of the Void.

¹⁴⁸ Stich (1994), 154.

¹⁴⁹ Yves Klein. Conférence de la Sorbonne, 3 juin 1959, introduction by Loïc Malle (Yves Klein Archives and Paris: Galerie Montaigne) n.p. "D'Abord, il n'y a

rien, il y'a un rien profond, puis une profondeur bleue."

¹⁵⁰ These five exhibitions were: Monochrome Malerie, Museum Leverkusen, March 18 - May 8, 1960; Yves Le Monochrome, Galerie Rive Droite, October 11 - November 13, 1960; Antagonisms, Paris, February, 1961; Musée des Arts Décoratifs: Yves Klein: Monochrome und Feuer, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, 1961; and Comparaisons, March 12 - April 2, 1962.

¹⁵¹ Stich, 268, fn. 92. Stich points out that only three of the books (0, 1, and 4) were ever used. Two of the books are no longer extant. Stich states that the value of the zones increased with the number of the book. The highest value indicated is 1280 grams of gold per zone from book 7 identified in the Antagonisms catalogue.

¹⁵² Klein's strategy to enlist collectors to invest in his notion of the void might be compared to Duchamp's Monte Carlo Bond of 1924, "issued for the exploitation of a system to break the bank in Monte Carlo." see "The Works of Marcel Duchamp: A Catalogue." Marcel Duchamp, Anne D'Harmoncourt and Kynaston McShine, eds. (Philadelphia and New York: Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 297.

¹⁵³ Yves Klein, "Theater of the Void." in Dimanche, November 27, 1960, 1-2. In Museum of Modern Art, Special Collection.

¹⁵⁴ This is one of two photomontages made by his photographers Harry Shunk and John Kender. For a discussion of them see Rosenthal (Houston, 1982), 127-128.

¹⁵⁵ Klein approved two photographs taken by Shunk and Kender. For the edition of Le Dimanche, Klein used the photograph with a bicyclist seen from behind riding down the street.

¹⁵⁶ "Les spectateurs assis sur la chaussées dans la rue sont contemplés par les acteurs sur les trottoirs!"

¹⁵⁷ Yves Klein. "Actualité." in Dimanche, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Stanislavsky is associated with method acting; Cocteau used surreal juxtapositions, classical references and magical sequences. Artaud is known for the Theater of Cruelty.

¹⁵⁹ Yves Klein. "Théâtre du Vide." in Dimanche, 2.

Chapter 4

Arman: Reconnaissance of the Already Seen

Between 1954 and the early 1960s, Arman produced a body of readymade-based work that surveys, at ground level, the impact of accelerated consumerism characteristic of this period in France. This chapter focuses on the ways Arman appropriated the readymade to communicate directly the new sense of reality in France, a defining emphasis of the Ecole de Nice artists. Arman's work is not visually related to the allure of Nice, which is more easily recognized in the works of Klein and Raysse, but his emphatic focus on the unease provoked by historical and social flux links him to the ethos of the Ecole de Nice. My view of Arman's work is informed by the critic Rivière who pointed out in 1961 that the Ecole de Nice used consumer items not to celebrate the values of consumption, but as a means to deal with the lack of absolutes caused by rapid change.¹

The object was the basis of Arman's visual language, but he was always interested in the object's accumulation and life cycle. Arman's work was the complement to Klein's, and together they demonstrated the paradigm of emptiness and fullness, a concept that resonates in the work of all the important figures of the historical Ecole de Nice. Arman used the object as a vernacular language, and his mechanical and repetitive processes further distinguish him as part of the Ecole de Nice. In a period noted for its veneration of newness, Arman retrieved, sorted, and re-presented everyday items without transforming them. Arman's appropriation of the readymade, presented without

transcription, represents the broadest definition of the Ecole de Nice, first defined by Sosno in his article "Tendances du Nouveau-Realisme Niçois" published in Sud-Communications in June 1961. The readymades he selected chronicled the changing patterns of daily life. He placed value on the past, which suggested a sense of loss that is articulated by his processes of recuperation.

Arman actively shaped the critical views of his work supporting their view that two qualities distinguish his work: its logical progression over time and its object base.² He described the corollary he established in his work between the single object, its accumulation, and final destruction. "As far as I am concerned," Arman wrote, "there is no fundamental difference between accumulating an object or smashing an object. One thousand objects are not fundamentally different from one thousand pieces of the same object."³ The process of accumulation required extended time, unless the accumulation was readymade, but the physical destruction of objects had immediacy since it was acted out in a series titled the Colères, or tantrums. Alain Jouffroy described his work as confined to two acts "preservation and active discharge."⁴

Arman presented a Colère at the Festival of Nouveau Réalisme in Nice, an event in which he destroyed antique furniture by smashing and burning in a fit of rage. This "practical demonstration," to use Restany's description of the events, was an attempt to grasp reality by choosing methods that expressed it.⁵ Arman's tantrums were violent and disturbing but at the same time, vicariously thrilling and sensational. Like the accumulations, the tantrums were an active form of resistance. As reported in the press

and radio program. "Salut les copains." "this manifestation left no one indifferent."⁶ The event was a comprehensible and direct attack on the "delinquencies" of Parisian Art Informel.⁷

Arman's relationship with Klein can be described as a partnership, dialogue, and even a mission, from the beginning. Arman credited Klein for dissuading him from painting, a practice the latter considered irrelevant and trapped in a dead-end of stylistic manipulation.⁸ He urged his friend to re-invest his efforts in the reality of the everyday. Like Klein, Arman questioned (and soon rejected) the validity of expressionism in postwar abstraction. Arman turned to the readymade as a means of reformulating the possibilities of expressionism outside the medium of painting. Klein was also Arman's direct link with the art world of Paris.⁹

Arman would not receive significant public attention until October 25, 1960, on the occasion of his exhibition, Le Plein, at Iris Clert Gallery, where Klein previously exhibited his monochrome paintings and the installation of Le Vide. Two days after the opening of Le Plein, on October 27, Arman signed the declaration of Nouveau Réalisme drafted by Restany in Klein's Paris apartment. Restany had already promoted the artistic relationship between Klein and Arman. On the occasion of Arman's first solo exhibition at the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan in December 1959, Restany described Arman's work in relation to Klein's monochromes.¹⁰ He suggested that the process of amassing images or objects into the single work results in a "monotypic proclamation." Arman described his work as "real in itself and multiplied by itself."¹¹

Arman's work from 1954 to 1960 culminated with the exhibition Le Plein. He initially proposed the exhibition in 1958, after Klein's exhibition, Le Vide, but Clert resisted for nearly two years. Clert admitted that only after Klein and Arman stated, "Après Le Vide on fera Le Plein,"¹² was she willing to schedule the exhibition. Arman, however, believed her decision was based on the success of his exhibition of *poubelles* – portraits of individuals comprised of their trash encased in plexiglass boxes – held at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf the previous June.¹³ Klein publicly supported Arman's exhibition; he considered them to be empire builders with complementary tasks: "The universal memory of art was missing this mummification of decisive quantitativism. From now on, nature in its entirety is going to speak to us again, directly and with clarity...At last true liberty is coming to art."¹⁴ Klein believed that Arman's language of magnitude was capable of forging new relationships between the individual and the environment and could liberate art from the conventional association with quality. Arman recently stated, "[my works] are the illustrations of a statement about the history of objects in our civilization; but before anything else, [they were] intended to be a work of art."¹⁵

Le Plein was both a spectacle and a monument (Fig. 17). This "critical mass," as Arman referred to it, turned the gallery space into a vitrine.¹⁶ It was an aggressive statement about the culture of consumption and contemporary art. Initially, Arman planned to turn the gallery into a dump by soliciting the sanitation department of Paris to empty garbage trucks into the gallery. When this idea proved unfeasible, Arman and

Martial Raysse collected, sorted and recorded the items that constituted this massive accumulation filling sixty cubic meters of space.¹⁷ He carefully chose the mix of organic and non-organic refuse to prevent degradation from occurring too quickly. The exhibition was scheduled for three weeks, but closed after one week due the inclusion of two-hundred-and-fifty pounds of pure garbage mixed into the refuse.¹⁸

The installation also included art previously shown in the gallery and other references to art – such as announcements, sculpture bases, and picture frames. Twenty paintings from Clert's April 1957 Micro Salon exhibition were included,¹⁹ as well as one thousand copies of Mathias Goeritz's "Votive Art against Crap Art." Arman later stated that he took pleasure in the irony of presenting two contradictory statements in the same exhibition.²⁰ His carefully detailed list includes items such as bicycles, old records, photographs, olive oil bottles, burned out light bulbs, and tapes of sound music. Iris Clert also arranged the delivery of old furniture from a monastery outside of Paris.²¹ Critic Walter Lewino reviewed this exhibition and juxtaposed Duchamp's Bicycle Wheel with a detail of the front window of Le Plein declaring that Dada had returned to Paris.²² Arman did not reject the association with Dada as Klein would continue to do. But Arman's work takes Duchamp's signature readymade to a point of excess. The impact is also different as Duchamp noted when he called Arman's work "personal things."²³

The junked bicycles were also reminders of a French lifestyle relegated to memory by the mass acquisition of automobiles by the French in the 1950s. In Le Plein, Arman combined objects that pressed the viewer to consider the degradation and demise of

discards charged with social, religious or cultural meaning. Memory was Arman's theme. In his words, "I believe in memory. Memory is the real inspiration. Memory creates time...And it's pure power. Pure power and pure strength, and pure utilization of space and time..."²⁴ Arman "plunged into the past," according to Otto Hahn.²⁵

By emphasizing the power of an object to elicit memory, Arman exposed the temporal interest objects hold and he critically reflected on the process of Americanization. As Françoise Choay pointed out, his work was a manifestation of revolt against the Americanization of society.²⁶ There was nothing to buy; it was a statement about the derelict and humorless American vision that displays "a certain state of decomposition (ours)." Alain Jouffroy described Arman's realism in 1963 as a "critical play."²⁷ He continued: "As far as I'm concerned, I am sure that Arman has never stopped being what any revolutionary artist wants to be: an enemy of immediate reality, a breaker of yokes, a *disturber*."²⁸ Arman attempted to show the reality of mass produced items in a state of decay in order to jar public sensibility.

Arman carefully documented the events leading to the opening of Le Plein, as Klein had done for Le Vide. In contrast to the engraved invitation Klein used for Le Vide, Arman used sardine cans for the three thousand invitations sent out by the gallery. Iris Clert and Claude Rivière oversaw the production of the invitations,²⁹ which were filled with metro tickets, scrap metal filings, cigar and cigarette butts, and the old French franc, taken out of circulation in 1959 when the new franc was introduced to curb inflation. The sardine cans were purchased from a fish factory in Brittany; Arman

hired unemployed workers and then filled them in a "Captain Cook" plant in Paris.³⁰ The use of French currency in the invitation was a symbolic gesture, according to the Clert,³¹ which provoked the postal service and police to intervene and halt the mailing. The Bureau of Mines was alerted and one shipment was confiscated and buried.

The invitation (Fig. 18) was part of the exhibition itself; it had been collected, sorted, packed and sealed. Like the expiration date on industrially packed food, Arman printed, "Ouvrir avant Le 25 octobre, 1960" on the lid; the key was provided on the underside of the sardine can.³² The invitation recipient was faced with the choice of opening the sardine can, thus contributing to industrial waste or saving the sardine can and elevating its value. Like Klein, Arman challenged his audience by raising the issue of value – in this case, by challenging the spectator to assign value to commonly produced items and currency with no value.

Restany's introduction was printed on the label: in this, he made the connection between Arman's installation and Klein's Le Vide:

A capital event at Iris Clert in 1960 gives to the new realism its total architectonic dimension. Within such a framework it is of importance. Until now the antipode of the void had not encircled the authentic organic aspect of the real.³³

Arman's installation is the conceptual counterpart of Le Vide.³⁴ Klein demonstrated that through the experience of sensitized space one could experience a sense of "fullness" distinct from material gratification; Le Plein showed that material fullness is linked to temporality, decay, and lack of fulfillment. Le Plein is a mirror of Le Vide. In the tradition of theatrical parody, this exhibition also flagrantly transgresses conventions of

aesthetics. It was a physical and sensational barricade that assaulted the senses. Arman emphasized the scatological and grotesque, in contrast to Klein's pristine emptiness.

Adjacent to the refuse heap, Arman installed some boxed accumulations filled with false teeth, razors, and keys encased in glass boxes, the only items for sale.³⁵ Clerf recalled that Raysse put a dead lobster inside the accumulation, which created a foul odor, attracted rodents, and repelled her collectors.³⁶ Le Plein was a momento mori that exposed the excesses of consumption and it triggered memories about wartime deprivations. This installation was also an act of resistance, for Arman refused to bury the past *and* he was critical of the new mode of interaction premised on possession.

Buchloh believes that Arman's work is "pure facticity," a phrase he uses to describe the way Le Plein escapes poetic resonance and displays no faith in the driving force of technology.³⁷ He argued that Arman's "entropic space" signals the death of production and the production of death.³⁸ Buchloh elucidated the significance of Arman's installation with this argument, but the sense of lamentation in this work does give it a poetic air. Arman arranged this installation to degrade over the course of the exhibition. Decay and gravity become the final event of the work, providing a means of communicating about the past and the present in a direct, comprehensible way.

Buchloh credits Arman with producing "the single most important paradigmatic change in reconstruction sculpture."³⁹ He suggested that Arman's exhibition is more significant as a singular event, not one constituted as a complement to Klein Le Vide. However, his view diminishes the impact Klein and Arman intended with these

complementary exhibitions. Klein's installation touched on spiritual and social emptiness, while Arman complemented his statement with his overwhelming proliferation of objects that replaced the rich spirit of the culture. As he put it, the multiplication of objects in society is at "the center of my thinking about things."⁴⁰ Both works convey a lack of faith in the direction of modernity exemplified by consumption and the erasure of historical memory. Arman created a spectacle of the everyday in a state of adulteration, violence and uniform inertness. He refused to impose symbolic order on the trash, but he raised the useless and inferior to a level that forces judgement and questions standards. To trash, as he does, is to cause damage in anger or protest. He assaulted the new ritual of consumption that provided a common base for daily life.

Le Plein even parodied the tradition of the Salon de Refusé. 1960 was the year that Galerie Charpentier held a massive exhibition of the Ecole de Paris.⁴¹ The one hundred artists in this show were chosen to substantiate the strength and vitality of "French" painting. Stylistic persuasion was a key determinant, as was nationality. Arman symbolically buried French painting in Le Plein by including canvases by artists from at least three generations of modern painting, including works by Picasso and Hartung. Their place in the collected trash was afforded no deference in the mix of the refuse and garbage.

In Combat, the critic René Boullier⁴² described Arman's Le Plein as dishonest and incapable of resuscitating the legacy of dada on which he believed it was based. However, Boullier did refer to the installation as a "Tower of Babel," a powerful metaphor in

support of his work. Le Plein exemplified the confusion of this moment aesthetically, socially, and politically with patterns of communication newly tailored to systemic needs or determined by objects. Arman recognized this shift in human communication, now exteriorized and attached to the flux of objects rather than seated in culture and history. The shift was made visible in Le Plein. According to Hahn, Arman established a direct language, which replaced representation with an art of presentation.⁴³ Restany even described Arman's morphology as a touchstone that "can act as a basis for a language, for an art of human communication and participation."⁴⁴ Arman's work reflects the ethos of the Ecole de Nice, which simultaneously displayed a deep suspicion of modernity while, at the same time, valuing it as a means of communication.

Arman distinguished his work and that of the Ecole de Nice, from dada by insisting that he was interested in the concept of "beauty."⁴⁵ Arman raised the issue of beauty through excessiveness and bad taste. Like Klein, he wanted to transform the viewer's vision and perceptions through transgression and spectacle. Arman amassed ordinary things as a means of illumination; the sheer material power of Le Plein manifests an awe of the banal, one that shifts the experience to a level of the ultra-mundane. It was a presentation of the visible yet unperceived in contrast to Klein, who presented the invisible but perceived reality of space and sensations. Le Plein exemplified Rivière's description of the Ecole de Nice as visionary and mundane. He presented reality as an expressive volume of matter to force contemplation on the state of a changed society. Bernard Lamarche-Vadel described Arman as creating a "negative panopticon of what industrial

society produces.” he was “laying bare its contagious, deathly nature.”⁴⁶

In 1960, Arman’s reputation was secured in Paris, and his artistic identity was linked to Klein, Nice, and Nouveau Réalisme. Arman established his ideas in Nice, which provided a context for his work. His family is a model of economic and social extremes: his French mother was poverty-stricken, and considered an outcast by his father’s wealthy Spanish-Moroccan family. Arman did suffer deprivation during the war years despite wealth in his father’s family. During his teen years in Nice, Arman was also making his living working for the American Army and began a business trading with the Army PX.⁴⁷ He served as bodyguard to De Gaulle’s minister Dessau, and he worked as a security aid for the Italian government. He admits that from his teenage years, he was attracted to violence. He was involved with bombings and terrorism in the campaign to eliminate communist insurgents in the Midi. Arman then worked in his father’s antique business and became a successful harpoon-fisherman, which enabled him to make money selling his catches to high-end restaurants. He had an entrepreneurial spirit, and he understood the role of buying and selling in times of hardship and plenty.

Like Klein, he was discipline minded. He met Klein in Judo class in 1947, and along with the poet Claude Pascal, they practiced spiritual disciplines such as yoga, fasting, astrology and Rosicrucianism in varying degrees until 1953.⁴⁸ On the beach in Nice, the three conceptually divided the universe among themselves, then Klein appropriated and signed his first blue monochrome, the sky over Nice. Klein wrote: “Arman, procreator and protector, maker of fullness, took charge of the animal realm.”⁴⁹

Arman stated that Klein was to take organic life and that he was in charge of "everything that was made."⁵⁰ In 1949, Arman, Klein and Claude Pascal formed the group Triangle.⁵¹ The three traveled throughout Europe, and like Klein, Arman learned several languages. In 1951, Arman taught Judo in Madrid with Klein before serving in the medical corps of the French marines in Viet Nam in 1952. Once Klein returned from studying Judo in Japan in 1954, the two artists resumed their close friendship.

Arman's father, a "Sunday Painter," cultivated the artist's early interest in the visual arts for recreational purposes. But it was his work in business that ironically provided Arman with the means to produce art without painting. Arman asserted *his* cultural identity by synthesizing the tasks associated with his antique business in Nice. His formal sources were diverse and indebted primarily to an international group of artists: Jackson Pollock (New York), Hendrik Nicholaas Werkman (Amsterdam), and Kurt Schwitters (Hanover). All three artists used materials (paint, stamps, typography, and collage) to create works with an all-over effect that had strong expressive appeal to Arman.

In 1953, Arman saw the Jackson Pollock exhibit at the Galerie Fachetti, and he acknowledged Pollock's work as important to his development as an artist. Arman admired Pollock's use of excessive gestures and his finesse in building up painted surfaces into a dense accumulation of linear matter. Michel Tapié organized this first show of Pollock's work in Europe, and his catalogue essay echoed the ideas in the recently published Un Art Autre (1952). Tapié described Pollock's work as "violence becoming

painting."⁵² He praised his risk taking, a testimony of the artist's emergence. Tapié believed that the breakdown of order in painting enabled an "intoxicating anarchy" indicative of the artist's push towards an unknown. The second essay in this catalogue, by Alfonso Ossorio, reverberates with ideas that would soon become the conceptual basis of Arman and Klein's work. Ossorio considered Pollock's works evidence of energy at the base of life. He characterized Pollock's painting surfaces as "Le Vide et Le Plein," ideas indicating beginning and end, and "that which is exterior is interior."⁵³

Arman was equally impressed by the work of Kurt Schwitter's and Hendrik Nicholaas Werkman. Schwitter's exhibition at the Galerie Berggruen in 1954 was also instrumental in focusing Arman's early work.⁵⁴ Schwitters' work suggested to Arman that objects also arrange themselves, Arman referred to Schwitter's works as "auto-compositions."⁵⁵ He later referred to Le Plein as a "three dimensional Kurt Schwitters."⁵⁶ The typography of the Dutch printer Werkman became a third influence in the formation of Arman's work.⁵⁷ Werkman was featured in a 1952 issue of Art d'aujourd'hui in a special number devoted to typography and collage.⁵⁸ He saw this issue in 1954,⁵⁹ the year he abandoned painting. The author W. J. H. B. Sandberg began the article with the following statement, "From birth, man, oscillates between two tendencies: the development of his personality and his integration into society."⁶⁰ This statement must have had an impact on Arman since he and his colleagues who were attempting to establish their artistic language in a depersonalized way that drew on the real and was derived from the environmental context. Sandberg described Werkman as a modern

design practitioner linked to the utopian spirit of the Bauhaus and De Stijl. Werkman's experimental approach to materials and his repetition of letters and blocks of colored inks connect his commercial posters with De Stijl in particular.

Arman synthesized these sources in the first series of his mature work, the "administrative cachets." The stamp signified the growing bureaucratic organization of transactions – be they family and local business trade or the shift to an administrative class associated with government and business expansion. They signified authorization, clearance, and completed transaction – a code of authority, one with particular resonance in post-Occupation France.

Arman first produced his Cachets, or stamped works, in December 1954, and continued to produce them until 1959. The ink-stamped works are built up, but they incorporate language that is tied to function, communication, and commerce. Restany describes the Cachets as the result of necessity, the long office hours Arman worked.⁶¹ Arman associated the medium and the repetitiveness necessary to their making in relation to the constraint and tedium of administrative tasks. However, the stamp afforded Arman the freedom to address painting, especially gestural expression, through a different means. The use of the functional object anchored Arman's work to the real and ushered him away from what he considered the "remote," "vague," and "wholly subjective" associated with expressionism.⁶² Arman used the stamps as a de-personalized script, but with expressive intent. He identified a means to assert individuality within the strictures of a banal task.

... you take a large Pollock, very well filled up, if you take the letter M M M M M in repetition with Werkmann, if you take the use of discarded objects with Schwitters, the

mixture of all those influences leads to my conception of a work of art, the use of the common object through accumulation and repetition.⁶³

The first stamped work, or Cachet, is dated 23 décembre 1954 (Fig. 19). It is composed of two readymade parts. The support is a floral fabric sample used for slipcovers or drapery, the edge cut with pinking sheers.⁶⁴ The floral surface is imprinted with two inked stamps. The first is a rectangular stamp with "Au Foyer" and beneath, an address in Nice.⁶⁵ The stamp is repeated, often illegibly, over the flowers on the fabric. The second stamp is the date, "23, Dece 1954." It is on the basis of the specificity of the date these stamps that the beginning of this series is established.⁶⁶ "Au Foyer" was the name of his family's second hand furniture and fabric business in Nice.⁶⁷ But Arman used repetition to diminish specific informational content. Instead, he emphasized the interplay of ink traces on the fabric ground. The rectangular outline of the stamp follows the tendrils of the floral pattern creating a linear web over the surface.

Arman's 1955 Untitled Cachet in the Stedelijk Museum Collection (Fig. 20) includes a greater variety of stamps more densely accumulated on the paper surface. These stamps are associated with commerce and military bureaucracy. They include: "Craint de chaleur," "Union Sportive Alimentation - Section Boules," "Sous reserves de congé signifie," "servant choix," "Payee," and "10Fr." Arman also included stamped images in the text; the allegorical personification of France and anchors appear throughout. The build-up of the stamps over the surface implies both task and time. Mechanical gestures take precedent, but the work maintains visual analogies with gestural

abstraction. Text and images coalesce into an overall abstract configuration but the stamps imply specific time, place, and transaction. The language of military and economic authorization merges with the language of abstraction, one associated with individual expression. Arman eroded the categorical distinctions between the real and the abstract, personal and depersonalized. He linked the role of administrator with that of the individual, or artist, by using a material language with associations that are private and public, domestic and institutional. The action of the individual is determined by a pre-determined function in relation to an object. In this work, for example, Arman repeats in contrasting colors of green rectangles and red stamps "PRIORITE A" (Fig. 21) and "726354."

The Cachets from 1954 to 1957 are generally the size of business stationary. A photograph of Arman taken in 1956, coincident with his first solo at Galerie du Haut Pavé in Paris (February 1956), shows him holding a stamp in the manner of a painter and standing rather than seated at the desk of an administrator (Fig. 22). He posed as a painter but with the tools of the office worker. Linda Hutcheon described this approach to role playing in her study of parody as an "ironic inversion."⁶⁸ In the case of Arman, the artist and bureaucratic man merge. His repetitive mode of action, stamping the surface with ink, replaced the physicality associated with gestural expression. He fabricated the look of expressionist marks in this process, thus suggesting that expressionism too has become a repetitive task. It was by means of these administrative stamps that Arman was first able to express his identity as an artist.

Arman was commenting on a social structure ordered by task and language; Roland Barthes will later use the term "structural man" to define the functioning man geared to profit, codes, and structures.⁶⁹ This administrative type suppressed individuality to the needs of a set of tasks and codified language that was thought to ease "communication" and usher in an efficient system applicable to government and business. Arman mimicked the processes and functional nature of work in his content as well as the mechanical and repetitive process of his stamping. The dense surfaces achieved by his repetitive procedures are evidence of a physical act, but administrative tasks also required limiting the movement of the whole body. Within these constraints, Arman created expressive images that identify him without personalizing the gestures or constructing narrative. References to his family business (stamps, materials, and later, objects) and freelance work connected the stamps to people, places and activities, inserting his personal and social identity into this task based work. Arman connected his life and his work, and he found an alternative to painterly gestures in readymade communication and mechanical procedures.

At a time when France was attempting to redefine its cultural narrative, Arman began to retrieve images and objects that recollect the past. Hahn called Arman a witness to culture changes.⁷⁰ In the object *Allures*, Arman chose recognizable sculptural reproductions of classical or historical subjects, then sliced them to create cookie-cutter shapes; these include images of Nike, Joan of Arc, or the allegorical figure of France (Figs. 35). Arman's choices of objects are often prime examples of the genre of souvenir

objects that are mass-produced and radically altered in scale and material.⁷¹ Such objects are recognizable despite their change from three-dimensional form into that of a stamp. Arman equated these inked traces of figurative shapes with typographic letters. He established a visual affinity between the image and its sign. For example, the sliced figure of France as Liberty is associated with the letter "Y." He repeated the shapes in rows establishing equivalence between the visual and linguistic referent.

Arman's experiments indicate how cultural forms are inscribed into society without being perceived at the level of conscious awareness. Objects constitute a social language, "everything communicates," in the words of Jacques Tati's housewife in the satire Mon Oncle. But unlike the ultra-modern domestic space portrayed in Tati's film that satirizes the Americanization of the French bourgeois household, Arman's choice of objects reflects the communicative value of objects associated with French tradition. His choice of souvenirs is particularly resonant, since they are generally collected by the tourist as evidence of their participation in a culture that has features distinct from their own. They advertise French heritage by means of mass production, and they are collected during the modern activity of tourism. History and culture enter the realm of kitsch, wherein they are treated as a by-product of progress. In Arman's Allures, these souvenirs are merely sequential traces analogous to a text, marking their passage in time across the empty space of his ground.

History and culture merge in these kitsch products, which convey historical knowledge with immediacy and without depth. Tourist souvenirs exemplify the meeting

of cultural nostalgia with the modern activity of travel. John Frow explained how tourist objects insert tradition into contemporary discourse by identifying historical objects and images that keep national heritage alive.⁷² The souvenir provides a sense of cultural continuity by resurrecting and re-presenting objects that signify a past life and inserting them into the present.⁷³

Arman also chose the genre of still life to reflect on the mortality of traditional French culture and, similar to the souvenir, to insert its memory-laden objects into the present. He recognized the poignancy of human behavior conditioned by the interaction with things ever more quickly discarded. Rather than allow their demise to go unnoticed, Arman harvested the discards. He assigned value to objects displaced by an excess of consumer goods and returned them to the present as an inheritance of daily life inflected with individual experiences. Modest objects generally found in the private sphere shift into the public, precipitating a sense of ambivalence in the viewer. This is particularly evident in his accumulations of personal effects such as dentures in, La Vie à Pleines Dents, 1960, which carry the history of the owner manifest in the broken or stained bridges and caps.

In relation to Klein's more visionary concepts, Arman takes a more pragmatic approach to objects that mimics the process society utilizes to produce, distribute, and dispose of things. Arman's method is based on appropriation, but not in the vein of Duchamp's disinterestedness or Rauschenberg's image barrage: Leo Steinberg referred to Rauschenberg's "receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered.

on which information may be received, printed, impressed.”⁷⁴ Rather, Arman displays sensitivity to the quality of the object before enhancing it by means of quantity. He exemplified what social historian Susan Strasser called the “old antique worshipping standards” of Europeans, a negative American criticism of European culture.⁷⁵ Arman did, in fact, first come to Paris to prepare for a career as an antique auctioneer.⁷⁶

Arman exposed the domestic and personal space by returning these items back into the form of their initial mass distribution. He took on the role of creator and observer.⁷⁷ Combs, glasses, tooth brushes, dentures, keys, and door handles are distinguishable only after the individual selects one item from the lot based on a matrix of needs (aesthetic, function, context, etc.). These objects then become an extension of the individual by association and use. Arman invested these objects with psychological associations simply through the process of amassing them. The objects he chose are touched, worn, and used; they have been insinuated in the private sphere only to be returned to the public space – the boundary between the private and the public is breached. Removed from the domestic arena, these personal items enter the social and political space and decisions about their place becomes a public matter. So, while Arman’s choice of items may indicate an acute sensitivity to the personal, their accumulation has broad social and political resonance in light of the sense that Americanization would erode French society in domestic and public spaces.

Arman dated this transition to a specific instance when he was struck with the packaging of mass produced objects. Assembled in containers in organized

configurations, the aggregate object enhanced his perception of each isolated object through defamiliarization. This chance realization occurred when the artist purchased radio tubes with the intention of inking and smashing them. As he stated, the sight of their arrangement became a "point of departure for my accumulations."⁷⁸ The radio tubes were packed for mass distribution but rendered obsolete by the introduction of the new transistor radio. Arman's original intention of smashing the tubes is a means of disposal sanctioned by the demands of consumption. His choice to maintain the packaged item is a choice to archive it rather than dispose of it. It provides a historic reference to a moment of technological advance and its impact on functioning objects. Arman reshapes our experience of the radio tubes so they bear witness to their own obsolescence and, transformed only by context, serve as reminders of disposability.

Arman soon amassed more ephemeral domestic items relegated to trash. In Petits déchets bourgeois, 1959 (Fig. 23), for example, he stabilized a picture of the middle-class household by filling a transparent case with items from material culture. His archeological site is no longer one measured by great periods of time but rather, one speeded up to a near daily pace of discards. His generic portrait of the household circumscribes a modest life defined by domestic duties, personal goods, and items associated with photography and painting. The objects include: a Camembert cheese box, an egg shell, a tea container, tooth brushes, sponges, laundry soap, clothing, strings, paper, film, tubes of paint, letters, ribbons, and papers from packaged goods. These items become a kind of time capsule, densely packed, even compressed. The format, a transparent rectangular wall case, is both

volumetric, but appears to be a painterly surface of heterogeneous materials, a three dimensional collage of the commonplace. Unlike the assembled boxes of the American Joseph Cornell, this work displays common discards that firmly anchors the work in a material "now." If Cornell's work evinces a rich interior life, Arman's accumulation of trash has the directness of a snapshot of the real. While he clearly maintained control over the contents and their placement, he tried to maintain the appearance of randomness. That dynamic aspect remains for the potential for re-assemblage is present; it is determined by the placement of the container well after the artist completes the work.

Arman's readymade accumulations of what industrial society discarded were critical and haunting. The subjects of the accumulations derive from childhood toys and games, memories of war, and physical and spiritual sustenance. The mass discarding of these items points to a change precipitated by the realities and aftermath of the Occupation and the assimilation of consumerism.

Arman's accumulations suggest that he drew from his personal experiences in the choice of his objects. Childhood takes on an onerous quality in Ainsi Font Font (Patty Cake) (Fig. 24), an accumulation of hands from dolls, mannequins, and statues. The small hands have metal rods emerging from the wrist; nightmare overrides any sense of play. Arman evokes references to violation and amputation in this haunting image. He used the subject of childhood in two additional works, Nursery and Village of the Damned, both of which also reflect a sense of horror. In Nursery, he accumulated diverse parts of the dolls; these fragments are arranged like relics. Village of the Damned, titled after the B movie, is

an accumulation of the identical dolls crammed into a wood and glass table box.⁷⁹ Arman attended an all-girl school in Nice for six years so he would not have to be separated from his best friend. His use of dolls that have been broken or locked in glass likely make reference to his experiences, but they commemorate more broadly the atrocities of World War II, the cramped quarters and extermination chambers and the collections of children's toys and clothing.⁸⁰

Medical and military references are also conspicuous in Arman's work, and may, in part, reflect his experiences in Viet Nam as a medical trainee. Medicine bottles, suppositories, homeopathic pills, aspirin, and tubes are the contents of several shallow box accumulations. Arman titles these Valetudinarian, Théorème de Ferma and La Manière de Donner vaut Mieux que ce que l'on Donne (suppositories) and Ce n'est pas la Mer à Boire (pipettes and rubber tubes). These items are, of course, commonly found in pharmacies, hospitals and the household medicine cabinet. Now produced en mass, they are standardized means of physical relief and intervention. Metaphorically, they can be seen as companions of Klein's monochromes which, as I point out in Chapter 3, were described by Restany as an antidote for a society overwhelmed by the demands of urban life.

The most resonant of the early accumulations are the gas masks. In Gav Gas Masks (Fig. 25), Arman compressed them and carefully stacked one atop another behind glass. According to Arman: "When I was taking an object with a very strong meaning, as an object like a gas mask, which built a little bit on the order of the human face, and has a meaning of war and destruction, the meaning of the object was stronger than the aesthetic

meaning, the poetic, or the message; the literary meaning was stronger than the aesthetic one."⁸¹ The features are anonymous and generic; large circular holes for the eyes and breathing tubes are prominent. The assemblage recalls the cruelties of mass destruction and war memorialized as an icon of anonymous inhumanity. France, in particular, was aware of the shadow of conflict ever present since the country was situated between Cold War ideological struggles and colonial conflicts.

Arman addressed Catholicism in several works dating 1959 -1960. In Fetish of the Theophagite Sect of 1960 (Fig. 26), he grouped crucifixes into a wooden box case.⁸² Multiple images of the crucified undermined the concept of an individual savior. Furthermore, he equated consumption and salvation with the fetishized desire; Arman undermined a sense of transcendence in this accumulation of discarded sacred images. The degradation of the sacred aspects reveals the vacuity behind the signs for the artist. They are emblematic of the spiritual and historical void of late modern society. Arman's loss of faith in France's historical religion is evident in two additional works, Fly-Tox ("Kill 'em all! God will know His Own"), comprised of bug spray containers,⁸³ and Ampoules, hypodermic injection tubes sub-titled "Eucharist."⁸⁴

Arman's resuscitation of waste defied the premise of market based consumerism. He adhered to a more traditional approach to objects in which functional degradation or changes in style provide the opportunity to infuse the useless with a second life and a new function. Waste was a resource in his assault on the Americanized French values of art and commerce; art appeared entrenched in the past, and consumerism erased historical

memory. The conceptual unity of Arman's work does not reside exclusively in a logical move from one manipulation of the object to another. Instead, his object declensions are more synthetic and rely on a broad sphere of references and analogies that tie them to the present state of being in France during its reconstruction. These include memories of wartime impoverishment and violence, a wave of consumerism, changed personal habits, a rise in popular culture, and the overall impact of Americanization – as well as his understanding of modern and avant-garde practices in the late 1950s.

Arman, like Klein, was interested in concrete music³⁵ and theatrical engagement with the public. By 1958, Arman began to pre-fabricate objects in a series called the "Allures." This series had a clear source in concrete music, especially the experiments of musician Pierre Schaeffer, a musician he knew through his wife, the musician Eliane Radigue. Schaeffer's procedure involved recording sounds made by objects hurling through space and smashed against walls or floors. Similarly, Arman inked objects and threw them onto a paper ground, resulting in the imprint of a trace of the object. This procedure is the visual equivalent of "allures de sons," Schaeffer's recording the sound made by objects set in motion. These experiments rely on the object created by a procedure once removed from the artist. Arman described them in direct correlation to his artistic models and/or task:

A process of taking by imprint on paper the traces of objects in motion inspired by first: the rubber stamp works which themselves were influenced by Kurt Schwitters, second, by the strategy of recording sounds of objects in motion, a strategy developed by Pierre Schaeffer, executive director of the Groupe de Recherche Musicale. Those recordings being part of the so called "musique concrète, also the name given at the G.R.M. for those recording was "allure d'objet".

I met Pierre Schaeffer through my first wife, Eliane Radigue who is a musician and was working with the composers of the G.R.M. I was present at such recordings, and was interested in adding objects to the rubber stamp works. At the time, the procedure got all my attention, and instead of having the traces of objects directly applied on the surface, I started to use the objects in motion and to record their development on paper after they were soaked in ink or paint.⁸⁶

Daniel Abadie pointed out that Arman's procedures produced images more closely related to lyrical abstraction than its object source.⁸⁷ This approach to music and art has a correlation with the work of John Cage and later, Fluxus.

Initially, Arman used inked plant stems, strings, pearls, and balls. He "conducted" these objects as they inscribe themselves onto a surface having been projected through space, but his process was more dynamic, not automatic. Works such as Allures #252 and #254, 1959 (Fig. 27) are lyrical and abstract and display immediacy like that of sound or vibration. The effect is musical and elegant, and the pieces convey a light and ephemeral quality, an abstract precedent for Klein's Anthropometry series.

Arman soon chose objects that had a defined form that would remain recognizable when hurled onto a surface. The objects – spiral springs, pins, needles, and pearl necklaces--retain their essential form but are mere traces, which tend to dissolve into a larger composition. For example, in Yves L'Épingle (ERA #234) (Fig. 28) inked straight and squared pins appear to rain down the sheet of paper. The traces of the objects are merely splatters of ink near the top of the composition. They fall at the bottom into a darker and more recognizable cluster of staple-like pins.

Arman's concern for beauty is evident in Allure d'Objet #2, 1959 (Fig. 29), a large scroll on the scale of a Pollock. Traces of objects and musical instruments unroll

continuously and seamlessly in time. Arman displays an interest in the path of the object in time, as a process of unfolding and revelation. Jan van der Marck refers to this period as one in which Arman was formulating "interventional gestures." Directly appropriated from experiments in music, Arman developed the equivalence to feedback, synthesizing, distortion, and repetition.⁸⁸ Arman's use of repetition produces paradoxical effects: amplification and destruction. It is a visual equivalent to sound vibrations of varying intensities, but at the expense of the integrity of the instruments.

The violin is a frequent instrument in Arman's work. Like many before him, he equated the shape of the violin (and cello) to the form of the female body.⁸⁹ The implications of this choice of subject range from historical cliché to abject violation. Arman was "recording their development" as the objects were being destroyed. The traces of the violin are recorded in a manner that suggests sequential photography. Though made directly with an object, they appear closer to flat mediums like printing, photography, or film. Motion and sound are implicit in the unfurling of these works on paper. The images appear at once real and abstract. Their relationship with Cubism is evident in the multiple views conveyed by the traces of the object. Arman made a distinction between his works and Cubism based on his choice of objects and repetitive actions. In Otto Hahn's words, "When you break a straightforward crate, what you get is a Cubist composition; you break a cello, and you end up with something romantic."⁹⁰ Arman's father played the cello,⁹¹ but beyond biography, Arman's work conveyed emotions that had direct impact on the sensibility of the viewer, an aim shared by all the

Ecole de Nice artists.

Arman was the subject of two films in 1959. Both were made by Jacques Brissot and scored with concrete music. The first, Chantier interdit au Public, featured Arman making Allures. The title refers to the privacy of the artist's studio, now open to public access. The second film was shot in Nice in the summer of 1959.⁹² It was produced by the Service de Recherches Images of the Radio Télévision Française and included several pieces of footage of Arman and others. Brissot subsequently wrote the essay about the film titled, "Forms, Objects, Mouvements."⁹³ He posited that Arman's work was similar to experiments in contemporary music; the artist and musician refused to impose false forms on real objects. Arman was interested in the process and its visual recording imprinted in time, a history of the object.

Arman's methods are primarily sorting and classifying objects. There is a spatial aspect to this process of recuperation and re-assignment of value. In an age where this is no longer necessary, it generally is regarded as a pastime. It provides an outlet for creativity and respite from the demands of productive work. So, while Arman's accumulation of readymades participates in the neo-dada zeitgeist of the moment, his mode of work also needs to be situated into the practices generally regarded as "culture of the people."⁹⁴ In this way, he resisted the consumerism and reaffirmed his own origins.

Arman's family and his professional education inspired his sensitivity to the past and the objects associated with it. The disregard for the past as inconvenient or unclean is a perspective that is alien or alienating to the antique and archeologically minded. Arman

refused to allow the materials generated in recent time to disappear or become an immaterial memory. He insisted on retaining the link between everyday life and a people's culture that is distinctive and separate from national culture, as regional culture advocates had since the 1930s. By the late 1950s, when Paris attempted to resuscitate national culture, Arman's work represented "the other," a regionally-based practice that aimed to counteract the alienation of urban living and the larger cultural phenomenon of historical repression.

Arman was a collector, but he did not distinguish between cultural relics, trash, or kitsch. He accumulated these objects as signs. Arman used the real to intervene and make the point that the history of objects in our civilization portends our own social interactions. Arman's methods draw on formal, iconographic, and contextual relations to demonstrate the failure of modernity to dislodge history and cultural memory. His commemorative works recognize the futility of progress and the sorry enterprise of discarding the past. Arman's attention to the lifecycle of objects provides sites of reflection on the nature of how we calculate time and repress mortality, and he drew attention to how consumption diminished the experiential potential of life. Arman used the object to bridge personal and social life and to communicate these sensibilities through this vernacular language. He created a vocabulary that articulated the way objects help define individual memory and cultural history, and he demonstrated how the proliferation of objects contribute to the anxieties of modernity – its speed, waste, and radical transformation of the social and psychological space. Rivière wrote that

Arman used repetition out of exasperation, repetition enabled him to fully identify the object and then, to reject it.⁹⁵

¹ Claude Rivière. "Langage et Communication," Sud Communications (Nice, 1961), 25.

² Arman charted his career by discussing the move from one series of works to another beginning with the Cachets in 1956 to Accumulations and Tantrums in the early 1960s. This approach is particularly evident in American publications especially the writings of Jan van der Marck. See: "Arman: The Parisian Avant-Garde in New York," Art in America 61 (November-December, 1973), 88-95. "Arman: Archeologist of the Present," exh. cat. (NY: John Gibson Gallery, November 1973). "Logician of Form/Magician of Gesture," exh. cat. (CA: La Jolla Museum of Art), 1974. and Arman (NY: Abbeville Press, 1984).

³ Arman, as quoted in Otto Hahn, Arman (Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1972), 43. This quote also appears in Jan van der Marck, Arman (NY: Abbeville Press, 1984), 47.

⁴ Alain Jouffroy. "Arman," Arman, exh. cat. (Milan: Galerie Schwarz, November 6-29, 1963), unpaginated.

⁵ Pierre Restany, "Festival of Nouveau Réalisme," exhibition pamphlet (Nice: Galerie Muratore, July – September 1961).

⁶ A.V.. "Les Arts sur la Côte d'Azur," Aujourd'hui: Art et Architecture (October 1961). Original typed manuscript, Arman Archives, New York. Hand written note for "Salut les copains."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Yves Klein, as quoted by Arman in Hahn (Paris, 1972), 6. "Tu es un bon peintre, lui dit-il un jour; mais des bons peintres, il y en a dix mille dans le monde..."

⁹ Arman, interview with author, New York, June 1991, and Pierre Restany, interview with author, New York, March 25, 1994.

¹⁰ Pierre Restany, "L'Accumulation: une philosophie de la vision et une syntaxe du langage," Arman, 1967-1968 (Abrams-Horay, 1973), unpaginated. Reprinted in Densye Durand-Ruel, Arman: Catalogue Raisonné 1960-1961-1962 (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1991), 26.

¹¹ Arman quoted in "Arman: Accumulations." Jardin des Arts (July 1960), unpaginated. Reprinted in in Denyse Durand-Ruel (1991), 26.

¹² Iris Clert, Iris-Time (L'Artventure) (Paris: Editions Denoel, 1978), 210.

¹³ Arman, interview by Daniel Abadie. "L'Archéologie du Futur," Arman (Paris: Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, 1998), 43.

¹⁴ Yves Klein, quoted by Pierre Restany. "Arman: A Radical Portrait of Modernity," Arman 1955-1991: A Retrospective (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1991), 36.

¹⁵ Arman, quoted by Corice Canton Arman for Arman, facsimile transmission to the author October 15, 1996.

¹⁶ Arman, as cited in Alison de Lima Greene. "Arman: Artist of our Time." Arman, exh. cat. (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1991), 8.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Arman's List of Objects Accumulated in the Galerie Iris Clert for the Exhibition 'Le Plein.' 1960," Arman (Houston, 1991), n.p. The list of the objects included in Le Plein indicates that Arman included 50 from the Micro Salon held at Iris Clert Gallery in conjunction with Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, April 12, 1957. But Arman states that there were approximately 20 works randomly selected from storage. This exhibition included over 100 artists associated with Surrealism, Cobra, the Ecole de Paris and a number of younger artists such as Takis, Tinguely, Klein and Arman. None of the works included in Le Plein were by Arman or Yves Klein. Arman, quoted by Corice Canton Arman for Arman, Facsimile correspondence to author dated October 15, 1996.

²⁰ Arman, Correspondence by fax with author dated October 15, 1996.

²¹ Clert (1978), 58-62.

²² Walter Lewino, "Dada Revient à Paris," (1960), Arman Archives, scrapbook #1/3, no citation.

²³ Marcel Duchamp, quoted in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, translated by Ron Padgett (NY: Da Capo Press, 1987), 95. Originally published as Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp (Paris: Editions Belfond, 1967).

²⁴ Arman, "Oral History Interview with Arman," interviewed by Sevim Fesci, April 22, 1968 (NY: Archives of American Art), 19.

²⁵ Otto Hahn, Avant-Garde: Theory et Provocations (Paris: Critiques d'Art: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1992), 139.

²⁶ Françoise Choay, "Lettre de Paris II: Culture de débris à la Galerie Iris Clert." Art International, vol. 4, no.9 (December 1960), 36.

²⁷ Alain Jouffroy, "Arman." exh. cat. (Milan: Galeria Schwartz, November 6-29, 1963), n.p.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Clert (1978), 212.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² The invitation in the collection of Jacques Matarasso, Nice, was examined by the author. Matarasso commented on the issue of value in relation to the unopened invitation in conversation with the author in Nice on January 9, 1992.

³³ Restany, as cited in Clert (1978), 212. "Un événement capital chez Iris Clert en 1960 donne au nouveau réalisme sa totale dimension architectonique. Dans un tel cadre le fait est d'importance. Jusqu'à l'antipode du vide n'avait cerné d'aussi près l'authentique organicité du réel contingent."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁵ de Lima Greene (Houston, 1991), 8.

³⁶ Clert (1978), 215.

³⁷ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. "Plenty or Nothing: From Yves Klein's *Le Vide* to Arman's *Le Plein*." Premises (New York: Guggenheim Museums, 1998), 96.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Arman, as quoted in Ted Castle, "Accumulations," Art in America, no. 11, vol. 71 (December 1983), 140. "I am a witness of my time. As an art historical statement, you are the fruit of your environment, but as an artist, I am a witness of my time. Before it became an explosion, I sensed the invasion of objects. Probably more objects have been produced in the last ten years than in all the history of humanity before this time. This

is the center of my thinking about things. It criticizes the situation, but also emphasizes the situation.”

⁴¹ Raymond Nacenta, “Ecole de Paris” (Paris: Galerie Charpentier, October – November 1960). Nacenta was the director of the gallery, and in the late 1950s began organizing an annual exhibition of the Ecole de Paris. See: Jacques Lassaing. “École de Paris 1959.” Pensée Française no. 12, v. 18 (December 1959), 57. In November 1960, Arts (Paris) featured “Ecole de Paris” in which the young painters of the Ecole de Paris from the Charpentier exhibition were diagrammed by nationality. Fifty-three percent of the artists were French, thirteen percent of the artists were Russian, and ten percent were Spanish. The lowest percentage (two-percent) of participating artists were Americans. See “Ecole de Paris” Arts (Paris) no. 795 (November 1960), endpage.

⁴² René Boullier, “Une orgie de folie mécanique”, Combat (April 11, 1960), 40.

⁴³ Otto Hahn, Arman: Ateliers d’Aujourd’hui (Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1972), 5.

⁴⁴ Pierre Restany, “Arman: A Radical Portrait of Modernity.” Arman 1955-1991: A Retrospective (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1991), 35.

⁴⁵ Arman quoted in Jan van der Marck (La Jolla, 1974), 1. Originally published in Pierre Descargues. “Arman: Accumulations et Colères.” Tribune de Lausanne (June 3, 1962).

⁴⁶ Bernard Lamarche-Vadel, “Destruction, Dumps and Trash.” Arman (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1987) reprinted in Denyse Durand-Ruel, Armand: Catalogue Raisonné 1960-1961-1962 (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1991), 12.

⁴⁷ Arman, “Oral History Interview with Arman,” interview by Sevim Fesci, April 22, 1968), 10.

⁴⁸ Arman, interview by the author, New York, June 1991. Arman did read Heindel, but unlike Klein and Pascal, he did not join the Rosicrucian Society of Oceanside, CA.

⁴⁹ Yves Klein, as published in Mc Evilly (1982), 28. Klein Archives, AZ

⁵⁰ Arman, “Oral History Interview with Arman,” interview by Sevim Fesci, April 22, 1968), 18.

⁵¹ Arman, as quoted in Edouard Valdman, Le Roman de l’Ecole de Nice (Paris: La Différence, 1991), 29.

⁵² Michel Tapié, Jackson Pollock, exh. cat., (Paris: Studio Paul Fachetti, 1953), n.p.

⁵³ Alfonso Ossorio, "Mon Ami Jackson Pollock", Jackson Pollock, exh. cat., (Paris: Studio Paul Fachetti, 1953), n.p.

"Vide et plein, action de l'homme et inertie se métamorphosent et se fondent dans l'énergie qui les soutient et qui est leur dénominateur commun."

Loin de anecdote, ou de propagande, dépouillé de tout appel matériel immédiat, ils réveillent tous deux en nous le sentiment de luttes individuelles et de racines collectives et nous rappelle ce fait trop facilement oublié: "Ce qui est extérieur est intérieur."

⁵⁴ de Lima Greene, (Houston, 1991), 10.

⁵⁵ Arman, interview by Sevim Fesci, 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ W.J.H.B. Sandberg. "Werkman (1882-1945)", Art d'Aujourd'hui, Numéro Double. "Le Graphisme et l'Art", Vols. 3-4 (February – March, 1952), 49-53. This issue also includes articles on dada typography and collage including that of Kurt Schwitters.

⁵⁹ Pierre Cabanne, Arman (Paris: Editions de la Difference, 1993), 11. Arman is quoted as stating his absolute amazement when seeing the Werkmann article.

⁶⁰ Sandberg (1952), 49.

⁶¹ Pierre Restany, Arman 1955-1991: A Retrospective, (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), 47.

⁶² Peter Jones, "Arman and the Magic power of Objects," Art International, no. 3, Vol. I (March 1963), 40.

⁶³ Dr. L. Gans, "Interview: Arman," Arman, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Galerie Mathilde, 1978), n.p.

⁶⁴ The scale 14 1/2" X 11 3/8" and the edges, cut with pinking sheers, suggests that it is a fabric sample.

⁶⁵ His address was 13, rue Paul Déroulède. Arman Archives, New York. The basement of this location is where Klein, Arman and Pasal met in 1947-48. It is here that Yves Klein painted the first blue monochrome directly on the wall. Virginie de Caumont, "Arman: la peinture du futur," (July 8, 1981), reprinted in Nice: Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (1991), 37.

⁶⁶ de Lima Greene (Houston, 1991), 11.

⁶⁷ Arman Archives, New York. "Au Foyer" was the business name of A. Fernandez et fils. This logo and the address on the stamp are found on the stationary of the second hand furniture and antique shop operated by Arman's father, a business Arman intended to continue in.

⁶⁸ Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody (NY and London: Methuen, 1985), 5.

⁶⁹ Roland Barthes, "L'activité structuraliste," in Essais critiques (Paris: Seuil, 1964), trans. Richard Howard as "Structuralist Activity," in Critical Essays (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) as cited in Ross (1995), 161.

⁷⁰ Hahn (1992), 139.

⁷¹ Matei Calinescu, Five Faces of Modernism (NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 225-262 passim. Revised edition, originally published as Faces of Modernity (Indiana University Press, 1977).

⁷² John Frow, "Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia," October, vol. 57 (summer 1991), 133.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁴ Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art (NY: Oxford University Press, 1972), 84.

⁷⁵ Susan Strasser, Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash (NY: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co. 1999), 197-198. Advertising consultant Christine Fredericks made this claim beginning in 1929. She believed that Europeans failed to see the relationship between consumerism and progress. Consequently, Europe lagged behind America -- a condition she believed was neither "civilized nor cultured."

⁷⁶ Arman, Arman: Mémoire Accumulés, entretiens avec Otto Hahn (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1992), 15. The curriculum for the commis-seur-priseur certificate awarded included art history courses taught by Bernard Dorival and Jean Cassou.

⁷⁷ Hahn (1992), 137.

⁷⁸ Arman, as quoted in de Lima Greene, 29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 31, fn 38.

⁸⁰ Arman, interview by Sevin Fesci (1968), 16. Arman's grandfather was a Separdic Jew.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fetiches de la Secte des Theophages, (DR#769) 48" X 31 1/2", 122cm. x 80 cm X 13 cm., Private Collection, Nice. Information provided by Arman Archives. On the back of this accumulation Arman wrote, "cela fait deux mille ans qu'il nous emerde [sic] pour ne pas etre mort sur un canape."

³³ This accumulation measuring 60 x 80 x 12cm was exhibited at Cordier-Warren Gallery, New York in January - February 1962. It was reproduced in "Arman at the Cordier-Warren Gallery", Art International, no. 6, Vol. 6, (February 1962), 42-43.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Arman was a member of Le Club de Jeunes; a meeting place for those interested in experimental music, art, and poetry, which opened in Nice in 1952. Eliane Radigue, Arman's first wife, was a musician experimenting with extra-musical sound and object recordings following the lead of experimental musician Pierre Schaeffer. Klein was also a close friend of concrete musician Pierre Henry since their meeting in 1956. Henry wrote "Pour penser à une nouvelle musique" in homage to Yves Klein in 1982 stating: "Sounds would become supreme... So concrete music is perhaps the music of *life* and of the *sun*." See: "En hommage à Yves Klein." Pierre Henry (1982) published in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982), 265.

John Cage acknowledged the importance of Schaeffer in Europe and on American musicians in the postwar era. See John Cage, "Experimental Music," Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage (NH: Wesleyan University Press and University Press of New England, 1973), 8. First printing 1961. "Experimental Music" first published in The Score and I.M.A. Magazine (London), June 1955. According to Cage, "In musical terms, any sounds may occur in any combination and in any continuity.

When the Allies entered Germany towards the end of World War II, it was discovered that improvements had been made in recording sounds magnetically such that tape had become suitable for the high-fidelity recording of music. First in France with the work of Pierre Schaeffer, and later here, in Germany, in Italy, in Japan, and perhaps, without my knowing it, in other places, magnetic tape was used not simply to record performances of music but to make new music that was possible because of it. Given a minimum of two tape recorders and a disc recorder, the following processes are possible: 1) a single recording of any sound can be made; 2) a recording may be made, in the course of which, by means of filters and circuits, any or all of the physical characteristics of a given recorded sound may be altered; 3) electronic mixing... permits the presentation of any number of sounds in combinations; 4) ordinary splicing permits the juxtaposition of any sounds... The situation made available by these means is essentially a total sound space, the limits of which are ear-determined only, the position of a particular sound in this space being the result of five determinants: frequency or pitch, amplitude or loudness, overtone structure or timbre, duration and morphology."

⁸⁶Arman, as quoted in Houston (1991), 49, f/n 3.

⁸⁷Daniel Abadie, Arman, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Beaubourg, 1978), unpaginated.

⁸⁸Jan van der Marck, "Arman: The Parisian Avant-Garde in New York," Art in America 61, (November-December, 1973), 92.

⁸⁹Man Ray is the precedent for Arman, especially his photograph of Kiki de Montparnasse, La Violin d'Ingres, 1924.

⁹⁰Hahn, (1972), 13.

⁹¹Arman quoted in interview with Sevim Fesci (1968), 4.

⁹²Jacques Brissot, "Formes, Objets, Mouvements" unpublished essay (1960) published in Durand-Ruel (1991), 22.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Rigby (London, 1991), 40.

⁹⁵Rivière, "Langage et Communication." Sud Communications (Nice, 1961), 25.

Chapter 5

Martial Raysse: Hygienic Surfaces

*As Penelope approaches and touches Ulysses
 He undoes her tunic ceremoniously
 Beneath
 She's in
 An (Olympic)
 Swimming suit*

Martial Raysse. "I have a thousand things to put in order." (1966)¹

Martial Raysse is the youngest of the three artists first associated with the Ecole de Nice. Like Nouveaux Réalistes Klein and Arman, Raysse was celebrated in Nice by the early 1960s for his success throughout Europe and the U.S. Raysse initially advocated use of the term Ecole de Nice among the artists² and, while most credit Klein for initiating the movement, Raysse is often considered to be its exemplar. His work drew attention directly to the Côte d'Azur, in large part because of its emphasis on the consumerism of the Mediterranean leisure industry and his use of "solarized" color to capture the region's visual aesthetic.

Restany described Raysse in 1964 as the "most autonomous" of the Nouveaux Réalistes. The critic admitted that in Raysse's work the "taste, smell and feel" of the Côte d'Azur is intrinsic. This quality distinguished him from the urban orientation of Nouveau Réalisme:

Raysse's nature prodigally pours forth the continual glitter of its tinsel riches, its pearls of neon, its decorative vegetation, the luxury of its villas, the mellow

sensuality of its sunlight, the subdued blue of its sky and sea. This nature has been sophisticated to excess – what the travel promoters would call its enhancement – and here lies the secret of its real beauty. Enhancement transcends vulgar banality by means of color.³

Otto Hahn wrote that Raysse had the distinction of being “too American for Paris, too French for New York.”⁴ This critic best characterized the position Raysse occupied and why he was a central figure in the Ecole de Nice. In this chapter, I will argue in support of Hahn’s view of Raysse’s position by examining the issues he raised within France as an artist from the South, and the view of his work as a French artist exhibiting in the U.S. in the early 1960s. Raysse’s work shared qualities with international Neo-Dada and American Pop, but his work has a distinct inflection of place. Raysse’s work epitomized the ambience of the Riviera in the early 1960s, a locale that shared little with that of Paris or New York. Raysse appropriated images and products that popularized the allure of the Riviera, and he also adopted the signature use of color associated with the formal innovations generated in the south of France associated with Matisse, in particular. His work linked the refined and the banal in a manner that was unlike his contemporaries internationally.

Raysse came from a family of artisans who worked in the ceramics center at Vallauris and were active in the French Resistance.⁵ After Picasso’s arrival in 1946, the Madoura and Tapis Vert workshops in Vallauris attracted major figures in the arts including Matisse.⁶ The workshops even produced a “celebrity collection” in 1952, which featured the work of artists and writers. Kenneth Silver stressed the significance of internationally known artists producing regional

popular art in these local workshops.⁷ “At their very core, both really and figuratively – Picasso’s ceramics are three dimensional repudiations of a certain strain of modernism, the one which, in separating high from low (i.e., elite art from popular art) and symbol from use, also separates innovation from tradition (or any tradition other than that of the “new”).⁸ He added that Picasso’s independence of spirit “caused a great deal of resentment, at least in France...”⁹ Raysse met Matisse while he was preparing the interior designs for his chapel in Vence, and he credited Matisse for inspiring his turn to visual art rather than literature.¹⁰ Raysse particularly admired Matisse’s cutouts: this piqued the artist’s interest in collage and color.

But it was the mass culture of the Côte d’Azur, generated by tourism and seasonal festivals, which provided Raysse with content. The Cannes Film Festival, for example, enjoyed a renaissance in the mid-1950s after quickly recovering from the war and postwar years. According to the film critic Dave Kehr: “A whole iconography emerged from Cannes – the palm trees, the tall green drinks, the black sunglasses, the white scooters, and the red bikini tops abandoned in the sand – and was carried to worldwide currency by Brigitte Bardot, the first movie star to be created by the Cannes publicity machine.”¹¹ Kehr pointed out that Cannes’ success was secured by images of topless starlets and the French New Wave, which ushered in a shift in mood from the “calculated drabness” of early 1950s neo-realism to a new “spirit of bright, sexy, youthful revolt” by its end.¹²

Raysse Beach (Fig. 31), the artist's 1962 installation, captured the sensibility of the Côte d'Azur in subject, vacation fashions and products, and use of color. Raysse's work was distinctive in these respects from his French and American contemporaries. Raysse's installation was featured in his first major one-person exhibition held in New York at the Alexander Iolas Gallery in November 1962. The Swedish curator Pontus Hulten had just exhibited Raysse Beach in the group exhibition "Dylaby" organized for the Stedelijk Museum.¹³ In Amsterdam, Raysse exhibited with Robert Rauschenberg, Niki de St. Phalle, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, and Per Olof Ultvelt – European and American artists associated with Neo-Dada, Nouveau Réalisme, and proto-Fluxus. In this exhibition, Raysse's work, like that of the others, was conceived as a participatory space.¹⁴ For the Iolas exhibition, Raysse's installation stood alone, and the action-based premise of installation in the "Dylaby" exhibition was less evident. The artist also included more photographs instead of the wall-mounted assemblages of readymade pool products previously used to frame the space.

The simulacra that Raysse exhibited included a plastic swimming pool, plastic beach balls, dolphins and swans, industrially made grass, beach umbrellas, and a jukebox. Raysse explained in the Iolas exhibition brochure that the swimming pool "corresponds to sophisticated and expensive taste and not to the ordinary needs of life."¹⁵ At the entry to the installation, Raysse placed an advertising sign, Raysse Beach, in neon, which simulated the sunlight of the Côte d'Azur.¹⁶ Raysse described neon as "living color," a medium that became his signature in the 1960s.¹⁷ As an advertising tool, neon communicated both a mood

and a message via its dynamic color. It attracted the eye with colored gas without being visually agitating.¹⁸ Neon also has an aural component, which like the colored light infiltrates the space. Raysse also enhanced the multi-sensory environment with the installation of space heaters to intensify warmth.

Raysse framed the installation with life-size photo-reproductions of models in swimsuits to which he added sunglasses, mirrors, and plastic flowers. He described the environment as "the ideal life, the eternal and beautiful dream, eternal youth, and eternal vacation."¹⁹ Artifice became the motivating goal in his choice of materials and color. Raysse was concerned with aesthetic issues such as taste and beauty, but he recognized that mass media and consumerism altered traditional conventions. At the time, Raysse stated: "I am a painter of simulacras. Painting is not an imitation of life, it is a re-creation."²⁰ Jean-Jacques Lévêque's commented about Raysse's work: "It is necessary to push falseness towards an end point. Bad taste, it is the dream of beauty desired too much."²¹

Donald Judd reviewed the exhibition for Arts Magazine. Judd failed to connect the artist's work with the Riviera aesthetic, or to Raysse's interest in "bad taste" as a means to express the relationship between sophistication and artifice. Judd described the installation as merely an expression of the utterly banal. Not only was the "purpose" of the room elusive to Judd but, "anything that Raysse altered, such as the photographs, seemed corny. The rest looked like any unsophisticated and cheap backyard in Canarsie."²² But vulgarity was precisely the issue Raysse was addressing. The issue of cultural "taste" was the subject of debate among French intellectuals in light of French Americanization.²³ From the

French perspective, American culture was vulgar; Raysse countered the view that there was a clear cultural distinction in taste by demonstrating that the Côte d'Azur, long associated with an international elite sensibility, shared this trait. And it was this quality that made it so appealing, especially to the youth of France in the 1960s. By recreating the ambiance of the Nice area with its internationally recognized signs—beaches, cover girls, and fashions – he identified a means to communicate internationally, while also distinguishing himself in France from Paris.

John Ashbery was important in establishing the critical perspectives about Raysse's work in the U.S. As art critic for the Paris Herald Tribune during the years 1955-1965, "his writing was important for what he saw and what he didn't see."²⁴ He wrote the Iolas catalogue introduction that accompanied Raysse Beach, a gallery that also operated in Paris. But more than the Paris connection, Ashbery described his art writing as coming from a position of "disinterestedness," in comparison with the partisan positions of major American critics.²⁵ Ashbery was interested in a range of artists who seemed to take up "personal visions" and recognized the potential for change in the self as a result of changes in the environment.²⁶ Ashbury suggested that Raysse kept everything simple and shallow in order to explore the very source of pleasure: "The colors are the lurid pastel ones of useful objects; the texture are those of new aluminum, plastic and nylon. It has been proved that women's eyelids flutter more rapidly when they enter a supermarket; Raysse has harnessed this hidden source of emotion."²⁷ Ashbery described how Raysse captured the sensational elements of

the consumer-based environment. More than simply visual attraction, these sensational environments were spaces where real emotions could be experienced. Artificial nature proved as powerful, if not more powerful, than nature in the modern sensibility *because* of its excess. This was not simply a concept, but an experience that could be realized in the Riviera environment.

Raysse's exhibition at Iolas Gallery ran concurrently with The New Realist exhibition organized by Pierre Restany and Galerie J in Paris and Sidney Janis Gallery in New York.²⁸ In the exhibition catalogue, Janis wrote that this new generation of international artists (average age 30) had replaced Abstract Expressionism (average age 50 when they gained critical attention) becoming the pacemakers of the 60s.²⁹ Janis characterized the New Realist as "city bred... a kind of urban folk artist." He described the works in this exhibition as "the true product of mass culture, the readymade." Janis added that the readymade remained unembellished but these artists intensified the impact industrially made object by means of accumulation. He referred to these "New Realists" as *factualists*, and, like Restany in his 1961 manifesto of Nouveau Réalisme: he distinguished between Duchamp-inspired work that was their common source, and dada nihilism. Restany and Ashbery contributed essays to the catalogue. In Restany's essay titled "A Metamorphosis of Nature," he wrote:

We are dealing with a new nature; a nature which as undergone a metamorphosis because of the changes in our emotions... In Europe, as well as in the United States, we are finding new directions in nature, for contemporary nature is mechanical, industrial and flooded with advertisements... The reality of everyday life has now become the factory and the city. Born under the twin signs of standardization and efficiency, extroversion is the rule of the New World.³⁰

Ashbery described “The New Realism” as a European term, which could be traced to sources in Cubism, Dada and Surrealism.³¹ In a more contemporary association, he related it to *Nouvelle Vague* in France – Robbe-Grillet and Alain Resnais – and to Antonioni in Italy. Ashbery explained that in the visual arts the use of metaphoric language was no longer possible. Instead, the object provided common ground, a neutral language, which held the potential to transform the viewer “objects were the ideal material to create experiences, which transcend the object.”³² Restany may have influenced Ashbery’s views since he described objects as a language of communication and linked the New Realists with European trends in cinema and literature, which Restany had already done in promoting Nouveau Réalisme in Europe. However, the poet Ashbery was certainly very familiar with these French cinematic and literary trends. Louis Menand recently described the impact of *Nouvelle Vague* directors who were well regarded by the Hollywood studios *and* intellectuals.³³ The innovations of the *Nouvelle Vague* included dialogue generated within the context of the filmmaking process, which gave this film genre a perceivable sense of realism. This new approach to the medium was an attack on traditional French film that showcased the director’s personal vision.³⁴ Likewise, the object orientation of the *nouveau roman*, focused on the exterior space and its surfaces as a means to dislodge the narrative from the character’s subjectivity. These ideas provided a common basis with the Nouveaux Réalistes and writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet. More specifically, Raysse’s emphasis on the superficial aspects of images and objects closely correlated with Robbe-Grillet’s ideas about the exterior space. For

example, Robbe-Grillet wrote in For a New Novel: "All projections of depth, which is to say, of human significance must be eliminated in order to arrive at the picture of the world that is *neither significant nor absurd*. It is, quite simply. Around us. ...things are there. Their surfaces are distinct and smooth, intact."³⁵

The "New Realists" exhibition precipitated a flurry of reviews and critical analysis. Brian O'Doherty called the exhibition "rearguard action by the advance guard against mass culture," making reference to Clement Greenberg's "The Avant-Garde and Kitsch."³⁶ He also suggested that this was conscious strategy of countering mass culture with the kitsch it produces. O'Doherty proposed the term "pop art" so this recognizably important trend would not be simply limited to a new form of realism. In doing so, he lessened Restany's influence by shifting the language to a term soon closely linked to New York. Instead of supporting the common basis of the European and American work, which Restany implied in organizing the show with Janis, the Europeans were disparaged or ignored, and the show announced the arrival of an American phenomenon. O'Doherty singled out Andy Warhol, George Segal, Jim Dine, and Tom Wesselman and overlooked more "traditional" works of "foreign artists."³⁷ Other critics followed. Barbara Rose, in "Dada, Then and Now," distinguished between the new American dada inspired by John Cage, who had an "understanding of the deadness of Europe and was trying to find some way out of it."³⁸ Though she admitted that the Americans have borrowed techniques from their European counterparts, she also noted that Rauschenberg, Johns, Larry Rivers, and Jim Dine differed in attitude and content.³⁹

Capitalizing on the interest generated by the exhibition, Peter Selz quickly organized "A Symposium on Pop Art" at the Museum of Modern Art on December 13, 1962:

We chose the term "pop art" because it seems to describe the phenomenon better than a name like New Realism, which has also been applied to such divergent forms as Germany's Neue Sachlichkeit of the Twenties and France's Réalités Nouvelles of the forties.⁴⁰

The transcript published in April 1963 in Arts Magazine is indicative of the move by the Americans to lay claim to the significant trend evident in the Janis show.

The "New Realists" exhibition at Sidney Janis was referred to as the "Pop Show" at Janis. Stanley Kunitz stated:

Condemning the aesthetic process, the pop artist proposes to purify the muddied stream of art by displaying objects in isolation, the banal items of our day refurbished, made real, by their separation from the continuum.⁴¹

He discussed the directions in science, philosophy, and film that dealt with the perceptions of objects. He also mentioned *nouvelle vague*: "The theme is still being pursued by some of the best creative minds of France, notably by the writers and film-makers of the so-called *nouvelle vague*."⁴² But Kunitz made no mention of artists such as Rauschenberg. Of the five critics on the panel, Hilton Kramer did not consider Pop Art as significant as the criticism it had engendered. In Kramer's words: "Pop art derives its small, feeble victories from the juxtaposition of two clichés: a cliché of form superimposed on a cliché of image."⁴³ Kramer viewed Pop Art as a boom to American art critics who rushed to replace "New Realism" with "Pop Art" and then, to declare it a movement of American artists. The critic inadvertently neatly characterized Rauschenberg's conceptual direction, the

appropriation of stereotyped images and use of cliché as the visual language of the present.

Sonya Rudikoff's review of the Janis exhibition also emphasized the Americans, with the European, Jean Tinguely, mentioned as a failure.⁴⁴ However, she did suggest that the "New Realism" was more than an appropriation of consumer items. She described the work as parody of the real; "a kind of accuracy is required, which is perhaps even stricter in some respects than that of the 'real.'" ⁴⁵ She lamented the rush to characterize the artists as acute social critics examining the detritus of our modern suburban culture. Rather, she viewed "New Realism" as playful and fun rather than sociological. She considered this work more in line with the history of modernism than sociology, thus dismissing the basis of Restany's theory of Nouveau Réalisme.

The title of Restany's article, published coincidentally with the exhibition, "Le Nouveau Réalisme à la Conquête de New York,"⁴⁶ reflected his attempt to control the language used to describe the exhibition works – a mix of Neo-Dada, Nouveau Réalisme, and Pop Art. He wanted to clarify the differences between the French and the Americans rather than judge their merits, which appeared to be the aim of the American critics. Restany wrote that Janis used his terminology because he understood that the term "New Realism" was broad enough to encompass neo-dada, junk culture, pop art, popular realists, commonists, and *factualists*. But Restany affirmed that Nouveau Réalisme was a French movement, which was defined foremost in relation to artists who participated in the first exhibition of a Paris based group, which premiered in Milan in April

1960.⁴⁷ He maintained that these artists established a new rapport with the real world, which they perceived as an urban experience, and they appropriated its objects as a system of communication. Restany conceded that a split had occurred: Janis had succumbed to the shadow of the Museum of Modern Art's "The Art of Assemblage" exhibition, organized by William Seitz in 1961.⁴⁸

Restany characterized the Americans' use of the readymade as an obsession with the object, in contrast to the Europeans who used the object as a basis of a new visual language. Restany recognized early on the major difference between the Europeans and the Americans. The Nouveau Réalistes, distinct in style, were held together by perception of the real and their choices in communicating about it. The Americans, by contrast, focused on the objects per se.

In the Janis exhibition, Raysse was represented by an assemblage titled Supermarket (Hygiène de la vision) (1961), which reflected his fascination with the Prisunic, a French general merchandise store (Fig. 32). He exhibited a display case divided into 28 compartments, which was filled with brushes, false eyelashes, powder puffs, moisturizers, and other toiletries. A mirror was angled over the box, which doubled the appearance of objects in the case, a common display technique. It was not the individual objects per se that interested Raysse, but methods of display--scale, arrangement, light, color, accumulation. Raysse illustrated the manner in which mass produced objects communicate: the viewer is seduced by the presentation as much as by the objects themselves. In Raysse's words, "I had the very simple idea of presenting the objects as they were because

they express our world. I don't make objects found in the Prisunics, it is the display itself that is the sculpture."⁴⁹

Raysse's work mirrored the moment in real and symbolic terms. He formulated a theory that provided a basis for his work, which he referred to it as "a ritual for a hygiene of vision," a cleansing of the visual experience that would enable the viewer to recognize the marvelous nature of the new.⁵⁰ Raysse engaged the spectator with images and objects that exploited advertising displays as a means to communicate an experience. The experience, in Raysse's view, had the potential of altering, ideally transforming, the viewer's perception of the modern world; he characterized this experience as a form of visual cleansing, a theme that had broader social resonance in re-construction France. Kristin Ross demonstrated that the massive desire for cleanliness in the personal and public space characterized the Americanization of postwar France.⁵¹ She also pointed out that cleanliness was associated with purging the country of the stains of the Occupation, a form of moral cleansing of the nation. This drive precipitated an exponential increase in the consumption of household appliances and cleaning products, and packaged goods that epitomized the newly sanitized environment.⁵² Household management techniques and new appliances, especially refrigerators, encouraged the French to adopt American hygienic standards, and to store products with extended shelf life. New refrigerators were shown packed with food to the delight of the housewife, husband, and friends. Functional and clean, the refrigerator embodied the new ideal of the home and this cold, hygienic space was associated with pleasure. Raysse described his work in relation to these cold

hygienic spaces: "I wanted my works to possess the serene self-evidence of mass-produced refrigerators...to have the look of new sterile inalterable visual hygiene."⁵³

Raysse's assemblages and installations reference public and private spaces associated with this cleanliness trend – kitchens, bathrooms, beaches, and department stores. Raysse focused on the surfaces of newly manufacture objects and the way advertising and labeling was used to attract the consumer. The connection between the trend toward new standards of hygiene and consumerism is one of Raysse's major conceptual concerns. It was a transformative dynamic that altered French society by eradicating vestiges of pre-consumer France. In Prisunic, Hygiene of Vision No. 1 (1961) (Fig.33), Raysse boxed packaged foods tightly as if viewed from a well-stocked kitchen cabinet. Products like OMO detergent (an advertising award winner), Persil soap-powder and Dubonnet are distinctly French; other products like Buitoni tomato paste in the center, marked Paris-New York-Rome, indicate the international distribution of food products. In contrast to periods of deprivation, the infusion of food products brought with it the need to advertise the products in a market with growing choices. Roland Barthes critiqued the new myths of everyday French life, he wanted to distinguish between the "naturalness" and ubiquity of detergents, food products, and plastics in everyday life, "what goes without saying," to what is hidden, history.⁵⁴ In "Soap-powders and Detergents," for example, Barthes discussed the cleaning effects of products such as OMO and Persil. He used advertising copy to consider the ways cleaning agents countered the evil of dirt and its cure through violent

action that "kills," or forces out dirt," driving dirt through the texture of the object, their function is keeping public order not making war."⁵⁵ The objective is to achieve liberation from dirt and stains, which becomes evident in the airy appearances of luxury that foam produces or the harsh deep cleaning of detergents such as OMO.⁵⁶

Ross suggested that the accumulation of food products reflected a need to satisfy an appetite for consumption; the memories of ration cards and the sense of desperation fueled this sense of "hunger" in the postwar years.⁵⁷ With the extended shelf life, provisions could be accumulated to eliminate any fear of shortages thus also satisfying a national psychic concern.⁵⁸ Raysse's choice of cleaning agents and food emphasize the packaging and labels that, as in Barthes argument, confuse nature and history, and masks the ideological abuse hidden beneath the surface.⁵⁹

Raysse's work complemented that of Ecole de Nice artists Klein and Arman. All three dealt with the reality of the present, but each identified a particular aspect of the experience linked with the new visible reality. Klein insisted that Raysse be counted as a Nouveau Réaliste when the group for formally named on October 27, 1960 in Klein's Paris apartment. At the time, Raysse was in Paris assisting Arman collect refuse for the Le Plein exhibition that opened on October 25, 1960 at Iris Clert's gallery. Raysse reported that within twenty minutes of the group's formation, disagreement erupted between the Affichiste artists and the artists from Nice:

We left it with a principle that we had in common, a new concept of reality. The very vague definitions seemed able to guarantee a durable agreement. However, the group had not been founded for twenty minutes when a violent quarrel erupted, each one reproaching the other over their view of this famous reality with more or less degrees of integrity or of purity.⁶⁰

Raymond Hains, in particular, was angered for he considered Raysse's work surrealism, not a new form of realism.⁶¹ Raysse told Arman in the aftermath of the altercation between Klein and Hains, that Klein believed he established Nouveau Réalisme and made the decision to quit the group in light of the disagreement. "I will make a group and we will call it the group of Nice," an idea already proposed by Raysse.⁶² A year earlier, Raysse credited Arman for urging him to move away from "nostalgic" objects to the exterior world of the Riviera.⁶³ By the time the Nouveaux Réalistes met to form the group in Paris, Raysse had already located the source of his new aesthetic in the Riviera Prisunic, an inexpensive general merchandise store. He was taken with the "profusion of colors" and the impact of the quantity of new products. Raysse quickly defined his themes in relation to the Côte d'Azur – "the joie de vivre, the evasions, the world of leisure activity, he appropriated make-up, artifice, clashing colors, the sun and sea as a means to banish death, which obsessed him."⁶⁴ He often chose items such as suntan lotions, bathing caps and sunglasses, which exuded a French caché in the most stereotypical way. His early films, made in 1961 and 1962, show the artist strolling in the aisles of the Prisunic in a hallucinatory state of pleasure under stark florescent lights. Raysse described these chain stores as "museums of modern art" and "a kind of consumer society

apology."⁶⁵ In contrast to Andy Warhol, characterized by Thomas Crow as "dramatizing the hollowness of the consumer icon: that is, events in which the mass-produced image as the bearer of desires was exposed in its inadequacy by the reality of suffering and death,"⁶⁶ Raysse parodied the emptiness of life constructed by seductive, but transitory surfaces. The delirium of the experience was the result of the accumulations of images, gadgets and ready-to-wear fashion expressly linked to the distinctly modern paradox: between time management and killing time. Warhol's focus on the "hollowness" of the consumer icon differs from Raysse who perceived the impact of product surfaces constantly accumulating and in flux. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh described Warhol's interest in the "object status, its design, and its display."⁶⁷ By contrast, Raysse was more concerned with the ensemble of objects readymade in commercial displays that conveyed a sense of the desirable aspects of Riviera living. This iconographic difference points to the difference in their sources. As Buchloh notes, Warhol early on merged the readymade tradition of the New York Dada with the legacy of Rauschenberg and Johns, one that included Abstract Expressionism.⁶⁸ By contrast, Raysse came to art having been inspired by Matisse's cutouts of refined color and elegant design combined with excesses of taste derived from the Cannes aesthetic. Raysse's sensibility was closer to his older colleagues in the Ecole de Nice who identified readymade signs, which addressed the emptiness of daily experience with its profusion of images and objects, not the resonance of a single consumer icon or public figures, which characterized Warhol's work. Restany even referred to Raysse as the "ingenue of the department store,"⁶⁹ who expressed

the real in a visual vocabulary that contrasted with the "the fossilized alphabet of gestural expressionism" of the previous generation. According to Michael Miller, the department store served as both an "encyclopedia" of consumer items and a "temple ritual of consumption. "It served as one of the primary means by which a middle-class public, often deeply unsettled by the dislocations in its older patterns of life, was won over to the new order being wrought in its name."⁷⁰

Raysse's affiliation with the Klein and Arman and the Nouveaux Réalistes catalyzed his career. In November 1960, Raysse was included in the Ile Festival d'Art D'Avant-Garde, Groupe des Nouveaux Réalistes at Versailles where Klein presented Dimanche, his appropriation of Sunday, November 27, 1960. Raysse was represented by a Prisunic advertising display, which he appropriated intact, but it was quickly discarded, mistaken for the advertising display it was. Shortly after, in April 1961, Restany organized a two-person exhibition at the Galerie Apollinaire in Milan titled "Arman, Martial Raysse e il buon senso" for the Galerie Schwarz in Milan.⁷¹ Raysse exhibited seventeen works in this exhibition; it constituted an inventory of his work to date.⁷² Most were accumulations of plastic items in the format of vertical column or display trays filled with plastic toys, household items, gardener's tools, and medical instruments. The exhibition included a single display, L'Étalage hygiène de la vision (1960), featuring cleaning products and a photograph of a smiling model in a shower cap, and the free-standing assemblage Les nylons oiseau de paradis (1960), of brightly colored plastic colanders, Lux detergent bottles and plastic spray bottles. Raysse chose plastic because it was "mass color," an international medium found in such far-

flung locations as the African Congo to Cape Canaveral.⁷³ Three years earlier, Roland Barthes described the allure of extruded plastics in bright colored forms as “ubiquity made visible.”⁷⁴ He even suggested that there was a parallel between the production of plastic and alchemy: “It is a magical substance which consents to be prosaic.”⁷⁵

Raysse participated in the three major exhibitions of *Nouveau Réalisme* in 1961. These include: 40° au-dessous Dada, organized by Pierre Restany for the Galerie J in Paris in May 1961; Nouveau Réalisme at the Galerie Samlaren in Stockholm, also in May 1961; and in July 1961, the Festival of Nouveau Réalisme in Nice. In July, Sud-Communication featured Sosno’s article, “Tendances du Nouveau Réalisme Niçois.”⁷⁶ Sosno wrote that these artists used “things at hand” without trying to change them. “They have descended to earth.” He concluded that the Ecole de Nice was an attempt to understand “the beauty of the everyday: an attempt to make the consumer into a producer of art.”⁷⁷ a description well-suited to Raysse’s artistic direction.

For Nice’s Festival du Nouveau Réalisme (July 1961), Raysse exhibited a vitrine-plage, a model for his installation Raysse-Beach, which later appeared in Amsterdam and New York the following year. Restany described his work as a “didactic proselytizing for a way of seeing.”⁷⁸ Raysse also installed Jungle, a sprawling accumulation of bucket cans, spray bottles, and flowerpots strung across the walls in a theatrical explosion. Restany wrote in the introductory essay for Galerie Muratore, “the ‘New Realism’ is a general orientation, a state of mind.

a special phenomenology of expression. Its purpose is the fascinating adventure of reality perceived in itself and not through the prism of transcription."⁷⁹

Raysse's work not only conveyed the mesmerizing potential of consumerism but also a mode of behavior, a stance of fascinated detachment. Raysse and his work shared a "look" that was young and sexy. The assemblages and displays, with their cool superficial appearance, matched the artist's self-presentation. Both displayed Raysse's ability to script chic appearances in the mode of commercial photography or cinema. Restany concluded the essay, "In the Augean stables of the Abstract, they practice the elementary hygiene of direct expression which is also (and above all) a behavior-pattern, a way of becoming aware of oneself and of the world."⁸⁰

A review by an author simply identified as "A.V." linked this work to a larger social phenomenon gripping France: teen pop culture. He or she wrote, "The 'teddy-boys' of modern painting restate the banal in the mode of a new dada formula but at the same time, triumphantly speak to their time via the banality of everydayness."⁸¹ The "teddy-boys," or "les blousons noirs," refers to a phenomenon decried by French intellectuals until 1968 as evidence of the induction of French youth into mass culture, with its materialistic and superficial orientation.⁸² In his study of popular culture in France, Rigby discussed the "teddy boys" phenomenon. He cited Emile Copfermann's 1962 study La Génération des blousons noirs: problèmes de la jeunesse française. In Copfermann's view, French youth, having absorbed mass culture, represented the success of the entertainment industry in constructing stereotypical social roles.

They represented the fruition of uncritical, instantaneous gratification fed by consumerism.³³ Raysse acknowledged that there was a gap in the experience of artists in Nice and their counterparts in other international locales, a point made based on reading international art magazines.³⁴ While the artist may be pointing out the lack of gallery/collector support for contemporary art in Nice, he might equally be pointing out the difference in spirit, exemplified by the “Festival du Nouveau Réalisme.” and in Raysse’s work, the emphasis on consumerism and mass culture, which was especially associated with Nice.

In September 1961, Raysse participated in the II e Biennale de Paris, where he exhibited a publicity display dedicated to “Amber Solaire,” a line of make-up. He titled the work Hygiene of Vision No. 7 (1960) (Fig. 34). This assemblage includes a photograph of a fashion model seated in a beach chair; flashy beach accouterments complement her “face of a dream,” meant to cleanse the vision of all but pleasure and escapism. Raysse appropriated the theme, and even wording, of the spring 1960 fashion look and products.

“Amber solaire” was a new product line inspired by Gauguin. In Les Lettres Françaises (April 1960), the lead article, “Le Printemps...et Gauguin,” states that fashion will be influenced by art – especially the works of Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Buffet, all popular exhibitions on view in Paris that spring.³⁵ Gauguin was identified as the front-runner because of his seduction and exotic solar colors. “Maquillage ensoleillé,” the new seasonal make-up line was the palette inspired by Gauguin and presented by the designer Harriet Hubbard Ayer. She called her make-up line “Amber Sun.” Ayer was just one of several

designers, including Elizabeth Arden and Fernand Aubrey, who created “maquillage ensoleillé” for the summer of 1960. In their advertising, they stressed luminosity, exoticism, and the “face of a dream.”⁸⁶

In Sosno’s 1961 interview with Raysse,⁸⁷ the artist described his work as a “totem, a catalyst for the viewer to enter the realm of the marvelous found in everyday life.” He added: “It is a ritual for a hygiene of vision.” Like Klein and Arman, the work has a functional aspect. For Raysse, it was a “moral one – suggesting a conception of the world and an attitude towards existence.”⁸⁸ His work was intended to be a vehicle of experience wherein the viewer’s perception of the real is transformed. Raysse later explained:

Human sadness was the fashion of Buffet, the last chic with its tragic figures and its rings under the eyes. I would like to exalt the modern mode, the optimism and the sun. To paint sadness one only plays the snob of morbid unconsciousness! Death is, well, rather dreadful, sufficiently disquieting...let’s say that my tableaux are perhaps an exorcism. One needs to chase the idea of death, to reassure itself. By work, by the beauty...⁸⁹

Raysse saw in advertising the means to communicate through cliché. In Raysse’s words: “I began my work with pre-existing clichés. These clichés are a common site, the leit-motif the sentimental climate of the period.”⁹⁰ His theme had soon expanded to include the fashion photographs of woman, a subject he emphasized in his exhibition at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf in June 1962.

The photo played for me the role of a connection, which in its beginning took the shape of stereotyped faces of the young women in advertisements, leitmotiv of our visual culture. Through these faces, a first type of real communication was established using readymade formulas.⁹¹

Miroir au Houpettes (1962) (Fig. 35) demonstrated Raysse's interest on the young woman as site of superficial beauty. Raysse collaged a photograph of a model, make-up, and powder puffs, onto the mirror, the place where the real and artificial meet in the ritual of creating an illusion. The female was treated as a surface, which was embellished by excessive application of color and accoutrements. The model is depicted in three continuous planes as she turns towards herself in the mirror. The mirror is the surface where the woman and her image meet, the site where she constructs her appearance by means of the commercial products of the fashion industry.

Raysse's exhibition "Mirrors and Portraits" opened in Los Angeles on January 6, 1963, it followed the New York debut of Raysse Beach in New York. Like Klein, Raysse, was comfortable in California, and he later described the Los Angeles area as "...un Côte d'Azur gigantesque."⁹² Raysse met Virginia Dwan through Arman in Nice.⁹³ She was the first to offer Raysse a modest contract, and she recalled that he had no gallery affiliations in Paris at that time.⁹⁴

Rayssee exhibited mixed media assemblages based on advertising models independent from the installation format he used in New York. Ashbery again contributed a statement about Raysse's work to the catalogue:

Martial Raysse has taken the colors and textures of this attractive world of the supermarket and made a poem of them...A box of OMO – the leading French detergent – was considered in itself an object designed to provide us with mountains of suds as well as a certain visual pleasure. Unlike some of his colleagues he is not trying to put across an ironic message. Things are left as they are. "I want everything in my work to be good-looking and brand-new," he once said wistfully.⁹⁵

This exhibition did include selected works from the period between 1959 and 1963; but the close-up female was the major motif. He solarized the women's faces with screened or spray painted colors and adorned them with plastic accoutrements or neon transforming them into excessive advertising prototypes. The colored light wheels used in dance cafés along the Riviera may have inspired his gaudy use of color. In the most provocative scene in Vadim's And God Created Woman (1956), for example, Bardot danced with abandon as her skin changed colors under the revolving dance light.⁹⁶ Otto Hahn described the delirious use of color in Raysse's work as a desire for excessive beauty, which is concentrated on the surface, a screen on which modern dreams are reflected.⁹⁷

On the invitation for the exhibition (Fig. 36), a photograph of a model with strands of hair attached, a powder-puff, a lipstick print on a mirror and a tube of lipstick were arranged like an equation. The model and products are factors in the creation of a formula for beauty carried out in a private ritual, the result presented in a public space. It was that ritual that intrigued Raysse. He expressed it as an additive process leading to an accumulation of signs of contemporary seduction. In Beatrice (1962), the photographic image sprouts a cloud of powder puffs from her head as she meditates on the hair conditioner attached to the salon towel draped around her neck. Rite of Spring captures the gaudy but marvelous in the manner of Dali's surreal foliated heads in paintings and window displays.

Raysse emphasized the eyes and lips of the female face in several works, such as Rose (1962) (Fig. 37). On a red ground, the face, neck and shoulder of the woman have a pronounced pink sheen adjacent to high value yellow, her almond

eyes are accentuated further with red and yellow paint. The lips are deep green then outlined with a tube of white neon. To the right side, "ELLE" appears in commercial lettering. Unlike Warhol, who began to make screen-printed paintings of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy in 1962, Raysse was primarily interested in the ordinary ideal female image. Works such as France Verte (1963), like Rose, exaggerated sensuousness and vulgarity, and used superficial symbolism – even that of a traffic light colors -- red, yellow, green – to convey behavioral overtures. Crow pointed out that Warhol chose celebrities, whose stature was elevated by death or sickness, thus dramatizing their breakdown as a product.⁹⁸ By contrast, Raysse exposes the excess of artificial devices advertising women and turning them into products, which seep into culture as a stereotype that is anonymous, but has a seductive impact. They function as a means to transform consciousness about the newly exhibitionistic potential of young women at a moment when women were redefining their roles in a more liberal consumer society, and openly challenging traditional values.

Women's fashion magazines of the 1950s featured models positioned as mannequins, part of a décor. A perusal of Paris Vogue or Officiel à la Mode à Paris in the early 1960s reveals the extent to which women and mannequins merged.⁹⁹ This world of perfected display fully integrates young, attractive women with perfect skin, features and slender bodies enhanced by seasonal make-up and fashions arranged before alluring backdrops, especially Mediterranean beaches and ski resorts. Aseptic, frozen and distant, the models provide an image of the ideal in which natural comportment and fresh faces are masked with

prescribed postures and surface foundation. Raysse described the process of perfecting images of women as eliminating “cellular corruption.”¹⁰⁰

Raysse understood the role fashion played in the tourist experience. Malcolm Bernard pointed out that fashion is linked to changes in recreation, and is an indicator of the beginning or end of a certain ritual of recreation.¹⁰¹ In tableaux such as Souviens-toi de Tahiti (1963) (Fig.38) or Soudain l'été dernier (1963), Raysse connected stereotyped woman with stereotyped locations. He brought illusory image into real space with objects such as sun-hats, beach balls and umbrellas that jut out from the life-size assemblages. Tahiti Beach, one of the fashionable tourist beaches in San Tropez, is an inescapable reference to Gauguin's exotic paintings, and to Matisse's cutout. In contrast to the far off exoticism of Gauguin's paintings or the collage fragments of Matisse's memory image, Raysse's photo-based technique is hyper-realist but equally remote. She is proximate to the viewer spatially and her accoutrements extend out into the viewer's space, yet she is distant, even absent, enhancing the voyeuristic, even scopoc experience.

Raysse treated the woman and landscape as an ensemble of exaggerated Mediterranean color. In his own words:

Here on the Côte d'Azur color is everywhere. Look at the beach. There is a woman under a mauve-green umbrella wrapping her self in a white towel with red polka dots. The landscape is a living picture...¹⁰²

Raysse referenced tourist locations as a means of extending his female stereotypes into stereotyped public spaces. Tourism is often considered a

fabricated experience or at least, a pale imitation of the real. Moles considered tourism a pseudo-event analogous to religious excursions in a society of transitory values.¹⁰³ But as MacCannell pointed out, these tourist situations often result in the creation of new visual forms.¹⁰⁴ This is the case in Nice, a locale described by Raysse and Klein as a form of "homeopathic medicine."¹⁰⁵ Nice became a metaphor for physical and spiritual revival – not transience. The beach vacation was a cyclical event that rewarded the urbanite for yearlong work. It established a pattern of pleasure and renewal that was reinforced by mass media. Raysse appropriated that vision and transformed it into an ideal living memory. Nude, yellow and calm (1962) (Fig. 39) illustrated the successful combination of woman and landscape. In the foreground, a contemporary young woman, with an overall yellow cast, reclines nude in front of drawn curtain before the beach at Nice. The inaccessibility of the figure is not simply an objectification of the female nude, but Raysse insinuates that her perfection is not only attractive but results in her own sense of alienation and isolation. Her classical calm and sense of "eternal feminine," to use Simone de Beauvoir's words, is as distant and unreal as the painted coastline depicted in the popular graphic style of Raoul Dufy.¹⁰⁶

For Raysse's second *Iolas* exhibition in 1964, Ashbery wrote that Raysse's work represented a "chivalrous utopia."¹⁰⁷ He pointed out that the artist succeeds in creating a sense of warmth despite the coldness of his materials and their clinical purity. But he also signaled that his work was distinctly French when he referred to the medieval legacy of woman as an ideal and unattainable love, and Raysse as the poetic servant of her perfection. He wrote that Raysse "has led his

viewers to the window," but it would be the choice of the viewer to perceive the extraordinary reality of the present.

Restany referred to Raysse as the "Matisse of 2000" because of his subjects, use of color, and use of commercial mediums such as photography, film, plastics and neon.¹⁰⁸ He rendered his contemporary subjects with a focus on formal innovations such as the installation format, and thematic groups rendered with extreme theatrically. Raysse exemplifies Pincus-Witten's remark that artists of the Ecole de Nice wanted to conquer bad taste on its own turf.¹⁰⁹ By the middle 1960s, Raysse promoted "bad taste" as the only means of true expression. Robert Solomon suggested that kitsch is a genre with distinct aspects; in his view, "high or elite kitsch" targets "bad taste" for exploitation, and it relies on superficial emotional appeal and hedonistic escapism.¹¹⁰ Raysse epitomizes Solomon's model for he replaced a longing for a lost paradise with an affordable dream, a dream already conceived in advertising displays and tourist brochures.

Raysse expanded upon the tradition of women in nature, a continuing theme in western art history associated with exotic locales. He referred to artists such as Gauguin, Matisse, and Bonnard but he realized the image with fashion shots geared to short-term seasonal importance. He soon after appropriated art historical images of the bathing nudes by Tintoretto, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Lucas Cranach, and Jean Broc. He re-presented these painters' works as products of cheap mass production inspired by industrial and commercial success of postwar Japan with its international markets. He admired the Japanese "adventurousness" he saw in department stores.¹¹¹ The series titled Made in

Japan was initially inspired by Ingres' Grande Odalisque, 1814. He transformed the images using excessive color and patterns, and arranging the planes of foreground to background on separate panels creating a shallow theatrical space of mixed mediums, including neon. They exemplified his notion of "bad painting" in their excessive materials and jarring combinations of color and patterns (Figs. 60). In Tableau Turk et Invrassemble, Made in Japan (Fig. 40), based on Ingres' Turkish Bath of 1862, Raysse used sixteen separate panels painted or printed with "mod" patterns, which he described as a "means of finding a new definition of space."¹¹²

Raysse exhibited these works along with neon sculptures in his first major exhibition in Paris at the Iolas Gallery in June 1965.¹¹³ Shortly after, Stedelijk Museum, which organized the Dylaby exhibition in 1962, organized a retrospective of Raysse's work in October 1965. The connection between Matisse and Raysse was highlighted on the catalogue cover; their names were juxtaposed horizontally with some letters crossed-out to link the spelling of the artists' names: the exhibition was subtitled "Maitre et esclave de l'imagination." The checklist of the exhibition included eighty-two works; it was fully illustrated with texts by Raysse, Restany and Otto Hahn.¹¹⁴ Raysse wrote that the only advantage of the artist over the machine was his ability to be excessive, to, in fact, create images in which excess and taste merge in "bad painting." Raysse described the sensations generated by this work as sadness, transgression, and a true sense of emotion.¹¹⁵ He suggested that it was by means of excess that one would be able to communicate in a direct, even brutal way. The photograph adjacent to his

statement shows him suspended in air with his arms outstretched. He is hanging, as if on a cross, but in a sharp suit and polished shoes.

Raysse created a paradise distinct from that envisioned by Klein; it is inseparable from the ensemble of products and locations that created it. It exists in the perfection of tourist locales of the Côte d'Azur. Raysse also succeeded in breaking down the equation between woman and nature; in his construction both woman and nature are artificial. They are both perfect vehicles of reproducible desire; a system of signs linked to escapism. Their fictive exoticism has precedent in Gauguin's Tahitian paintings with their strong sense of color and planes of patterns. Gauguin lured the imagination of the French to a paradise outside the hexagon. He created a primitive paradise supported, in part, by the needs of a society moving into the modern era. Raysse, by contrast, is fully ensconced in the tamed and glamorous environment of tourist beaches, photographer's studios, and department stores. His paradise is, by comparison, a real fiction entirely comprised of superficial appearances parading as reality.

Raysse represented France in the 1966 Venice Biennial. His submission, titled Nice-Venice (Fig. 41), was awarded the David Bright Prize, given to artists under forty-five years of age. The work consists of thirty-some panels with fragmented images of locales between these cities. They are spread multi-directionally across the wall creating patterns out of color saturated architectural and natural places that constitute a tourist guide. Easily identifiable monuments include the Grand Canal, Doge's Palace, and the palm trees of the Cote d'Azur. Hahn described Raysse as dispersing our vision into a field in which the

ambiguities of vision meet the very problems of language. Raysse articulated the sense of spatial ambivalence and the problem of its articulation without the stabilizing impact of readymade, if not cliché images and places. Raysse reduced the process of travel between these two cities to a loose band-aid installation of culturally stereotyped images en route. The haphazardness with which they were installed forces the viewer to shift perspective – down, up, sideways, etc. – resulting in a disorienting experience of space. Any sense of order or stability is based on the viewers' recognition of the sites, whether directly experienced or simply recognized.

Abraham Moles wrote that kitsch is essential element of a society devoted the leisure; and cycles of kitsch are related to cycles of consumerism.¹¹⁶ He described the pattern of consumption as moving from object appropriation, fetishization of consumer products, ensemble organization of the consumer object into a décor, and finally into alienation. He also correlated hedonism and escapism to consumerism alienation.¹¹⁷ Like Klein, Raysse considered kitsch the appropriate expression of the contemporary moment and a new direction in the visual arts. Raysse wanted to obliterate the difference between good and bad taste, to close the space between art and consumerism, and art and leisure.

Raysse's interest in the surfaces of the contemporary life led him to analyze the structures of stereotyped images by the mid-1960s. In his exhibition at Iolas Gallery in New York in November 1966, his major work was titled Geometric Variable and Life is so Complex (1966). In this wall installation, the face of the woman is cut into twelve parts then rearranged with some areas, the

eyes and mouth, repeated. The fragments of the screened plexi-glass are arranged in a manner that diffuses the face into a grid of abstract patterns. Raysse decomposed the face to interrogate specific elements from different angles. He implicates the viewer by using a reflective surface: the viewer's image meets his facial codes on the surface.

Otto Hahn categorized Raysse's work in three phases: appropriation of consumer items; use of photography and photocopies; and, use of film, projectors and TV.¹¹⁸ In Hahn believed that Raysse used in his art "the wealth of industrial resources to rival the beauty of the modern world."¹¹⁹ Raysse's 1967 work, Idémité, maintenant vous êtes un Martial Raysse (Fig.42) exemplifies his use of communication technology, but also its link with anonymity, which characterizes mass culture. He demonstrated this with his choice of the increasingly popular medium of television. This mixed-media tableau is comprised of a large scale white cut-out of the shape of a head with a TV screen attached to a video recorder, which projects images of the audience, as seen from behind, onto the white outline. The black outline of the passing groups of individuals is shown as a series of anonymous shapes passing across the white screen of similar shape. The viewer participates as an anonymous component of the work, a distinct, but unidentifiable form in the context of other like signs.

Raysse captured the aesthetic of the Riviera in the pre-1968 era, one that is neither Parisian nor a product of America. It is at once French and American but, more precisely, it is a visual manifestation of internationalism—mass culture, kitsch, consumerism—with an inflection of the sensibility of the Riviera. His

work is indebted to the artistic precedents established in the area – a synthesis of French modernist formal innovations in color, light and themes, and the particular look of chic Mediterranean tourism that epitomized by the Côte d'Azur in the 1960s.

¹ Martial Raysse. "I have a thousand things to put in order." typed statement, artist file (NY: Museum of Modern Art, dated November 1966), reprinted in Martial Raysse, exhibition brochure (NY: Alexander Iolas Gallery, November 5-December 3, 1966), unpaginated.

² Arman. "Oral History Interview with Arman," interview by Sevim Fesci, April 22, 1968, (NY: Archives of American Art), 17.

³ Pierre Restany. Martial Raysse, trans. Neil A. Levine (NY: Alexander Iolas Gallery, November 24-December, 1964), unpaginated.

⁴ Otto Hahn. "Instant Raysse." Art & Artists, vol. 2, no. 5 (August 1967), 14.

⁵ Véronique Dabin. "Chronologie." Martial Raysse, exh. cat. (Paris/Nîmes: Éditions du Jeu de Paume/Carré d'Art, Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1992), 30. Raysse considered his family's involvement with the Resistance and their connection to the ceramic workshops important to his development as an artist.

⁶ Dominique Forest, Vallauris: Céramiques de peintres et de sculpteurs. (Vallauris/Paris: Musée de Céramique d'Art Moderne de Vallauris/Diffusion, Seuil, c. 1995). Particularly in the 1950's, the workshops celebrated their collaborations with the artists. A "Celebrity Collection" was begun 1952 with the works of the artists and writers such as Paul Eluard and Pierre Reverdy. By far, the most works made in the workshops were by Picasso and Chagall.

⁷ Kenneth E. Silver. "Pots, Politics, Paradise." Art in America, Vol. 88, no. 3 (March, 2000), 78-85, 141.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰ Alexander Watt. "Martial Raysse on the Move." Paris Commentary. Studio International, Vol. 170, no. 868 (August 1965), 83.

¹¹ Dave Kehr. "A Critic's View." Cannes: Festival International du Film (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 21-22.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Pontus Hulten and Daniel Spoerri. "Dylaby, Dynamisch Labyrinth" exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, August 30-September 30, 1962).

¹⁴ "Dylaby." photographs of Raysse's installation during the vernissage published in Martial Raysse (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 49-50. Raysse was photographed wading in the plastic pool amid models and mannequins. Spoerri, Robert Rauschenberg, and Niki de Saint-Phalle were dancing to the jukebox in the installation.

¹⁵ Martial Raysse, Martial Raysse (NY: Alexander Iolas Gallery, November, 1962).

¹⁶ Martial Raysse, as quoted in Dabin. "Chronologie," Martial Raysse (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 48.

¹⁷ Martial Raysse. "La Beauté, c'est mauvais goût," excerpts from interview by Jean-Jacques Lévêque. Arts (Paris), June 16-22, 1965, p. 39.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Martial Raysse, as quoted in Dabin. "Chronologie," Martial Raysse (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 48.

²¹ Jean-Jacques Lévêque. "Martial Raysse: la beauté, c'est mauvais goût," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1962, 21. "Il faut pousser la fausseté jusqu'au bout. Le mauvais goût, c'est le rêve d'une beauté trop voulue."

²² Donald Judd, "Martial Raysse," Arts Magazine no. 51 (February 1963), 51.

²³ Herman Lebovics, Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4.

²⁴ David Bergman. "Introduction," John Ashbery: Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles 1957-1987, ed. David Bergman (Harvard University Press, 1989), xiv.

²⁵ Ibid., xii.

²⁶ Ibid., xviii.

²⁷ John Ashbery, Raysse Beach (NY: Alexander Iolas Gallery, 1962).

²⁸ Sidney Janis and Pierre Restany, The New Realists (NY: Sidney Janis Gallery, October 31-December 1, 1962). The exhibition included artists from France,

Italy, England, Sweden, and New York. Raysse, Klein, Blue Sponge Sculpture, 1961; Arman Accumulation of Sabers, 1962; Hains. Affiches Lacerée, 1962; Christo, L'empaquetage, 1961; Spoerri, Multiplicateur d'art, 1962; Tinguely, WNYR7, 1962. US: Agostino, Dine, Indiana, Latham, Lichtenstein, Moskowitz, Oldenbourg, Phillips, Rosenquist, Segal, Stevenson, Thiebaud, Warhol and Wesselman. From Italy: Mimmo Rotella and Enrico Baj, Baruchello, Festa, Schifano; England: Peter Blake; From Sweden: Ultveldt and Ovid Fahlstrom.

²⁹ Sidney Janis. "On the theme of the exhibition." The New Realists, New York 1962, unpaginated.

³⁰ Pierre Restany. "A Metamorphosis of Nature," The New Realists (NY: Sidney Janis Gallery, 1962), unpaginated.

³¹ John Ashbery. "The New Realism." The New Realists (NY: Sidney Janis Gallery, 1962), unpaginated.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Louis Menand. "Paris, Texas." The New Yorker (February 17 – February 24, 2003), 174. François Truffaut came to New York for the American distribution of his film "The 400 Blows" in 1960, and he was joined by Jean-Luc Godard at the negotiations with Universal Studios to produce "Fahrenheit 451," in New York in 1962, the year Godard's masterwork, "Breathless" was released.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 172. Menand explained: "In the nineteen-fifties, the *Cahiers* stood for three things: contempt for postwar French cinema...; the worship of Hollywood filmmakers...; and the *politique des auteurs*, the theory that the movies of important directors should be considered as a single body of work expressing, through the mise-en-scène, the director's personal vision."

³⁵ Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, Inc.), 75.

³⁶ Brian O'Doherty, "Art: Avant-Garde Revolt," originally published The New York Times (October 31, 1962), 41. Reprinted in Steven Henry Madoff. Pop Art: A Critical Anthology (1997), 41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁸ Barbara Rose. "Dada, then and Now," Art International (January 1963), 23-28. Reprinted in Pop Art: A Critical History, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁰ Peter Selz. "A Symposium on Pop Art." Arts (April 1963), 35-45. Reprinted in Pop Art: A Critical History, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (1997), 65.

⁴¹ Stanley Kunitz, as quoted in "A Symposium on Pop Art." Arts (April 1963), 35-45. Reprinted in Pop Art: A Critical History, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (1997), 75.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Hilton Kramer, as quoted in "A Symposium on Pop Art." Arts (April 1963), 35-45. Reprinted in Pop Art: A Critical History, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (1997), 68.

⁴⁴ Sonya Rudikoff. " Art International Vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1963), 39-41.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Pierre Restany. "Le Nouveau Réalisme à la Conquête de New York," Art International Vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1963), 29.

⁴⁷ Pierre Restany, "Les Nouveaux Réalistes," preface written on April 16, 1960 for exhibition Arman, Dufrène, Hains, Yves le Monochrome, tinguely, Villeglé (Milan: galerie Apollinaire, May 1960), unpaginated.

⁴⁸ Restany, Art International Vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1963), 29. He was referring to William Seitz, The Art of Assemblage, exh. cat. (NY: Museum of Modern Art, October 2 – November 12, 1961). Raysse was included this exhibition at age twenty-four. He was represented by a single work, Nécrepole, luxe, et parfum, a loan from the Galerie Schwarz exhibition in Milan.

⁴⁹ Martial Raysse, as quoted in unedited text, undated. Published in Dabin, "Chronologie." Martial Raysse (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 36.

⁵⁰ Martial Raysse, "L'Ecole de Nice à la Biennale de Paris." interview by Sosno, Sud-Communication, no. 4 (October-November, 1961), 23.

⁵¹ Kristin Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonialization and the Reordering of French Culture (MA: MIT Press, 1995), Chapter 2 *passim*.

⁵² André Malraux initiated his tenure as director of the Ministry of Culture with a public project to clean the monuments of Paris. See Lebovics, Mona Lisa's Escort (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 211.

⁵³ Martial Raysse, "I have a thousand things to put in order," extract reprinted in Martial Raysse, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Dwan Gallery, May 31-June 24, 1967), 17.

⁵⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Janathan Cape Ltd. (NY: Hill and Wang, 1972), 11. Originally published as *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁷ Ross (MA, 1995), 72.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ Martial Raysse. "Refusing Duality," *Arts Magazine* (Vol. 41, No. 4, 1967), 34-36. "Nous partions du principe que nous avions en commun une nouvelle conception de la manière d'aborder la réalité... Ces définitions très vague semblaient capables de garantir une entente durable. Or, le group n'était pas fondé depuis vingt minutes qu'il partait dans une querelle violent, spectaculaire, chacun reprochant au soins d'aborder fameuse réalité avec plus ou moins d'intégrité ou de pureté."

⁶¹ Arman, "Arman." interview by Susan Hapgood, New York City, November 4, 1992, exh. cat. *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art, 1958-62* (New York: Universe Books/American Federation of the Arts, 1994), 108. "Raysse did not really fit with the group at the beginning. There was a big brouhaha about him. The poster artists, especially Raymond Hains, did not want to accept Raysse because they were not familiar with his work. They went to the attic of the house where Martial lived to see his work and they shouted, 'This is Surrealism not New Realism. We do not accept it! This turned into a heated discussion and Klein struck Hains.'" In an earlier interview, Arman reported that Hains compared Raysse's work ("a bit surrealist") with Klein's. Hains reportedly said, "It's like you [Klein], when you make woman, print [sic]. I like the blue but I don't like the..." see Arman, interview with Sevim Fesci (April 22, 1968), 21.

⁶² Arman, interview by Sevim Fesci (April 22, 1968), 21.

⁶³ Martial Raysse, extract from unpublished interview, published in Dabin, "Chronologie," (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 31.

⁶⁴ Dabin. "Chronologie," (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 47. "exaltant le joie de vivre, l'évasion et le monde des loisirs, il s'approprie le maquillage, l'artifice, les couleurs éclatantes, le soleil et la mer afin de conjurer la mort qu'il obsède."

⁶⁵ Martial Raysse, unedited text, no date. Published in Dabin, "Chronologie." Martial Raysse (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 36. "Les Prisunics sont les musée d'art moderne." "C'était une sort d'apologie de la société de consommation."

⁶⁶ Thomas Crow, The Rise of the Sixties (NY: Harry N. Abrams 1996), 86.

⁶⁷ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," Andy Warhol: A Retrospective (MY: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 43.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁶⁹ Pierre Restany, "Arman, Martial Raysse e il buon senso," (Milan: Galerie Schwartz, April 1961), unpaginated.

⁷⁰ Michael Miller, The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), *passim*, as cited by Thomas Crow, Modern Art in the Common Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.* Works listed in this exhibition include fourteen from 1960, four from 1961 and one from 1959. They include: L'Étalage hygiène de la vision (1960), Super Marché magie multicolore (1961), Les nylons oiseau de paradis (1960), Variation sur 11 bouteilles (1960), Nécropole, luxe et parfum (1960), Nécropole, c. inique (1960), Nécropole, huppée (1960), Neuf vitrines délicates et saugrenues (1961), Transmutation bleue (1960), Transmutation (1960), Alchimie (1960), Shaker aux linges gris (1960), Deux pantoufles à jamais (1960), Gris poudreux (1960), La pomme (1960), Pourrir avec délicatese (1960), Coulée...nulle part (1960), Coulée ...la reste de ma vie (1959).

⁷³ Martial Raysse, "L'École de Nice à la Biennale de Paris." interview by Sosno, Sud-Communication, no. 4 (October-November, 1961), 22.

⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, Mythologies trans. Annette Lavers (NY: Hill and Wang 1972), 97.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁶ Sosno, "Tendances du Nouveau Réalisme niçois." Sud-Communication, le jeune, no. 108 (June 1961), 18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁸ Pierre Restany, quoted in Dabin, "Chronologie," (Paris/Nîmes, 1992), 46. Restany described Raysse's "vitrine-display" as "un véritable prosélytisme didactique du donner à voir."

⁷⁹ Pierre Restany, "Festival of Nouveau Réalisme" (Nice: Galerie Muratore, July-September 1961).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ A.V., "les Expositions en Provence et a L'Etranger – les Arts sur la Cote D'Azur, handtyped manuscript for Audourd'hui Art et Architecture, Boulogne S/Seine, October 1961, n.p. Arman Archives, New York.

⁸² Brian Rigby, Popular Culture in Modern France: A Study of Cultural Discourse (London: Routledge, 1991), 165.

⁸³ Emile Copfermann, La Génération des blousons noirs: problèmes de la jeunesse française (1962), as cited in Rigby (1991), 166. Rigby points out that it was not until 1968 in France that social radicals such as Situationist Raoul Vaneigem recognized the revolutionary potential of "teddy boys" within capitalism.

⁸⁴ Martial Raysse, Idéntitiés, revue littéraire, no. 11-12 (summer–fall 1965), 1.

⁸⁵ Hélène Cingria, "Le Printemps...et Gauguin." Les Lettres Françaises no. 821(April 21-27, 1960), 9.

⁸⁶ Ibid. "visage du rêve" was also the name of a face powder.

⁸⁷ "L'Ecole de Nice à la Biennale de Paris" (Sud-Communication, October 1961), 22-23.

⁸⁸ Martial Raysse, quoted in Otto Hahn, "Instant Raysse," Art and Artists (August 1967), 16.

⁸⁹ Martial Raysse, "La beauté, c'est mauvais goût," interview with Jean-Jacques Lévêque, Arts (Paris) (June 16-22, 1965), 39. "La tristesse humaine était à la mode de Buffet du dernier chic avec ses figures tragiques et ses cernes sous les yeux. Le voulais exalter le mode moderne, l'optimisme et le soleil. Peindre la tristesse ne peut être que le jeu snob d'une inconscience malade! La mort est bien assez affreuse, suffisamment inquiète... Disons que mes tableaux sont peut-être un exorcisme. Il faut chasse l'idée de mort, se rassurer. Par le travail, par la beauté..."

⁹⁰ Martial Raysse, quoted in Otto Hahn, "La Beauté comme invention et délire," Art International (Special Number, 33rd Venice Biennale), Vol. X/6 (Summer 1966), 78.

⁹¹ Martial Raysse. "La Beauté, c'est le mauvais goût." interview with Jean-Jacques Lévêque. (June 16-22, 1965), 39. "La photo a joué chez moi le rôle d'un relais qui, à ses débuts, a pris la forme de ces visages stéréotype des jeunes femmes des réclames, leitmotiv de notre culture visuelle. Au travers de ces visages, un premier type de communication vécue s'établissait au-delà des formules jusque' alors utilisées."

⁹² Jean-Jacques Lévêque, "Martial Raysse: la beauté, c'est le mauvais goût." Beaux-Arts (June 16-22, 1965), 21.

⁹³ Virginia Dwan, interview with Charles Stuckey (1984), 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ John Ashbury. "Mirrors and Portraits: Martial Raysse" exhibition catalogue. (Los Angeles: Dwan Gallery, 1963).

⁹⁶ John Ardagh (1968), 393. Bardot epitomized the ingenue breaking with conventional behavior. In Ardagh words: "For the first time in French cinema since the war, here was youth looking at itself with raw directness; and instead of the traditional coquette in a man's world à la Martine Carol, here was a new type of young heroine, wild, sensual, and emancipated, much closer to the contemporary truth."

⁹⁷ Otto Hahn, "La Beauté comme Invention et Délire," Art International (Special Number) The 33rd Venice Biennale, Vol. X/6 (Summer 1966), 78.

⁹⁸ Crow (1996), 51.

⁹⁹ See for example Officiel de la Couture et de la Mode de Paris no. 519-520 (June 1965), 58.

¹⁰⁰ Martial Raysse, as cited in Otto Hahn. "Instant Raysse," (1967), 14.

¹⁰¹ Malcolm Barnard, Fashion as Communication (NY: Routledge Press, 1996), 65.

¹⁰² Martial Raysse, quoted in Otto Hahn, "The Painter of As If," Arts Magazine (September-October 1965), 30.

¹⁰³ Abraham Moles, Le Kitsch, l'art de Bonheur (Paris: Maison Mame, 1971), 15.

¹⁰⁴ Dean MacCannell, Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

¹⁰⁵ Sosno, 1960 interview with Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, and Arman, published as "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes." in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982) 264.

¹⁰⁶ Le Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nice has one of the largest collections of Raoul Dufy' painting. One of his most admired subjects is the Jetée Promenade on the Promenade des Anglais.

¹⁰⁷ John Ashbery, Martial Raysse (NY: Alexander Iolas Gallery, November 24-December 31, 1964), unpaginated.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Restany, "Arman, Martial Raysse, Klein: les insurgés de l'Ecole de Nice," Plaisir de France 34 Année, no 353 (March 1968), 17.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Ecole de Nice." Arts (December 1988), 61.

¹¹⁰ Robert C. Solomon, "On Kitsch and Sentimentality." Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 49 (winter 1991), 3-4.

¹¹¹ Martial Raysse, quoted in Alexander Watt, "Martial Raysse on the move." Studio International, vol. 170, no.868, (August 1965), 84.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹³ Otto Hahn. "L'Obsession Solaire," Martial Raysse (Paris: Alexandre Iolas Gallery, June 10-July 10, 1965), unpaginated. This essay was reprinted in Trois Artistes de L'Ecole de Nice (Nice: Galerie des Ponchettes, 1967).

¹¹⁴ Pierre Restany, Otto Hahn, and Martial Raysse, Maître et Esclave de l'Imagination (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, October 15-November 28, 1965), unpaginated.

¹¹⁵ Martial Raysse, (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, October 15-November 28, 1965), unpaginated.

¹¹⁶ Moles, (Paris, 1971), 13.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹¹⁸ Hahn "Instant Raysse," (1967), 14.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 6

Ben Vautier: Total Art

Therefore, everything seen. – every object, that is, plus the process of looking at it – is a Duchamp.

John Cage, 26 Statements RE Duchamp (New York and Philadelphia, 1973)¹

Je signe tout
Ben 1960²

Ben Vautier (most often referred to simply as Ben) has been one of the leading artists of the Ecole de Nice since the early 1960s, though it is his affiliation with Fluxus, as director of Fluxus South, that has established his reputation internationally. Ben was a catalyst of art activity in Nice since the late 1950s, and he brought a climate of vanguard internationalism to the locale. Artist and editor Marcel Alocco identified Ben as the lynchpin of artistic activity in Nice.³ Although not a native of the region,⁴ he became an ardent champion of regional autonomy and the dialect of the Côte d'Azur. Alocco added that the artists with whom Ben associated refused to accept that the area was provincial, and the Ecole de Nice was a product of that thinking. Arman stated that “without Ben, that which is called the Ecole de Nice would never have existed.”⁵

However, Pincus-Witten pointed out that Ben's role in the Ecole de Nice might have contributed to its neglect.⁶ The critic characterized him as “the anarchic bad-boy whose art adopts a provocative role akin to the self-canceling hi-jinx of Tristan Tzara in the history of Dadaism.”⁷ Ben's performance-based

work was direct, and even aggressive. He was an organizer, and more politically engaged than that of Klein, Arman, and Raysse. But in defining the Ecole de Nice, Ben emphasized the conceptual rapport, which linked Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus initially and later the painter Claude Viallat, not their political ideologies.³

Ben contributed the idea of Total Art to the Ecole de Nice. Total Art was a direction in concept-based art that connected the Ecole de Nice with Fluxus and other performance-based postwar tendencies. He identified Klein's activities as an important precedent for his work. In his hand-produced journal, Ben Dieu: Sa Revue he wrote: "The journal of Yves Klein is a monumental document on Total Theatre."⁹ He credited Klein with taking painting to the extreme limits, which he exercised in theater; he believed that Klein's aim was to create a new "theatrical consciousness."¹⁰ Klein's appropriation of Le tout, life itself, also established the content of Ben's Total Art.

Ben's defined Art Total as research into a "new language and a new thought."¹¹ He used familiar words and common scenarios in an effort to communicate directly with a broad public. Ben, like Klein, aspired to transform consciousness and enable the viewer to become conscious of the present. In Ben's words: "Art is relational activity that is situated between the person and the created form."¹²

Ben was the primary link between the Ecole de Nice and Fluxus. George Macuinias described Fluxus as a loose community of individuals who engaged in collective activities, which initially had a basis in postwar trends in new music.

But Fluxus artists also maintained the view that art and life were linked and distinct from the conventional art promoted by galleries. Ben was largely responsible for the Fluxus spirit becoming a component of the Ecole de Nice. Fluxus in Nice might best be described as an outpost of Fluxus. Ben was perceived to have affinities with a group that defied clear definition in terms of quantifiable attributes aside from a mode of thinking and acting that underscored artistic activity as a means of social transformation. Both movements emphasized the possibility of the "new" through direct experiences with the objects and routines of everyday life. However, he also pointed out that neither Nouveau Réalisme nor Fluxus were specifically Niçois movements, but artists in Nice drew from both tendencies.¹³ He defined the Ecole de Nice as having a single ideology, the "new."¹⁴ He considered Klein and Arman responsible for drawing attention to new perspectives on moment, which they did mostly by their strategy of appropriation. "The appropriation of the world, the introduction of reality, that is to say, the readymade into art."¹⁵ Ben combined this search for the "new" with the Fluxus idea that "everything is possible."¹⁶ He developed Total Art Theater to dramatize these concepts.

The relationship between these ideas was demonstrated at the "Festival of Nouveau Réalisme," held at the Abbaye de Roseland in Nice on July 13, 1961. Ben unofficially participated in this event by providing Restany with a signed Bowler hat to wear, which Nouveau Réaliste Jean Tinguely incorporated into a meta-matic sculpture, his contribution to the action events.¹⁷ At this festival, Ben met Daniel Spoerri, a Swiss-born member of Nouveau Réalisme, who was known

for hotel room installations and "Snare Painting;"¹⁸ the one he created at the festival was destroyed as part of Arman's Colère. Spoerri was also active in music and theater circles with artists soon associated with Fluxus.¹⁹

Ben introduced Total Art in Nice at the Festival Mondial Fluxus et Art Total (Fig.43) in July 1963. At that time, he was new arrival in the Fluxus orb; he did not participate in the tour of "Very New Music," which George Maciunas scheduled from January to September 1962, and promoted using the term Fluxus for the first time.²⁰ Nice was not officially scheduled as a venue for the 1963 tour of Fluxus Festivals (Festum Fluxorum was scheduled in 1963 for Düsseldorf (February – March), Stockholm (March), Copenhagen (June), or Amsterdam (June). However, Ben did participate in the Amsterdam event in June, and when no plans for an event in Paris materialized, the Nice venue was scheduled as an interim stop, in July 1963, between the northern cities and the later scheduled Florence stop, which was finally aborted due to lack of funds and performers.

Ben had already corresponded with Maciunas about publishing his works, and festival plans that combined his Total Art street events with Fluxus events.²¹ Ben called his weeklong series Festival Mondial Fluxus et Art Total. Maciunas was agreeable to adding Nice to the summer Fluxus tour. In his words, "All such agitation is in the Fluxus spirit."²² The program for the festival was printed in Ben Dieu, Art Total, Sa Revue, with the date January 7, 1963, indicating that the events were clearly planned well in advance.²³ Maciunas promoted the event as a "Festival of Total Art and Comportment," organized by Ben with the participation of the Fluxus Group International of Concentric Creation, along with an

extraordinary evening of research of a new language and shock theater which will take place July 27 at 9PM at the New Casino in Nice.”²⁴

Macuinas arrived in Nice around July 25, after a Paris stop. Ben had already printed placards and fliers to advertise the scheduled venues; these were the only Fluxus materials not designed by Macuinas, and this was the only Fluxus event that was entirely organized by anyone but Macuinas – who tightly, if not rigidly, produced and directed Fluxus performances.²⁵ Ben continued to use Fluxus along with Total Art to describe his activities and thus, created a distinct aspect of Fluxus.²⁶

The Festival ran from July 26 to August 4, 1963. Ben expected many of the Fluxus artists to travel to Nice for the Total Theater event. Macuinas sent out invitations, but lack of funds prevented the invited performers from attending. Consequently, the events were scaled down to accommodate the small number of participants. With other Fluxus members unable to come to Nice, Macuinas and Ben performed most of the events along with Ben’s “disciples” Serge Oldenbourg, Robert Erbo and Robert Bozzi.²⁷ However, Arman and Raysse also participated. Raysse hosted a conference on July 27, titled “actualité de Delacroix,” and Arman performed a “dynamite work,” a variation on his Colères. Macuinas considered Nouveau Réalisme, especially Klein and Arman, an important aspect of Fluxus in Europe.²⁸

The festival began at 10AM at the Old Port in Nice. Ben arrived dressed in a black suit with his signature bowler hat and umbrella (not unlike the little tramp character of Charlie Chaplin²⁹ or Magritte’s bowler-hatted gentlemen). He

inaugurated the Total Art event by swimming the port of Nice (Fig. 44). During this action event, he promoted the Fluxus concert scheduled for the following evening with printed advertising board that he brought to the site.³⁰

Ben's promotional skills impressed Macuinas, who recognized how effective his street events were at enticing the passerby. The Nice performances proved to Macuinas the success of street events and later became a model for New York Fluxus events. He wrote to Emmett Williams about their success: "In fact it convinced me that the street is best theater to give concerts in – it's free, we don't have to advertise and we get big audiences. Since we don't spend any money on rent and promotion we can't lose anything."³¹ Originally, these Fluxus events (seven held in the summers of 1962-1963) were designed to generate interest in a new publication featuring experimental music and theater scores. But this festival in Nice convinced Macuinas of the success of street performance in attracting an audience to other Fluxus activities. Macuinas credited Ben with contributing an essential aspect of Fluxus, the street events, which he dated back to his early graffiti works of 1959.³² Ben made a second important contribution to Fluxus, his characteristic sans-serif typeface, which Macuinas later used in Fluxus publications.³³ The second was directly related to Ben's promotion of Total Art – the street event.

On July 26, a bowler-hatted quartet (including Ben, Macuinas, Erébo, and Bozzi) arrived at the Café Provence, a popular café run by Alex Lauro on the rue Félix Faure, for an event in which they ingested "mystery food" (Fig. 45). Macuinas inspired the event performed in homage to the American Fluxus

musician Ben Patterson. Macuinas often purchased unlabeled foods at the grocery store when he was short on money; since the cans had no labels, the ensuing meal was shrouded first in mystery then discovery. Ben purchased canned items and relabeled them "Flux Mystery Food." A large crowd surrounded their table stationed on the sidewalk adjacent to Ben's Deux Cheveaux, covered with Fluxus posters. His Deux Cheveaux was another of his signature readymades, which he used to advertise events in front of his store. Laboratoire 32.³⁴

For the performance of the Fluxus concert, Ben rented the Nouveau Casino in Nice, but the management cancelled their reservation at the last minute. The event was moved to the Hotel Scribe on rue Clemenceau. The program lists events scored by George Brecht, Arthur Kopeck, La Monte Young, Patterson, Robert Filliou, Christo, Spoerri, Ben, and Macuinas. There were variations on the previously staged event scores, a common feature of Fluxus events. For example, in Patterson's "Piece pour Papier" (a favorite of Ben's), rolls of paper were passed from the stage through the audience. Patterson described this score as allowing the audience to engage in the joy of making of music rather than listening. Paper afforded the opportunity to make a variety of sounds via tearing, crumpling, etc. Ben made the event specific by insisting on using local paper from the flower market in Old Nice.³⁵

Macuinas was scheduled to present Piano Piece, but his In Memorium to Adriano Olivetti (1962) was performed instead. The performance included four participants: Ben, Macuinas, and Robin and Carroll Page, who created sounds corresponding to numbers generated by an adding machine. This half-hour

“language happening” had been previously staged at the Düsseldorf Fluxum Festorum in February 1963 with a much larger group of performers.³⁶ Another difference in Nice was that the events did not have the political tone of the Düsseldorf Fluxus Festorum. There, Macuinas distributed a manifesto in which he called for a purging of “professional and commercialized culture” in favor of a “revolutionary flood and tide in art.”³⁷ His stated aim was to eliminate artists in society; the goal of his publications was to undermine conventional art commerce by circumventing the commercial gallery system. Macuinas openly admired the Soviet LEF artists, writers of the 1920s, a group Ben also admired.³⁸ They both shared the view that Fluxus should “step by step” eliminate the Fine Arts: “to redirect the use of materials and human ability into socially constructive purposes.”³⁹ Macuinas’ manifesto from Düsseldorf stressed values and social practices, the basis of the Fluxus. Despite the more apolitical tone of the Nice festival, Macuinas was persuaded by the festival’s success. Nice, not Paris, was a more fertile possibility for Fluxus in France.

Other unique features of this Fluxus festival include Ben’s “Total Theater and Organized Behavior” events, in which he appropriated places and people. On July 27th, he designated Nice as a work of art; he also declared the Promenade des Anglais an “International Museum of Living Sculpture.” Ben provided certificates of authenticity for plots of land and living sculptures. He designed life as art and, conversely, death as art. Ben declared every person who died between the festival beginning and end as a work of art. Macuinas considered Ben’s “gestures,” beginning in 1959, as setting an important precedent for Fluxus: “Ben Vautier

was doing his first piece by signing...everything: continents, peace, famine, war, and noise, end of the world and especially human sculptures. That's something important to know because later [Piero] Manzoni copied it."⁴⁰ Although Ben took the idea of signature to excess, his predecessors Duchamp, John Cage, the Lettrists, and Klein had already recognized the relationship between the readymade object or situation and the effect of signature that enables it to become one's own.

The Sculptures Vivantes (1959-1962) stem from Ben's fascination with the absolute of resemblance. He documented four occasions on which he purchased and exhibited human sculpture (July 3, 1959 – Jean-Claude Orsatti; August 1961 – Jean-Claude Orsatti (500 new ff); July 18, 1961 – Gaston Gabrielle Melidoni; June 22, 1962 – Alice Heyligers).⁴¹ These events involved both appropriation and exchange, a counterpoint to Klein's sale of zones of immaterial sensibility and his theater scenarios, whereby actors were appropriated for a period of time with or without their awareness.⁴²

Ben concluded the events by inviting the public to a "Nervous Depression" at his store, which he referred to as the "Centre d'Art Total." A film of the event shows Ben on the sidewalk outside Laboratoire 32 lying on the ground under a sheet. He proceeded to cross the street crawling under the sheet in the midst of traffic, an event which shocked all present.⁴³ Ben then signed "tout comportement," the responses of the spectators.⁴⁴ Finally, he signed a Living Sculpture toward the close of the festival, Sunday, August 3rd. The poster reads, "Ben creator of Total Art will give consciousness to Agui-Gui, god of the street

whose behavior is a work of art.” Ben signed the old, long-bearded man who began to orate to the crowd after being signed on the forehead by Ben. This event illustrates Ben’s premise that with his signature he created (gave life and the word) a real sculpture.⁴⁵

Ben also made a conceptual film for the Total Art/Fluxus festival, titled Cannes Ville 1963. On the publicity poster, he described it as a “true film created with the intention of total reality.”⁴⁶ While this work lacks the scenarios Klein introduced in his theater proposals, Ben’s description of the film issued on the poster is clearly indebted to Klein: “Location – everywhere; Screen – your eyes; Direction – (le tout) Ben; Interpretation – you; Music – (La Vie) Ben; Script – Ben; Duration – unlimited; Color – natural.”⁴⁷ The layout of the text in sans-serif typeface is spare like that of later Fluxus event scores. Ben advertised that he would provide certificates to those who were in the film, authenticating them as actors in Total Art.

Fluxus provided the forum for applying Ben’s concept of Total Theater. He believed that all Fluxus events and Happenings had a source in John Cage’s musical score, 4’33”, a work in which the performer sits in silence at the piano for the designed time. He began all of his events with this Cage’s piece.⁴⁸ Music had a role in Ben’s work just as it had in that of Klein and Arman. Klein used silence in his *Monotone Symphony*, and Arman used objects in a way analogous to sound music. Like Cage,⁴⁹ all three wanted to break down the boundaries between the performer, the work, and the surroundings.

This festival enabled Ben to synthesize several directions in his work that he had addressed in his work since the late 1950s. The most striking was his interest in his persona and behavior as an artist, and his signature. By the mid-1950s, he had begun to graffiti buildings and construction fences along boulevard François-Grosso. J'aime tout, Mur and Mamam are examples of his spray painted graffiti that indicate his interest in language, signature, and writing as an event. On a white wall left standing in a construction site, he painted Mamam – because he liked the sound.⁵⁰ Ben filmed these early graffiti works in 16-mm format, documenting what is generally regarded as a delinquent activity that manifest anti-social tendencies, and signifies marking territory in sub-culture hierarchies.

Other early graffiti works and word paintings illustrate how he used a simple image and/or slogan as a means of social and political intervention. Between 1958 and 1961, Ben produced most of the “Écritures,” repeating his characteristic script in white paint on a black ground. These word paintings are explicitly political and reveal the anxieties of Cold War politics, the French/Algerian colonial conflict, and social/racial inequality. Examples of these early works include: Mort à l'oppression [sic] (1958) (fig. 46); Seul la gauche va dans le sens de l'histoire... (1958) and j'espère que cette toile ne vivra jamais une guerre atomique [sic](1960) (Fig.47), Paix en Algérie (1956), Je suis noir et beau (1959), Liberté, Entré Libre, Défense d’Afficher, (1959) Viva Castro (1960). His simple, direct writings are, for the most part, inseparable from political protest slogans.⁵¹ Ben used wood panels of various sizes, often pre-used, and simply painted the ground black, then using white paint to write words or phrases. On

occasion, he reversed the ground and script color using black writing on a white ground. These works indicate the political voice of the artist, one that distinguishes him from the subtler political stance of the Nouveaux Réalistes. Ben's work is activism, in art, politics, and cultural autonomy.⁵²

His 1959 text, Moi Ben Je Signe, reads like a manifesto composed of a list of his appropriations, which includes war, pestilence, famine, peace, gazes, and rays of light, and common objects, but it concluded:

Death Death Death Death Death Death

Silence the Noise the Smell the Fear the Joy Death Death
The end of the world Loneliness Death Death Death Death
The destruction of humans in front of white walls by
Machine-gun Death Death Death Death Death

My Death

I sign especially the Le Mystère en Boite and L'écriture Peinture⁵³

Ben's litany was written with the meter of an automatic weapon mimicking the reported inhumanities and death that resulted from the renewed offenses against the Algerian independence movement in 1959, at the same time DeGaulle's publicly supported Algerian self-determination. Ben's work is a form of assault by repetition and signature. Ben, in fact, defined political action as an attempt to preserve the maximum situation of "life" and to combat situations of oppression of that sense of life.⁵⁴

Ben reported that he was moving in the direction of his "actions" beginning in 1958, when he was searching for a new form of abstraction in painting. He copied a single repeated shape, based on the form of a banana, directly onto a canvas or board over a collage of advertising images. An

installation photograph, dated 1959, shows Ben expanding the shape and patterns of these canvases onto the wall creating a total environment. On seeing this, Klein advised Ben to veer away from abstraction and to consider instead what the marks signify as a visual language. This suggestion prompted Ben to turn to language – his “writings:”⁵⁵

I was in Nice together with Arman and Yves Klein. They kept talking about appropriation. Yves Klein had appropriated blue and Arman had appropriated the accumulation. I wanted my share of the pie: I picked the banana. I therefore painted bananas. Yves Klein told me: ‘With your bananas you are in Kandinsky’s room whose door I have just closed with my monochromes.’ It was then that I started writing my ideas on canvas. I took a black canvas and I wrote ‘black’ on it, and I did the same thing with red. My first period is the period of truths...Life became art through the statement of truth. Later came the whole issue of the new.⁵⁶

Ben explained that “Yves Klein et Cie” had found themselves confronted with a given situation – abstraction dominated in Paris. He stated that they were innovative in taking ideas from Duchamp, and created Nouveau Réalisme, as a means to go beyond abstraction, and to compete with the Ecole de Paris.⁵⁷

His work of 1960, Je suis un con, suggests that he was aware of the language Klein, Arman, and Raysse used to describe themselves (gangsters, *tricheurs*) in the 1960 interview with Sosno.⁵⁸ He also wanted to show the contradiction implicit in the valuation of art objects, as Klein and Arman had done, and to raise the issue of the celebrity artist and pressure to maintain that role.⁵⁹

Ben soon began to perform “public art” by situating himself in relation to his Écritures, creating impromptu street events. He intervened in public spaces in order to jar the public out of routine activities and to engage them in a brief

encounter where surprise could bring about a truthful communication. Ben did not sensitize space as Klein had done in his zones of immaterial space or his exhibition, Le Vide. He did accumulate objects that filled up space, but he blocked space by putting himself in it as a means of breaking through routine or the indifference of the local and visiting public to contemporary art.

In his street performances, Ben subjected the audience, encountered by chance, to situations, which expose their pretension and doubt. He imposed conditions on individuals that force them to face contradictions in themselves. Ben described these street events as “interesting situations.”⁶⁰ In his filmed event titled Curieux!, Ben walked to the middle of the seaside Promenade des Anglais and sat in a chair. He then wrote Théâtre – Regardez Moi with white chalk on a blackboard, and leaned against his chair. (He repeated this in another version titled Regardez-moi, cela suffit [Fig. 48]). A hidden camera showed Ben disrupting the flow of strollers, and prompted spontaneous public responses (annoyance, laughter, inquiry, scrutiny, etc.) to the situation. His trespassing called attention to patterned behavior and generated instantaneous responses.

In the counterpart work, Régardez d’ailleurs, he annoyed and confounded his audience, who resented his directive, or insisted upon looking at him. He referred to works as “interrogation points.” They relied on immediacy and surprise, thus instigating a form of awakening – a new experience derived from repetitive everydayness. His audience appeared by chance and the results were indeterminate. Unlike Klein, he made no pretense to selectivity and he minimized preparation and staging. Ben’s situation-based events had the tone of vaudeville.

This quality and his emphasis on behavior suggest his early affinities with Fluxus ideas.⁶¹

Ben also acknowledged Klein and Lettrist poet Isadore Isou as providing a basis of his performative works. Isou was an important precedent for Klein; he found his ideas to be an important model of disruptive aesthetic situations with political implications.⁶² Isou used the term “hypergraphology” to define a means of unveiling the universe through a new means of communication.⁶³ Isou provided the form for Ben's Total Theater. In Isou's 1953 “Fondamentals pour la transformation intégrale du théâtre,” he insisted upon the elimination of anecdote and its replacement by an “engraving framework.”⁶⁴ Rather than constructing a single narrative, Isou constructed a situation that allowed for a multiplicity of actions to emerge. As a result, “polylogues of implication” form within a more spatial “total theater,” where each participant (or creator) presents discoveries in an autonomous way. Ben used his own presence or laconic phrases to establish an “engraving framework.” Regardez-moi cela suffit, first performed in the middle of avenue Félix Faure in Nice, for example. Christine Stiles wrote that Ben's use of language /body reinforces the importance of a text and the interconnection “between thought, perception, action, and experience in the formation of meaning-producing signs.”⁶⁵

In 1960, Ben formulated the Théorie du Nouveau,⁶⁶ and presented it at a symposium organized by critic Jacques Lepage. Ben titled his presentation Tout et Rein. He presented the text in the form of questions and propositions concerning two major points central to his own work to the present – the

personality and ego of the artist and his/her relationship to what he calls the "domain of the unknown."⁶⁷ Ben insisted on the necessity of individual subjectivity and a search for the "new." He described his theory as the capacity to re-arrange disparate memories and old materials into a "puzzle" informed by personality and imagination.⁶⁸ He linked the concept of "newness" to the individual and his or her circumstances at a particular moment, in a particular situation. As a result, the experience of the "new" is relative and can be experienced over and over in various situations. Depending upon the individual, it may exist in infinite degrees. According to Ben, one recognizes "the new" because it has been experienced as a sensation before – it is both "new" and an experienced repetition. He argued that seeking "the new" or the "domain of the unknown" should be an absolute standard in the arts and one that allows for the contingency of personality and behavior. This search into the unknown was a form of transformation, a process whereby creative potential is acknowledged and incorporated into one's behavior. Ben's Théorie du Nouveau was not directly linked to aesthetic values or the production of objects but rather to a commitment to the process of self-transformation.

Like the Nouveaux Réalistes, Ben was concerned with a new perception of the real; he affirmed the view that art has the capacity to elicit a fresh perception of what already exists. Ben's commitment to self-transformation and communication specifically links his ideas to the Ecole de Nice. He believed that in the repetitive nature of daily existence the possibility for a new experience existed. Ben also added another dimension to the conceptual and theatrical

strategies of the Ecole de Nice. He exaggerated his role as an encroacher; he disrupted routine activity in order to force new experience to occur. This awareness represented a form of direct communication between the artist and individuals he encountered, which had the potential to enable both to perceive their reality as a new experience.

Ben described newness as a spatial concept – a space not yet consumed. The desire for the “new” is a drive, an ambition to create a space for one’s mark or signature – one is reinforced and rewarded in a culture that embraced novelty.⁶⁹ Ben’s obsession with signature manifested the sense of anxiety that accompanies the creative act. His repetition of signature can be characterized as a cannibalizing force, an appropriation and consumption of the already made, which is subject to reclamation. Ben’s approach differed from Arman whose work dealt primarily with cycles of production. By contrast, Ben search for a space for his signature was frustrated by the recognition that new concepts and ideas had already been consumed.

Ina Blom has argued that Ben’s signature was the conceptual basis of his work:

He plays with and confuses the very slight differences, which the French language sets up between *du nouveau* (the new) and *de nouveau* (once again). Since Klein had already signed totality or “all” (*le tout*), Ben can think of nothing else but to repeat this act of signature by signing totality all over again. Whereas Klein signs *all*, Ben signs *all*, which is an entirely different thing. Klein’s act remains on the level of propositions or intentions, whereas with Ben the material physical presence of his signature or handwriting is all-important.⁷⁰

Klein’s work was conceptually seminal to the Ecole de Nice. Ben, like Arman, was completing Klein’s Void by filling up space (s) with his signature, an

excessive and highly visible gesture, counterpoint to the immaterial. But whereas Arman's accumulations were contained, Ben's signatures were boundless, as Blom pointed out (yet frustrated by limitlessness). Ben sought proprietorship of all; but unlike Klein's appropriation of space, Ben's re-appropriations were banal and lack the transcendence implicit in Klein's rituals. Ben's repetitive signatures are the physical marks of some thing or some place once identified as new then subjected to a repetitive process of ownership and collection. In turn, Ben depletes the concept of ego by repetition; he instigates the "death" of the subject.⁷¹

Ben wanted to merge his life with his art. He criticized Klein for not admitting that theater is not life, but its imitation:

Is the Newspaper of Yves Klein a monumental document on the Total Theatre – Painter Klein wanted to sign the extreme and the absolute. -“Le Monochrome.” the void, and he would have succeeded if I had not been there, a greater metaphysician than him, to sign before him DEATH, the UNIVERSE, the Concept of ALL, the Concept Nothing, Pastiche, Mystery, God in a Box, etc. He signs “Life” on Sunday 27 November. a play in the world. He signs “Sleep” a play in which a man will sleep!

He signs – A tableau where people are attached together and will have to support Klein, Le Monochromes.

He signs (you only have to read his Newspaper) the war, etc.

Klein's newspaper is a significant text of theatrical anticipation...

Klein forgot that the LIFE is not synonymous with Theatre.⁷²

Ben's gallery/store/installation, Laboratoire 32 (fig. 49), was a massive accumulation of Ben's life. He opened it as a second-hand record shop in 1958 on 32 rue Tondutti de l'Escarène among other small businesses in Nice. Routraut Uecker, soon to be the companion, and later, wife of Klein, painted the roof of Ben's record store in a pastiche of Jackson Pollock. He amassed Écritures on the inside and outside of the shop. Over the doorway of his storefront, Ben painted in

white paint. "Vive liberté, égalité, et la fraternité." the motto commonly used by Klein. Ben organized the exhibition, Scorbut, in 1959, which featured artists Raysse, Albert Chubac, Claude Gilli (all later associated with the Ecole de Nice). Thereafter, Laboratoire 32 (later called Ben Doute de Tout) became a venue for exhibitions until 1972 and the site of Ben's Total Theater events and Fluxus activities.⁷³

Laboratoire 32 had affinities with Klein's Le Vide and Arman's Le Plein. His space, a commercial storefront dense with used objects of all sorts including his written signs, was a both a void and an accumulation. It was a hub of encounters that also housed the "black hole" (the unknown). Ben filled up the space with his work, his performances, his business, his life and that of others. It was a metaphor of Ben's complementary axiom of Le Tout and Le Rein, his counterpart to Le Vide and Le Plein. According to Ben, Klein's void was the vast emptiness of life and death; Ben's stamp, "Ben sous Klein – Klein sous Ben," exemplified his relationship with Klein. But it also reflected Arman's fullness as he filled it up with activities and things. To complete this empty/full paradigm in his installation, he incorporates nothingness, entropy, and death with Le Mystère en boîte in the back recess of the store. This small black hole or point (consider Klein's illumination of the obelisk at La Place de la Concorde, described as the exclamation without a point!) is unknown matter that is dense and gravity-bound.

It was in relation to Klein that Ben developed his own experiential performance events, but he remained closer to Arman in his accumulation of objects. In Ben's work, he enacted the anxiety he associated with Klein's void as

well as the process of filling-up life with activity and objects associated with Arman. His "black hole" was a testimony of his allegiance to Klein even while he parodied the purity of Klein's spatial interpretation of the void with his entropic darkness. He used repetition and aggressive humor to act out and reinterpret the concepts of his Ecole de Nice cohorts.

In a 1966 interview in Identiés, Ben defined the Ecole de Nice as simply an extension of the Ecole de Klein.⁷⁴ Ben considered Klein a revolutionary idealist, crediting his appropriation methods for inspiring others about the possibilities of a new reality by a transformation of consciousness and a fresh search for beauty. In Ben's words, "Klein drew attention to air, the void, water and fire . . . he intentionally took possession of beauty, of the elements."⁷⁵ Ben invoked the vide/plein polarity when he wrote,

The artist creator is in Life and fills this life with activity. He tries to replace the Life (the void) by activity (fullness)...Klein's art seeks the absolute, it the void, water, and fire. But it seems to me that which is absolute can only be reached in death, which contains all.⁷⁶

Ben had an encounter with Klein that illustrated his dialogue with the void/fullness paradigm of Klein and Arman in 1960. In what Ben described as a fit of jealousy, he approached Klein and queried him about the universal sensibility he took as the force in his work. He then suggested to Klein that if that universal spirit was everywhere, it could be found in the microcosmic Ping-Pong ball. He signed the ball "Dieu." with a prominent dot over the "i", and gave it to Klein. His gesture suggests that subjectivity (the "i") is inherent in all things despite Klein's premise that one can operate, either in art or life, from a position

of depersonalization. In general, Ben firmly adhered to the notion that no activity can be separated from the ego that mediates human drives and the demands of civilization. He acknowledged that with the ego comes invidiousness and jealousy.

Ben made a series of works, Les Trous, between 1959 and 1961. The series of conceptual appropriations (walls, drains, body holes) that he designated "partie du tout à Ben." may refer to Klein's wish to destroy the birds who bored holes in his perfect blue monochrome, the limitless blue sky over Nice. They are metaphoric of dark and unknown spaces that reveal the imperfections or waste inherent in the physical and psychic space.

However close Ben was conceptually with Klein and Arman, his reputation was established internationally with an exhibition and festival organized by Spoerri at Victor Musgrave's Gallery One in London. The London Festival of Misfits or The Misfits Fair was held October 23, 1962 – November 8, 1962. This event brought Ben directly into the Fluxus milieu.⁷⁷ Artists included Spoerri, Filliou (co-organizer), Robin Page, Gustav Metzger, Kopke, Higgins, Alison Knowles, Per Olof Utveldt, Patterson, Emmett Williams, and Ben. In the spirit of performance. "The Misfits" were introduced as a cast of characters: Spoerri and Filliou were identified as a "Romanian adventurer" and "one-eyed good for nothing Huguenot" respectively, while Ben was titled "God's broker."⁷⁸ The "Misfits" were an eclectic group with diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Their announcement for the event reads as a series of propositions, a pitch for the festival in the language of a sideshow snake oil peddler.⁷⁹

Spoerri conceived the exhibition on the format of the Dylaby exhibition held in Amsterdam August 30 – September 30, 1962.⁸⁰ What distinguished this exhibition from Dylaby was a greater focus on collaborative events and poetry. As Spoerri described the exhibition, “The whole idea is to show situations rather than individual works of art. The aim is to involve the audience.”⁸¹ The show was also a striking visual contrast to British Pop associated with the London art scene; since the 1950s, artists associated with Lawrence Alloway and the Institute of Contemporary Art critiqued consumerism and popular culture by appropriating advertising techniques and images.⁸²

Ben was provided the front window of the gallery for his installation Ben’s Window (Fig. 50) and 15-day performance titled Living Sculpture.” His ambition was to achieve “fame and recognition” with this installation: he did, in fact, attract most of the attention. This installation was his most important work to date, and it brought together his graffiti, accumulation work, and performance together as a unity. Ben’s presence in the window blurred the distinction between himself and other objects cluttered around him. He installed his bedroom, washstand, and small eating area in the window, transforming private activities into a public spectacle. While his exhibitionism was self evident, he also drew out the public’s voyeuristic fascination with the everyday doings of someone’s private life. Ben displayed his life as his art and, like Klein before him, sought to “tear down the walls of the studio.” The installation has other precedents including Arman’s sensational Paris installation Le Plein, and the successful exhibition of the *poubelles* in Germany – portraits comprised of trash encased in vitrine cases –

which in French is both a museum case and a shop window. In Nice, for the Festival of Nouveau Réalisme. Raysse installed a plage-vitrine in the Galerie Muratore exhibition, which served as the maquette for Raysse Beach installed at the Dylaby exhibition in Amsterdam in August and September 1962. Ben's Window was installed the following month in London.

Ben installed a version of his store, Laboratoire 32, for this London show. He displayed his himself in the window along with his graffiti, accumulations. It was a self-exhibition in a total environment with affinities to the expressive environments of Kaprow's "Happenings." Ben admired Kaprow and considered him a precedent for his concept of Total Theater.⁸³ Ben's Window became a stage where the repetitiveness of ordinary tasks of daily living astonished the public. He recognized the potential of the front window to attract a public with both fascination and desire.⁸⁴ Ben lives by the axiom that art is life and worked to solidify the inseparability of his artistic intention and his everyday actions.

Ben's accompanying Écritures indicated that he was willing to go beyond physical exhibitionism. He wrote on the glass and panels inside the window. "I am jealous. I want to make something that hasn't been made. I am afraid of being a failure. I want everything. I am alone. I cry at night. I hate others. I create everything. I sign all. I am God Creator."⁸⁵ Ben combined fear and arrogance; he displayed the dilemma of the creative process generally hidden from the public. He also wrote. "We have had enough of it all" and "Struggling to be great – what's next?" – exhibiting the plight of being caught between ambition and resignation, between the subject and the object. Yet his lack of

discretion appeared to be a hoax, either humorous or pathetic. He exploited the relation between the storefront window and the commodities inside. He assumed the role of one himself, situated among other objects and signs such as Coca-Cola, the American signature of consumer success. His display, like that of the local shopkeeper (he was one), relied on the passerby who chose to stop his/her routine to scrutinize his live performance or elects to ignore him. Gallery One became Ben's stage, store and studio, a second version of his Laboratoire 32:

Ben's work focused on the paradoxes of subjectivity, and while he often made self-exhibitionism his theme, he continued to collaborate with other artists. Ben participated in the Concert in Conjunction with the Festival of Misfits performing with Filliou, Higgins, Knowles, Kopke, Metzger, Musgrave, Page, and Spoerri. The artists expected about two hundred guests for an "event/supper party." However, just one hundred guests arrived. The smaller than expected crowd would later be attributed to the impending anxiety created by the Cuban Missile Crisis during the course of the exhibition. Christine Stiles pointed out that Metzger – who "misfit the Misfits" – proposed hanging the front and back page of the newspaper in the gallery each day. On the opening day of the exhibition the masthead reported, "Kennedy: We Bar Ships of *All* Nations Ferrying Arms to Castro CUBA BLOCKADE."⁸⁶

Stiles described the Festival of Misfits as an example of Fluxus humor and exhibitionism sandwiched between dada's more high-minded irony and postmodern cynicism.⁸⁷ For example, Ben scrawled the slogans "we are all works of art" and "art is dead" on the window of Gallery One with a cake froster.⁸⁸

Ben's A Flux Suicide Kit and Page's Suicide Room are violent. Page announced "Kill yourself or else stop beefing and get on and enjoy life."⁸⁹ These works are prototypes of edition pieces later produced and distributed by Macuinas from his Canal Street store.⁹⁰

According to Stiles, the most basic element of Fluxus performance is attention to behavioral processes.⁹¹ Ben, in the manner of "living on vacation" (associated with the Ecole de Nice) also exemplifies the Fluxus notion of "goofting off." Ben wanted to go beyond situation toward attitude, one that is both critical and farcical.⁹² His goal was to partner depersonalized art with extreme narcissism, amateurism with professionalism, and unimportance with significance.⁹³

Ina Blom suggests that Fluxus artists such as Ben began to challenge Cage's "field of multiplicity" by altering this terrain with the very marks that Cage sought to eliminate – ownership, signatures, subjectivity, intentions and representations.⁹⁴ These issues are central to Ben's Total Theater and to the Monochrome Adventure of Klein. In his 1966 essay, "Intermedia," Higgins describes these new activities as working outside boundaries via strategies of displacement and performance; but they also involve a degree of subjectivity because the passage from one state to another is mediated by the performer/artist. The artist is essential to this possible change of consciousness, using his medium to reconfigure memories for a new historical moment.⁹⁵

Cage stated that the "insistence upon an alternative culture...a culture which is not authoritarian underlies the principles of both Fluxus and Dada."⁹⁶

Cage recognized and supported art created and situated outside predetermined structures. Employing chance, open-ended situations and indeterminacy, one might provide a fresh vision of the world with a sense of immediacy. Ben and Klein employed these methods as a means of transforming the experience of life and creating a new social space, a principle of creation that is the basis of Fluxus.⁹⁷

In 1964, Ben became particularly active in Fluxus performances in Nice and elsewhere. He staged at least three Fluxus Festivals in Nice in January (Réalité), March (Quelquechose), and October (Les 7 Jours de Recherche) with the "bande de Ben" (Bozzi, Erebo, Pontani, Dany Gobert and Annie Baricalla). In April, he traveled to New York for the Fluxus Concert No. 1 and Concert No. 3 before performing in Jean-Jacques Lebel's 1er Festival de la Libre Expression at the American Cultural Center in Paris in May; this event in Paris included Carolee Schneeman's "visual drama" Meat Joy. This festival was complemented by an exhibition of Pop Art and Nouveau Réalisme suggesting that the performing aspects of Happenings and Fluxus dovetailed with the visual arts. He concluded the year with participation in Fluxus festival in Rotterdam in November, and an exhibition in Amsterdam titled "Nine Directions in Art."⁹⁸

Macuinas named Ben director of Fluxus South 1963; he began to produce short films, 8-mm home movie loops, for sale in Macuinas' FluxShop and Mail Order Warehouse in New York beginning 1964. He also produced multiples of what he referred to as "mystery foods" and bottles of dirty water sold by the size. In Nice, he published notes on Fluxus South and performed Fluxus events for

local exhibitions including those organized Claude Viallat and Jacques Lepage in 1967-68. Viallat organized "Impact I" at the Musée de Céret with critic Jacques Lepage, during the summer of 1966 (July 15-September 25). In conjunction with this exhibition, Ben performed a La Monte Young event score titled Composition No. 10 (to Bob Morris) (1960) performed at the Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden, Germany by Korean artist Nam June Paik, titled "Zen for Head."⁹⁹ He inked his feet and walked over a narrow sheet of paper, leaving his footprints; then he dipped his head in ink and dragged his hair over the paper creating abstract ink marks, which recorded his movement and hair texture. A photograph of the event shows spectators lining the sides of the paper in the middle of the street.¹⁰⁰

The month after the close of the Céret exhibition, Ben organized an exhibition titled "Le litre de Var coûte 1.60F" at Nice's Galerie A.¹⁰¹ This exhibition included artists associated with Fluxus in Nice and New York and works by Klein. The artists that Ben chose indicates the relationships he perceived among their ideas. Ben concluded the decade in June 1969 with Non-Art, Verité Art, Anti-Art. This event, sub-titled "how to change art and mankind," was initiated with the distribution of 1000 copies of a statement of intent. It was designed to inventory "actions, gestures and ideas, which will have taken place in the world from the 1st to the 15th of June." Ben chose artists because their artistic activity "seemed to have always valued ideas and attitudes more than physical or commercial esthetic objects."¹⁰² This international mail-art exhibition included Fluxus regulars (Brecht sent an inventory of everything on the walls of his

London apartment, for example) but also Guy Debord, Duchamp, Viallat, Daniel Buren, and Olivier Mosset.

Ben also epitomized Fluxus Art Amusement, defined as concepts or events that are simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificance, require no skill or countless rehearsals, and have no commodity or institutional value.¹⁰³ There are clear affinities between Fluxus and the Ecole de Nice. Both regarded art as a past-time that should emphasize imagination and leisure. But even more, "Fluxus is a way of viewing society and life, a way of creating social action and life activity," as Ken Friedman pointed out.¹⁰⁴ Fluxus was a social practice that attempted to transcend the boundaries of art, to merge art with life, and to aim for the transformation of society. Ben is the exemplar of Brecht's definition of Fluxus as "the fusion of Spike Jones, vaudeville gags, children's games, and Duchamp."¹⁰⁵ but Macuinas description of Fluxus as "interested in originality, fresh thinking not imitation or overworked forms"¹⁰⁶ certainly applies to Ben. Ben admired the aims of Suprematism and Constructivism, he believed in the anarchistic spirit of Cage and Fluxus, which he referred to as a "post-Duchamp" sensibility.¹⁰⁷ In a 1978 interview with Larry Miller, Macuinas said that the important precedents for Fluxus all happened in 1959; they include the Cage classes at the New School for Social Research, the activity of the Nouveaux Réalistes, and the work of Ben.¹⁰⁸ The Nouveaux Réalistes and Ben shared the twelve ideas that historically characterize Fluxus, especially their "democratic approach to culture and to life."¹⁰⁹ Macuinas wanted to undermine accepted venues for art sale and distribution, and he wanted to shift attention from the

object of value to the value of idea. Fluxus provided a context for experiments and ideas operating without boundaries in the service of creation and transformation.¹¹⁰ These principles are evident in Ben's work and his approach to life. With the freedom afforded Fluxus came the onus creating new situation, actions and forms.

Bernard Pagès, a sculptor associated with the group Supports/Surfaces, pointed out that Ben "manifests a lot of anguish, he shows that creation is difficult, such that he expresses this with laughter, humor and derision."¹¹¹ Pagès recognized Ben's awareness of his own ego and its limitations. He is the "I" that is "worried and in doubt."¹¹² Ben continually returned to the paradox of ego and insecurity throughout his work, a personality trait that linked him with Klein, or one he appropriated from Klein, whose ambition was often fraught with insecurity.

According to Arman, without Ben the Ecole de Nice would not exist.¹¹³ Ben prefers the plural Ecoles de Nice because he considers all of it, his own work included, extensions of the Ecole de Klein. Ben wrote three scored events for Klein in 1963, a year after his untimely death. In their simplicity, these events demonstrate Ben's appreciation of Klein's work and are indicative of his knowledge of Klein's theater proposals. In Monochrome for Yves Klein, the performer paints a large white panel black. This work is a reflexive score based on Klein's white illumination of a screen after immersing his audience in total darkness once tightly secured in the theater seats. In all three scores Ben counters Klein's demonstrations of illumination with darkness. The most poignant score is

Monochrome for Yves Klein, Fluxversion II, a work related to Klein's Monotone Symphony. Klein's sound event is composed of a single note repeated over a period of time, then complemented with silence. In Ben's score, an orchestra, quartet or soloist, dressed in white, plays a favorite classic. A fine mist of black paint rains down during the performance. Performers continue to play as the scores and music stands, their instruments and clothes slowly turn from white to black. The performance ends when no performer can read the notes. In this work, Ben scores a transition from a beginning characterized by a situation involving light and sound to one of darkness and silence. This transition suggests a shift from life to death. Ben composed a memorial work that linked his work with that of Klein. Both artists envisioned art as a way of life, and established important precedents for performance art, conceptual art, mail art, and body art in the 1970s – all were important contributions of the Ecole de Nice in the 1960s.

The basis of Ben's work is graffiti – a signature, which marks the space as the territory of the writer. He expanded that concept into the limitless field of artistic practices. Ben pointed out the contradiction implicit in seeking an anonymous art while achieving celebrity, shifting the readymade from object to behavior and attitude: "I don't believe you can do anything non-ego. Man is 100% ego."¹⁴ The Ecole de Nice artists wanted to eliminate the emphasis on the artist's subjectivity as the basis of visual expression, and to direct attention toward a direct experience of the exterior space. Ben's work made explicit the inherent paradoxes of subjectivity in both the artists and the spectators, which is his specific contribution to the Ecole de Nice.

¹ John Cage. "26 Statements Re Duchamp." Neo-Dada Redefining Art 1958-1962 (NY: American Foundation of Arts and Universe Publishing, 1994), 137. Originally published "John Cage's 26 Statements Re Duchamp." Art and Literature (Autumn-Winter 1964).

² Ben Vautier, Écritures, oil on board, published in Ben, pour ou contre: un rétrospective (Marseille: Musée d'Art Contemporain des Musées de Marseille, c. 1995), 43.

³ Marcel Alocco, as quoted in Edouard Valdman, Le Roman de l'Ecole de Nice (Paris: Édition de la Différence, 1991), 14. Alocco also recalled that Ben was important because he received art publications from the United States.

⁴ Ben has the most international background of the artists associated with the Ecole de Nice – born in Naples. Ben is of Irish/Swiss heritage, and English was his first language. He lived in Turkey, India, and Switzerland.

⁵ Arman, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 31. "Sans Ben, d'ailleurs, ce qu'on peut appeler Ecole de Nice n'aurait jamais existé."

⁶ Robert Pincus-Witten. "Ecole de Nice: A Missing Book." Arts 60 (January 1986), 88.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ben expressed his political sentiments in the series of Écritures, works which resemble political slogans or posters. He protested the Algerian War, race relations within France, his affiliation with the political Left, and so forth. His publically stated political stance distinguished him from Klein, Arman, and Raysse in the early 1960s whose works suggested that they could not be clearly defined by specific political affiliations. However, by the middle 1960s, Arman defined his work as a protest against consumerism, and Raysse soon critiqued the mass culture he appeared to celebrate.

⁹ Ben Vautier, Ben Dieu: Sa Revue, handmade artist book (Nice: Ben Vautier, c. 1963), 6. Ben made several versions of this hand-made book with some variations. I have examined three copies of it – two in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NY and one in the collection of Bernar Venet, Le Muy, France.

¹⁰ Ben Vautier, Ben Dieu, Sa Review, handmade artist book (NY: Museum of Modern Art Special Collection: Silverman Fluxus Collection), unpaginated.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ben Vautier. "Manifeste," Théorie (Milan: Giancarlo Politi 1974), 18.

¹³ Ben Vautier, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 37.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 38. "L'Appropriation du monde, l'introduction de la réalité, c'est-à-dire le ready made dans l'art."

¹⁶ Ibid. "La sensibilité du 'tout possible,' c'est-à-dire une sensibilité post-Duchamp, dans le mesure où Duchamp signe l'objet et Fluxus signe la vie."

¹⁷ Ben Vautier. "Creer, c'est n'est pas se laisser classer et pourtant voici les tendances de l'Avant-Garde à Nice classes par Ben." A propos de Nice (Paris: Centre nationale d'Art et de Culture, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977), 16.

¹⁸ "Festival du Nouveau Réalisme." (Nice: Galerie Muratore, July-September, 1961). Spoerri's "Snare Painting" a series based on appropriating the remains of a dinner – plates, ashtrays, wineglasses, etc. – glued in place on the table then, inverted ninety degrees and attached to the wall.

¹⁹ Christine Stiles. "Between Water and Stone. Fluxus Performance: a Metaphysics of Art." In the Spirit of Fluxus, Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, eds. (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 68. Fluxus performance has its origins in the Darmstadt circle of composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and the Zero Group founded by Otto Peine and Heinz Mack in 1957. Stockhausen, legendary in the new music circles of Europe in the late 1950's, was mentor to Fluxus artist Nam June Paik.

²⁰ Owen F. Smith, "Fluxus: A Brief History and Other Fictions." In the Spirit of Fluxus (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 26, 30. Smith wrote: "Fluxus, in this early period, was just one of a number of artistic groups – including Cobra, Letterism, International Situationism, Nouveau Réalisme, and Group Zero in Europe, Gutai and Neo-Dada Organizer in Japan, Happenings in the United States – that developed between the late 1940s and early 1960s as a response to, and reaction against, prevailing social, cultural, and artistic models. In France, Smith pointed out Yves Klein, Arman, Niki de Saint-Phalle, and François Dufrêne.

²¹ Ben Vautier (Paris, 1977), 17. Ben met Macuinas at the Festival of Misfits in London where Robert Filliou also reported meeting Macuinas to discuss the planned 1963 Fluxus festivals.

²² George Macuinas, letter to Ben Vautier, n.d. [ca. Late May 1963] Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, NY and Detroit, as cited in Owen F. Smith, Fluxus: the history of an attitude (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, c. 1998), 123. "Your plans for "nervous crisis" in your shop and "Ben's Publik" – very good – also good to give conference on Total Art, tracts of various kinds. All such agitation is in the Fluxus spirit (unfortunately it was lacking in Paris and Germany...)"

²³Ben Dieu: Sa Revue (NY: Special Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, c. 1963).

²⁴ Smith, (San Diego, c.1998), 124

²⁵*Ibid.*, 124, 280, fn 198..

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷ Robin Page is listed as participating although though the literature indicates that Macuinas was the only member of Fluxus and the only performer not from Nice. They performed event pieces by Benjamin Patterson, Robert Watts, Nam June Paik, Daniel Spoerri, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, and La Monte Young.

²⁸Owen F. Smith. "Fluxus: A Brief History and Other Fictions." In the Spirit of Fluxus, exh. cat. (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 37. Macuinas planned on Fluxus in Europe as the theme for the third Fluxus publication. This was to include a section on Nouveau Réalisme.

²⁹ George Macuinas. "Interview with George Macuinas." see: Larry Miller. "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Macuinas, 24 March 1978." reprinted in The Fluxus Reader, Ken Friedman, editor (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 192. Macuinas stated that Ben was all about humor, and he relates it to Futurist theater and vaudeville, especially Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

³⁰ The placard read "Look for a new musical creation at the Theatre in the New Casino on July 27, 1963."

³¹ George Macuinas, letter to Emmett Williams, n.d. [after July 29, 1963], Jean and Leonard Brown Collection, Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, as cited in Smith (San Diego, 1998), 125.

³²George Macuinas. Genealogy of Fluxus chart, reprinted in Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection (NY: Museum of Modern Art 1988), unpaginated.

³³ George Macuinas, letter to Ben Vautier, n.d. [ca. Late May 1963] Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, NY and Detroit, as cited in Owen F. Smith, Fluxus: the history of an attitude (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, c. 1998), 124. Macuinas wrote: "Your posters look very good and appropriate. In fact they look very much like Fluxus publications (including the paper) – so use that wrapping paper & the type you have – it looks very good..."

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- ³⁴ Citroën developed the Deux Cheveaux just prior to World War II. It was specifically made as a vehicle for farmers, but it grew in popularity in postwar France.
- ³⁵ Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeeman, Editors, Happenings and Fluxus, exh. cat. (Cologne: Koelnischen Kunstverein, November 6-January 6, 1971), unpaginated.
- ³⁶ Christine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone. Fluxus Performance: a Metaphysics of Art." In the Spirit of Fluxus, Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss, eds. (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 67.
- ³⁷ George Macuinias, "Manifesto." (1963), reprinted in In the Spirit of Fluxus, (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 24.
- ³⁸ Ben Vautier, Ben Dieu, Sa Revue (NY: Museum of Modern Art, c.1963), unpaginated.
- ³⁹ Stiles (Walker Art Center, 1993), 69-70. Joseph Beuys and other Fluxus artists were concerned with social goals and their general leftist ideology was matched by actions intended to change society. Also see: Jon Hendricks, ed. Fluxus Codex: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman collection, (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1988). (1988), 35-38.
- ⁴⁰ George Macuinias, "Larry Miller: Transcript of the Videotape 'Interview with George Macuinias.'" 24 March 1978, reprinted in Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 185.
- ⁴¹ Ben Vautier, documents and photographs. Ben, pour ou contre: un rétrospective (Marseilles, c. 1995), 38-39.
- ⁴² Yves Klein, "Theatre du Vide." Dimanche, 27 Novembre 1960 (Paris: 1960), 2.
- ⁴³ Chris Burden performed a similar work on La Cienega Blvd. in Los Angeles in 1973 for which he was arrested and taken to trial.
- ⁴⁴ Program reprinted in Ben=Art. Exhibition catalogue April 6 – May 20, 1973 (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum catalogue no. 543), 15.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ben, publicity poster. photographs published in Sohm and Szeeman (Cologne 1970), unpaginated.
- ⁴⁷ Ben, film score. published in Sohm and Szeeman (Cologne 1970), unpaginated.
- ⁴⁸ Ina Blom, "Boredom and Oblivion." The Fluxus Reader, Ken Frideman, ed. (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 63-64.

⁴⁹ John Cage formulated the "possibility of immersion," as discussed in Blom (1998), 63. Originally published as John Cage quoted in Richar Kostelanetz, Conversing with Cage, New York (1988), 209.

⁵⁰ Ben Vautier, artist talk. Anthology Film Archives (October 28, 1998). Jonas Mekas has video copies of Ben's films of the events; video is courtesy of Jonas Mekas and Anthology Film Archives, NY. For an additional list of Ben's filmed event scores see Jon Hendricks, ed. Fluxus Codex: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, Detroit Michigan (NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1988) 500. As noted in the Silverman archive, the Tate Gallery has a copy of Silverman films reel 1 in 8mm format.

⁵¹ For a complete list of Ben's Écritures see Ben: Écritures de 1958 à 1966 (Paris: Daniel Templon and Mazarin, 1971).

⁵² Ben Vautier. "Les Moments de la Création à Nice." (Paris. 1977), 15.. In Ben's chronology of the Ecole de Nice, he mentioned François Fontan frequenting his store in November 1959. Fontan was a linguist who published a book on ethnic culture and language, and he was the founder of the Occitane political party. Ben included him in a section of the 1977 Paris catalogue, A Propos de Nice. "Prises de Position par Rapport au Renouveau de la Culture Occitane. He continued to reference Fontan in a debate presented by the artist on October 22, 1991 in conjunction with "Ben Vautier: For a pluri-cultural avant-garde world." (NY: Emily Harvey Gallery, September 24-October 22, 1991). The announcement featured a map of the United States by Fontan dated 1964, which indicated political boundaries based on ethnical and linguistic criteria.

⁵³ Ben Vautier. "moi ben je signe." Théorie (Milan: Giancarlo Politi, 1974), 20.
 "La Mort La Mort La Mort La Mort La Mort La Mort
 Le Silence le Bruit L'Odeur La Peur la Joie La Mort La Mort
 La fin du monde la Solitude La Mort La Mort La Mort La Mort
 La destruction d'humain devant des murs blancs a la
 Mitrailieuse La Mort la Mort la Mort la Mort la Mort

Ma Mort"

Je signe surtout Le Mystère en Boite et L'Écriture Peinture.

⁵⁴ "Ben on Ben." Ben Libre (Saint Etienne: Musée d'art et d'Industrie 1981), 25.

⁵⁵ Ben Vautier, quoted in Ben, pour ou contre: un rétrospective (Marseilles c. 1995), 36.

⁵⁶ Ben Vautier, interview with Otto Hahn, Statements New York 82: Leading Contemporary Artists from France (NY: Presses Artistiques. 1982), 14.

⁵⁷ Ben, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 43.

⁵⁸ Sosno, 1960 interview with Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, and Arman, published as "Klein, Raysse, Arman: des Nouveaux Réalistes." in Yves Klein (Paris, 1982) 264.

⁵⁹ Achille Bonito Oliva, Europe-America: The Different Avant-guards (Milano: Deco Press, Franco Maria Ricci, editor (1976), 183.

⁶⁰ Ben Vautier, artist lecture, Anthology Film Archives, NY October 28, 1998.

⁶¹ Clive Phillpot, "Fluxus: Magazines, Manifestos, *Multum in Parvo*, Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1988), 13. Originally published, George Macuinias, "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview, Addenda I (no date or place of publication), 15.

⁶² Yves Klein, "Le réalisme authentique d'aujourd'hui." (September 1959), reprinted in KWY 11 (Paris) 1963. This issue was devoted to Klein and edited by Christo. The issue is subtitled, "Le Nouveau Réalisme dépass-t-il?" The issue opens with a reprint of this September 1959 text by Klein.

⁶³ KWY 11 (Paris) 1963, unpaginated.

⁶⁴ Stiles (Walker Art Center, 1993), 67.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ben, Pour ou Contre: un Rétrospective, exh. cat. (Musée d'Art Contemporaine: Galeries contemporaines des musée de Marseilles, July 14-October 1, 1995), 34.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Blom, "Boredom and Oblivion." The Fluxus Reader, (1998), 85.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 86.

⁷² Ben Vautier, Ben Dieu: Sa Revue (c. 1963). "Le Journal de Yves Klein est un document monument sur le Théâtre Total – Klein Peintre avait voulu signer les extrême et l'absolu. - "Le Monochrome" "le vide" et aurait réussi si je n'avait pas été là, plus métaphysicien que lui, pour signer avant lui – LA MORT – L'UNIVERS – la Notion de TOUT – la Notion de Rien faire – le Pastiche – le Mystère – Dieu en Boite, etc..."

Il signe "La Vie" le Dimanche 27 Nov. pièce de Théâtre dans le monde.
 Il signe "le Sommeil" – Une pièce dans laquelle un homme dormira!
 Il signe – Une pièce ou les gens sont attachés et devront supporter le Monochrome Klein.
 Il signe (vous n'avez qu'à lire son Journal) la guerre. etc...

...le journal de Klein est un texte important d'anticipation Théâtrale... Klein a oublié que la VIE n'est pas synonyme de Théâtre."

⁷³Jacques Lepage, quoted in Valdman (1991), 130. Critic Jacques Lepage believed that Ben's importance to the Ecole de Nice was connected to his store where he acted as a center point of information and critical ideas and writing. Lepage recalled that petitions were circulated to demolish his store on many occasions before it was finally sold to the Beaubourg.

⁷⁴ Ben Vautier. "Ben Vautier," Identités, No. 11-12, été - automne, 1965, 15.

⁷⁵ Ben Vautier, quoted in Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), unpaginated

⁷⁶Ben Vautier. Ben Dieu (New York, c. 1963). "L'Artiste créateur est dans la Vie et il remplit cette Vie d'activité. Il essaie de remplacer la Vie (vide) par l'activité (plein)...L'art de Klein recherche l'absolu, il expose le vide, l'eau et le feu. Mais il me semble, que l'absolu ne peut être atteint que dans la mort, qui contient tout et rien."

⁷⁷ Owen Smith. Fluxus: the History of an Attitude (CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 79-80.

⁷⁸Christine Stiles, (Walker Art Center 1993), 75.

⁷⁹ Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lecombe. "Chronologie," 1960: Les Nouveaux Réalistes exh. cat. 15 mai – 7 sept. 1986 (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris), 94. Also see: Noëlle Réveillaud-Chabert and Sylvain Lecombe, "Biographies," 246.

⁸⁰Dylaby was organized by Pontus Hulten and Daniel Spoerri. It included the works of Martial Raysse, Jean Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, Robert Rauschenberg, Niki de St. Phalle, and Per Olaf Uldvelft.

⁸¹Spoerri, as quoted in Stiles (1993), 77.

⁸² Contemporary art in London was closely linked with the Independent Group formed in 1952. Major exhibitions such as "Parallel of Art and Life (1953, ICA) and "Man, Machine and Motion" (ICA, 1955). "This is Tomorrow" (1956, Whitechapel Gallery), and solo exhibitions by Peter Blake, Joe Tilson, Edouard Paolozzi, and Kitaj fused British art with popular culture. Lawrence Alloway,

critic and curator assumed leadership at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1955 as Assistant Director. He resigned in 1961 as Program Director at ICA to assume the post of curator at the Guggenheim Museum. Jean Tinguely exhibited in an exhibition titled Art, Machines and Motion at the Kaplan Gallery, London in November 1959. In conjunction with that exhibition, Tinguely held a conference and performance at the ICA on November 16 titled Static, Static, Static! Be Static! During the event, 1.5 kilometers of paper drawn by two cyclists on his meta-matic bicycle spread through the audience while Tinguely read his theory of movement and machines simultaneously heard on radio in Paris.

⁸³ Ben Vautier, Ben Dieu: Sa Revue (NY: Museum of Modern Art, c. 1963), 6.

⁸⁴ Ben set the precedent for the performance activity of many artists in the 1970s and 1980s such as Chris Burden (Sleep Piece, 1972) and Linda Montano.

⁸⁵ Ben Vautier, statement after his participation in the Misfits Fair in London, 1962. Published in Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeeman, eds. Happenings and Fluxus (Cologne: Kunstverein, 1970), unpaginated. Also cited in Ina Blom (1998), 84.

⁸⁶ Stiles (Walker Art Center, 1993), 75.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁸⁸ Smith (1998), 79.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹¹ Stiles (Walker Art Center, 1993), 64.

⁹² Ben stated that Arman introduced him to "attitude art" which he associates with Andy Warhol. Jonas Mekas said that Warhol and Fluxus organizer George Macuinas "were the same" in that they both dealt with nothingness treated life as a game and never took it seriously. See Mekas' film Zefiro Tournò (1989); the film is a tribute to George Macuinas.

⁹³ Ben Vautier (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977), 7.

⁹⁴ Blom, (London, 1998), 84.

⁹⁵ Dick Higgins. "Statement on Intermedia," Reprinted in In the Spirit of Fluxus (MN: Walker Art Center, 1993), 172-173.

⁹⁶John Cage, "John Cage discusses Fluxus" Visible Language 26 Winter/Spring 1992 58-68.

⁹⁷Ken Friedman. "Fluxus and Company." The Fluxus Reader (London: Academy Press, 1998), 243.

⁹⁸Sohm and Szneeman (Cologne, 1970). This catalogue includes extensive exhibition documents and posters. Material now in Archives Sohm.

⁹⁹"Actions de Ben à l'occasion de Impact, Musée de Céret, July 15, 1966. Photographs by Jacques Strauch published in "Chronology II," Chroniques Nicois (1991), 332-333.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ben Vautier, exhibition organizer. "Le litre de Var coûte 1,60F." (Nice: Galerie A, October 1966). The exhibition included: Marcel Alocco, George Brecht, Chubac, Eric Dietman, Jacques Fahri, Yves Klein, Olivier Mosset, Serge III, Claude Viallat. The opening included Fluxus events by Ben, Nice critic Jacques Merino, George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, and Alison Knowles. See: "Chronology II," Chroniques Nicois (1991), 334.

¹⁰²Festival of Non-Art, No. 31 (1969) Special Collection Periodical, Schmuck, no. 6, no date. Special Collection, Museum of Modern Art Library, NY.

¹⁰³George Brecht "Something about Fluxus" (May 1964). Happening and Fluxus (Cologne 1970), unpaginated.

¹⁰⁴Ken Friedman. "Introduction: A Transformative Vision of Fluxus." The Fluxus Reader (London: Academy Editions, 1998), ix.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶George Macuinas, letter to Nam June Paik, n.d. [c. August 15, 1962]. Photocopy of the letter is located in the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Cited in Owen F. Smith. "Fluxus: A Brief History and Other Fictions." In the Spirit of Fluxus, Armstrong and Rothfuss, eds. (1993), 28.

¹⁰⁷Ben, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 38, 42.

¹⁰⁸George Macuinas, as quoted in "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Macuinas, 24 March 1978, reprinted in Friedman (1998), 185, 195-6.

¹⁰⁹Ken Friedman. "Fluxus and Company." The Fluxus Reader (1998), 244-251. The twelve Fluxus ideas are: globalism, unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality. Fluxus is anti-

elitist. Friedman defined elitism as "a dominant elite class based on inherited wealth or power or based on the ability of dominant minorities to incorporate new members in such a way that their wealth and power will be preserved. This is quite contrary to an open or entrepreneurial society in which the opportunity to advance is based on the ability to create value in the form of goods or services.

¹¹⁰ Friedman (1998), 243. He defined these as principles of Fluxus.

¹¹¹ Bernard Pagès, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 149.

¹¹² Ben Vautier, as quoted in Blom (London, 1998), 84, 90, f/n 71. Ben Vautier statements after his participation at the Misfits Fair in London (1972) published in Sohm and Szeeman, eds. Happenings and Fluxus (Cologne, 1970).

¹¹³ Arman, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 31.

¹¹⁴ Ben, as quoted in Lars Movin, The Misfits: Thirty Years of Fluxus [videorecording] Documentary film in conjunction with the 1990 Venice Biennial. National Film Board of Denmark, distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, 1993.

Chapter 7

Claude Viallat: Focal Dispersion

Claude Viallat rejected the notion of stylistic progress in art. Like others associated with the Ecole de Nice, his work is a product of appropriation, accumulation, and repetition. He fabricated painting by “impregnating” a material surface with color using a single pre-determined form (Fig. 51). Viallat’s writings and interviews concentrate on key points: the importance of a systematic process and a fundamental reconsideration of the subject of painting. He described his position in 1970: “A canvas, a work, alone it is nothing, it is the process – the system – that is important.”¹ Viallat affirmed the task of painting, but he was critical of the position that painting held when defined exclusively by formal criteria. Viallat wanted to integrate painting into the fabric of daily life in the south of France.

Viallat’s work is generally discussed as a direction in abstract painting linked with both the Ecole de Nice and the short-lived Nice-Paris group Supports-Surfaces. His return to painting, especially abstraction, appeared to shift the readymade orientation of the Ecole de Nice, and Sosno even suggested that the return to painting by Viallat and others contributed to the Ecole de Nice losing prestige.² But in fact, Viallat’s use of readymade materials and his methods are consistent with the Ecole de Nice, and his allegiance to Nice further substantiates

his rapport with this group. Viallat was close to the critic Jacques Lepage, a proponent of the Ecole de Nice, and Arman and Ben.³ In the two years that he lived in Nice, he regularly exhibited with Ecole de Nice artists, including the first exhibition of the Ecole de Nice at the Galerie de la Salle in 1967, which first used the term to validate the works of the seventeen artists that participated.

Viallat's practice/theory approach to painting had political implications, particularly in the era of 1968 in France. Viallat was a key figure in Supports Surfaces, which was deeply interested in using painting as a political tool. However, within the group, the balance between the practice of painting and politics was an issue of serious debate that led, in part, to the demise of this important group (1970-1971). The first exhibition of Supports/Surfaces in 1970, organized by Pierre Gaudibert, curator of ARC 1, remains an historical milestone.⁴ The following year, the artists defined their positions in the document titled "Positions du Group Supports/Surfaces," in conjunction with their second exhibition, which took place in the Théâtre de la Cité Internationale, Cité Universitaire, Paris (April 19-May 8, 1971).⁵ Their manifesto emphasized a commitment to a theory/practice methodology linked to a collective enterprise, a position they believed countered prevailing trends. "This constitutes in itself a position against the individualist conception of Art, the fetishization of the work of an omnipotent creator whose "creations" are only made for merchandising."⁶ Instead, painting "here is "central and an object of knowledge: inscribed in the

processes of writing-teaching in perpetual transformation.”⁷ The role of painting is to allow one to “see.”⁸ so the subject of painting focused on its very materials and their effects. Research was to be generated by an instinctive approach in order to begin an interrogation of foundations of painting, a goal not geared to a central image around which the fabrication is peripheral.⁹ The artists cited several artists that provided important precedents for their works including Cézanne, Matisse, Mondrian, Pollock, and Rothko. And their approach to theory and politics was consistent with the dialectic methods of Marx-Engles, whom they credit directly.¹⁰

The last Supports/Surfaces exhibition just one year later took place in the Théâtre Municipal, Nice (June 15-20, 1971) (Fig. 52).¹¹ In both these exhibitions, the ensemble installations of free hanging materials, leaning canvas supports, cut canvases, and materials such as rope, sticks, dish clothes, and fishnets created a visually dynamic and theatrical effect. The boundaries between one work and another are often difficult to discern because the structural integrity of each object has been replaced by an inter-play of materials and objects generally linked to activities of daily life. The spectator does not stand outside the installation, but interacts with the space and materials in a direct way, encountering constantly changing perspectives in the de-structured installation.

At the Nice exhibition, the group split into two camps, a break initiated by the artists from Nice.¹² In the “Lettre de Scission” signed by Viallat, Dolla,

Saytour, Valensi, and Toni Grand on June 14, the Nice artists stated that the Parisians refused to advance applied theory to the practice of painting, they also refused to address the how their works would be circulated in exhibitions or sold.¹³ Furthermore, the artists in Nice believed that the Parisians separated, even prioritized politics over painting rather than considering them united as a social practice. This perceived elevation of politics over painting on the part of artists such as Louis Cane and Marc Devade, in particular, contributed greatly to the dissolution of this group. Lepage wrote that Cane and Devade and their associates at the Paris journal Tel Quel struck a severe blow to the artists in Nice by giving them “a certificate of provincialism.”¹⁴ After the 1971 split, Viallat chose to remain close to those in Nice.¹⁵ The Paris group thereafter regarded the Nice artists as simply “wanting to play their little provincial games.”¹⁶

In contrast to the views of some Parisian Supports/Surface artists, regional autonomy and cultural pluralism had a key place in late sixties cultural discourse. This chapter will emphasize the regional ties that are evident in Viallat's work. The visual link to place is evident in his use of color and ornament, which connects his work with Matisse, in particular. But as the Niçois critic Raphael Monticelli has suggested, “It is about the everyday life in the South of France with its exterior orientation, cosmopolitanism, tourism, and concern with American reality. Yes, this work is regional.”¹⁷ Or in the words of Finnish

curator, Timo Vuorikoski: "The Mediterranean culture of the south of France is the very soil from which Viallat's art has absorbed its vigor."¹⁸

Viallat warrants the term provincial because his work is inseparable from a set of circumstances (historical, cultural, and political), emerging from the culture of France's southern regions. His work signaled a new form of popular culture, a phenomenon that had been overlooked or, even repressed in postwar reconstruction France. The emphasis on the region's popular culture connected the artists of the Ecole de Nice. Brian Rigby described it as a cultural production associated with resistance and independence, a process of "poaching" in the domain of sanctified culture.¹⁹

Viallat admired the work of Matisse, but he rejected Parisian art because he considered it "unethical" to systematically distance creative work from the very "fabric of life."²⁰ Viallat connected his work, especially the process of stamping, with the local decorative method, "blanchir."²¹ This was a traditional way of decorating kitchen walls using sponges soaked in a blue pigment, which were pressed onto whitewashed walls in regulated patterns. In contrast to the hygienic, modernized interior space that was one of Raysse's major themes. Viallat used a pattern and method that was specific to the region, using a process that could be applied to a variety of supports – sheets, clothing, table-clothes, awnings, boat coverings. As Viallat put it, "It is not an intellectual process and it is not calculated. It is a wall or a floor paving."²² Bernard Ceysson, of the Musée

d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne, has pointed out that Viallat worked outdoors, and to avoid the stretched canvases from bending, he began to lay un-stretched canvas on the ground, which prevented it from flying away. He incorporated the changes that occurred due to exposure to bright sun and gravel that marked the back of the surface.²³

Viallat rejected Nouveau Réalisme because it appeared that the object basis of this work supported consumerism, and the readymade no longer had the critical edge necessary to interrogate the ideology that supported the values it represented. To him, their work appeared to be merely a celebration of Americanization by the mid-1960s. Viallat turned to abstract painting, particularly to the precedents established by American abstractionist of the 1950s as a means to analyze the material and structural components of abstraction, and to resurrect it with a new set of social and cultural aims.

But Viallat was very specific about the importance of Arman to his work.²⁴ Even though Arman continued to work with objects, he made the point on receipt of the Marzotto Prize at the Venice Biennial in 1966 that he was distressed at the "accumulation of things, the quantity." In his words, "My work is an illustration of this quantity and a protest."²⁵ Viallat admired Arman's "production" of work, and his "ability to exploit proliferation."²⁶

Viallat was one the seventeen artists included in the first exhibition of the Ecole de Nice held at the Galerie de la Salle in Vence (March 18 –April 18,

1967). Arman designed the poster on which the names of the artists were stamped, along with grammatical marks, and stenciled letters repeated in horizontal and vertical arrangements. His typographical layout is a complex organization of ink stamp letters, stencils, over-stamping and repetitions in single letters. Though it differs from the structured imprints of Viallat, Arman's visual impact on Viallat is clear.

Viallat used abstract painting and its materials in relation to the "mechanical" precedents associated with significant figures of the Ecole de Nice – Arman, in particular.²⁷ This is evident in Viallat's procedures: stamping, accumulating, and material use of pre-printed fabrics and other readymade materials. Viallat, like Arman, restricted his work to a series of physical measures that led to the next course of action. His repetitive act of stamping a pre-determined form onto a canvas allowed him to then consider the pattern, color, scale, ground, etc.

Arman advised Viallat to turn to readymade forms; he suggested that Viallat use the shapes derived from a hygrometer, a device that charts moisture in the atmosphere.²⁸ The instrument produces curves that calculate water/gas relationships contingent upon atmospheric variables, which yield rhythmic patterns. The curved lines are automatically produced in relation to specific atmospheric conditions of a time and place. Arman also suggested that Viallat use the palette shape as a template for repetitive marks, inspiring him to begin to

work with sponges and foam rubber in the shape of a palette, which he soaked in water-based or gelatin-based pigments and then stamped on stretched canvases. The self-referential, repetitive shapes were organized in registers or in internally framed spaces within the canvas. The "impregnation" of the surface by the saturated sponge also produced splashes and drips of color (Fig. 53).

Although Viallat does not have any connection with the mystical potential of art that was emblematic of Klein's Blue Revolution, Klein's use of color as sensuous matter, his incorporation of natural elements into the process of making an image, and his use of space does have affinities with Viallat's work. I want to also suggest that the social aspects of Viallat's work, his interventions, are indebted to Ben's encounter-based performance. Jean Clair pointed out that Ben supported and exhibited the work of Viallat and others associated with *Supports/Surfaces* beginning in 1966.²⁹ Both artists disrupt the viewer's conditioned response to the environment. Viallat's work is rarely considered in relation to Fluxus, but Ben's Total Art, a unique combination of Ben's local work and international Fluxus, was based on the relationship between the banality of repetition and the potential for new experiences, a conceptual basis of Viallat's work. Like Ben, Viallat used his paintings to direct the spectator's vision beyond the paintings and into the social context.

Viallat was also included in a small exhibition, primarily of documents, that substantiated the activity of the Ecole de Nice (December 25-January 7,

1968).³⁰ Jacques Lepage organized this display for the Club Antonin Artaud, a center of interdisciplinary activity in the arts established an interdisciplinary space in 1952. This exhibition ran concurrent with the show, "Trois Artistes de L'Ecole de Nice," at the Galerie des Ponchettes. Although Lepage wrote the introduction for the Klein, Arman, and Raysse exhibition catalogue, his organization of Ecole de Nice documents demonstrated that the definition of the Ecole de Nice at the Galerie des Ponchettes was narrowly conceived, and could, if not should, be expanded, a position that Ben also maintained.

During the few years that Viallat spent in Nice, from 1964 to 1967, he exhibited regularly. In addition, he organized two important group exhibitions at the Musée de Céret (1966) and in the town of Coaraze (1969), and he then became a central figure in the Nice/Paris group Supports-Surfaces. Viallat organized "Impact I" at the Musée de Céret with critic Jacques Lepage, during the summer of 1966 (July 15-September 25). This exhibition included twenty-eight artists, mainly from the south of France associated with Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus, or, friends of Viallat, including Daniel Buren, Niele Toroni, Michel Parmentier (who later formed the group BMPT with Olivier Mosset) and Vincent Biuolès, Michel Parmentier, François Rouan (who later associated with Supports/Surfaces). The cover of the catalogue (Fig. 54), a map of Céret, is cut in the shape of a star overlaid with a target; Arman designed the exhibition poster, which featured an accumulation of artist palettes. The catalogue cover and poster

point to the theme of the exhibition – artists convening as a form of protest against the sense of alienation that results from “a manufactured existence of science, progress, frigidaires and cosmonauts.” Impact I was described as “spiritual help of the species,” an attempt to “surmount social alienation.”³¹

Clair described the exhibition as “the most beautiful collection of contemporary art that a provincial museum ever possessed.”³² In an effort to gain public support, the artists agreed to give the works they exhibited to the museum. Despite this offer, the Musée de Céret returned the works to the artists.³³ The museum’s decision is indicative of institutional indifference so often remarked upon by artists from the region. This “regional problem” forced artists to use unconventional venues such as streets, beaches, mountains, hill towns, and theaters to install their works. The work shifted to installation format; Viallat describes it as an intervention into the geographic.³⁴

The artists represented in this exhibition, including Ben’s performance of La Monte Young event score titled Composition No. 10 (to Bob Morris) (1960)³⁵ suggested the conceptual links the artists’ recognized even though they are now categorized as distinct groups such as Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, Supports/Surfaces, and BMPT. They all shared a common interest in using art as a vehicle of social intervention and they all employed a theatrical or performance component. And all of the artists in this exhibition considered the context and installation of their works key to its impact. Viallat was interested in the mode of

presentation, the variables that constitute painting as an object of study, and an evaluation of the capacity of the works to communicate.

The month after the close of the Céret exhibition, Viallat participated in a group show organized by Ben at Nice's Galerie A titled, "Le litre de Var coûte 1.60F."³⁶ The title of this exhibition, based on the cost of local wine, underscored the regional taste of the works even though several artists associated with international Fluxus participated. In this exhibition, Viallat installed free hanging dish clothes stamped with repetitive marks and an unstretched stamped canvas. Viallat impressed on his surfaces a strict pattern based on task-based repetition.

John Cage provided an important precedent for the diverse approaches to artistic activity that characterized the Ecole de Nice at this period. Cage's ideas, specifically related to theater had just recently been featured in Marcel Alococo's literary review Identités.³⁷ His comments on theater are relevant to the direction of installation-based work of Viallat and his aim to disperse vision into a broader field than the centrally focused canvas. Cage stated: "More interesting [than the stable vision of the Renaissance model] our everyday experience is a theater in which we ourselves are in the round, in which activity takes place around us."³⁸ Viallat published his theoretical ideas in a ten point list in "Fragments" published in 1974 in which he begins with the following: "Consider space real, attack the mono-centric vision of Renaissance space."³⁹

Cage was the inspiration for Fluxus, a group that used task-based activities and repetition. According to Cage, repetition is a complicated and paradoxical concept.⁴⁰ He explained that “pattern is information that is not present in it. It is dependent on a chain of reactions that occur when the initial pattern (code) interacts with other information. Variables arise from combinations.”⁴¹ This statement could easily apply to Viallat. He was addressing this very issue in painting – the structural elements of painting, the process of coloring the support, the tension or slackness of the material – and its relation to the context. Viallat used pattern as an internal means of structuring an insignificant form, which would be meaningless without combinations and reactions.

Viallat described the basic shape, which he called a “haricot,” as “...neither figurative, nor abstract, nor representative, nor geometric, nor symbolique...that is not important.”⁴² However, his work evokes numerous precedents such as Arp (shape), Cézanne (atmosphere), and Matisse (repetition and pattern); or structures and patterns, such as leaded window sashes, masonry webbing in cathedral vaults, stained glass diapering, heraldic banners, cobblestones, theater curtains, flags, and fishing nets. Viallat has not created a new form but found one connected to already constructed social spaces.

By 1968, Viallat was also exhibiting with artists later called Supports/Surfaces in the “V Festival des Arts Plastiques de la Côte d’Azur” (December 1967- January 15, 1968), which included Vincent Bioulès, Pierre

Buraglio, Daniel Dezeuze, and Patrick Saytour. Viallat then organized an exhibition in the hill town Coaraze, 40 kilometers north of Nice in the summer of 1969 (Fig. 55). With the support of Parisian curator, Pierre Gaudibert, Viallat and artists Saytour, Bioulès, Dezeuze, and Bernard Pagès planned what Jacques Lepage called “the occupation of the village.”⁴³ Coaraze became the site for an ensemble installation by the artists, which had a festival-like atmosphere. The installation was a colorful event with un-stretched fabrics in bold patterns hanging on the walls of the town and over the streets, and an installation by Bioulès of 125 brightly painted poles leaning between the sidewalk and the building walls. The ensemble works suggest heraldic banners, processional spaces, and even hanging laundry.

Ceysson suggested that this exhibition manifested a nostalgic and romantic air.⁴⁴ The installations created an atmosphere that re-invigorated the history of this medieval town, and photographs confirm Ceysson’s view that visual poetry is indeed a component of their work. Viallat described the scene as “painting annexed the void.”⁴⁵ The encounter forced the viewer to question what was presented, and to reflect on history as a dynamic process relevant to contemporary life. Marcelin Pleyner, the critic who supported Viallat, viewed history as a dynamic process rather than a diachronic stream of progressive events. For Pleyner, history is subject to change based on the interrogation of the

present that allows for an unveiling of the past and a means of establishing a contingency with the present.

Viallat's military tone evident in words such as "occupied" and "annexed" underscores the aggressive, and even, revolutionary intentions. There are no vague or remote agendas; he wanted to intervene directly into the space, to expose it in the present tense, but also to show its foundations.

Viallat's cultural politics and allegiance to the Midi are evident in his support of the "INterVENTION A" manifesto in October 1968.⁴⁶ The statement was written and published by the Marcel Alocco, the critic Monticelli, and Carmelo Arden Quin, an Uruguayan artist associated with the Argentine group Madi (Marxism/Material Dialectic) in the 1940s. The title captures the ethos the Ecole de Nice – invention (vocabulary of forms) and intervention (self-declaration). Quin's work as a Madi artist would have also provided Viallat with a precedent for his approach to painting. The Madi use painting as a means to critique society, especially its structure. The artists approached painting as a formal task, but refused to adhere to formal conventions, especially the flat picture plane and the rectangular format. Their works are multi-planar and non-rectangular – formal innovations in the 1940s. Quin exhibited at the Paris Salon des Realités Nouvelles from 1949-1956 and traveled frequently between Argentina and France. Despite the difference in generations (he was born in 1913), his commitment to abstraction as a social practice and his formal

interrogation of painting as a structure would have been key precedents for the work of Viallat.

“INterVENTION A” attacked France’s centralized cultural system broadly perceived as a failure despite decentralization efforts. According to these artists, the French government failed to support cultural pluralism, and the insistence on a strong national culture was inherently unethical and hegemonic. This language is consistent with the language of popular culture advocates in the 1960s who considered national culture insufficient to “fulfill and engage people in their everyday lives.”⁴⁷ One of the most insistent themes of 1968 was the call for a “plural culture” in defiance of de Gaulle.⁴⁸ “INterVENTION A” was a demand for cultural autonomy. Genviève Poujol and Raymond Labourie defined the importance of cultural pluralism at the time: “The attention nowadays to the plurality of cultures, cultural identity, regionalism and everyday life, inevitably reveals a militant approach.”⁴⁹ Popular culture was no longer associated with the edification of the working classes but rather an affirmation of diverse cultural experiences.

Viallat’s work is more than simply a regional manifestation. Rather, it relates to the broadening discourse of popular culture. The term popular culture is one that struggled for clear definition especially in the postwar period in France. In Rigby’s study, Popular Culture in Modern France (1991), he suggests that the resonance of popular culture is so insistent because historically France undertook

a program to create a unified national culture at the expense of the great diversity of cultures within its borders. French cultural pluralism was destroyed or repressed in order to accomplish French unification and to safeguard social order.⁵⁰ The underlying means to accomplish this was the creation of a strong national administration and rapid modernization.⁵¹

In the postwar era, the notion of popular culture was also linked to the unsavory memory of the Vichy and that regime's idealization of rural life and folk culture.⁵² But by the late 1960s, it came to exemplify a separate and subversive culture. Cultural historian and critic Michel de Certeau shifted the discussion of popular culture in the direction of a pluralistic idea of cultures with distinct practices. Rather than object-based, it tends toward more ephemeral and instantaneous events.⁵³ Specifically, this cultural manifestation is linked to two concepts: la fête and le quotidien. De Certeau maintains that popular culture takes into account the "underlying patterns, rhythms, and meanings" of daily existence and how individuals negotiate social relations in the private and public space.⁵⁴ For him, it constitutes a form of collective memory distinct from historical commemorations. The traditional connection between popular culture and the working masses had eroded in the era of 1968; however, the association between popular culture and political subversion remained. In the area of culture, popular culture was viewed as a viable source of resistance to national culture.

At the Musée du Havre in 1969, Viallat and other artists exhibiting (Louis Cane, Dezeuze, and Saytour) defined their position as painters:

The objet of painting is painting itself and the works express only rapport among the paintings. They do not call upon things beyond them (personality of the artist, biography, or the history of art, for example). They do not offer an evasion, because the operation of the surface, by ruptures of forms and colors, prohibited mental projections or the oneiric divagations of the witness. Painting is a fact in itself and it is on that ground that one must pose the problems. It is not a return to sources or pure original research, but of the simple exposure of the pictorial elements which constitute the pictorial fact. From this there is neutrality of works presented, their absence of lyricism and expressive depth.⁵⁵

Lepage described this type of painting as a terrain, a topology for interrogation and inquiry.⁵⁶ He maintained that painting should be stripped of its "inhibitions," including conventions such as recto/verso, tension/slackness, format, means of marking, and especially the abandonment of logocentrism.⁵⁷ Viallat's work makes visually real his view that painting involves a "process of exchange," a position first espoused in their Paris exhibition at the École Spéciale d'Architecture in 1969. This show was called a "presentation," which had a didactic agenda and was to be a demonstration of these artists' research into what was perceived hidden in materials and processes that generated a painting. Viallat writes in the catalogue, "painting must be determined within itself, it allows itself to be seen: to show, that is all that needs to be said."⁵⁸ The exhibition title, "Peinture . . . Sculpture . . . Architecture . . ." indicates the significance of their work in relation to other visual arts. The idea was to encourage a "place of artistic exchange and in constant transformation." Viallat and others in his group

associated their work with constructed public space, which suggests that they wanted to create a new public art with a social realist agenda. Their ideas had sources in realism, as defined by materials and colors (Léger), the research-based methods of Constructivism, and the sense of play material in Dada and Fluxus.

Pleynet described their approach in his 1969 article, "Disparition du Tableau," as an attempt to "disappear" painting and to reformulate it as an "object of knowledge."⁵⁹ Painting became a means of deconstructing itself to reveal the systems that sanctioned its very structure. Painting becomes a means of "showing how" of an historical development through reflection on its own material basis.⁶⁰ Viallat believed that if the painting failed to escape or even question the conditions of its own making, it succumbed to its own boundaries. The painter accepted subordination to painting conventions without any resistance to the prescribed conditions of its making. Originality was not the issue; rather, it was the fact that artists failed to question conventions, which was linked to broader social ramifications. Viallat wanted to verify things; the existence of things leads to a process of questions and reflections.⁶¹

Viallat was not interested in style, but rather in the idea that abstraction was an unfinished project. For Viallat, the significance of postwar abstraction as a cultural construct had yet to be analyzed and the meaning of its structure addressed. Artists such as Pollock, admired by Viallat, formulated an approach to abstract painting that defied focal attention to a single image, and was produced in

a manner that highlighted process and material. In postwar France, it represented a paradigm of cultural and ideological success that sidelined French painting dominance. Rather than abandoning painting as Klein and Arman had earlier believing that the medium was exhausted, Viallat returned to abstract painting as a point of an analysis aimed to exposed it as a cultural and societal model, and to employ it as a means of social critique. Melville suggested that it was the focus on the optical qualities of American abstraction, in particular, that had left the material analysis of the works unexamined.⁶² But like Klein and Arman, Viallat also questioned how art was valued and how it participated in systems of exchange. For Viallat, the goal of making a painting was not validation by institutional collections or gallery sales, but rather it was an effective means of intervention. "painting punctuating space!"⁶³

Viallat challenged conventional modes of seeing by continuing in the same vein as artists of the Ecole de Nice – taking a "common materiological and critical approach to pictorial activity."⁶⁴ His means of re-orienting vision is an inversion of the earlier tendencies in Nice. Rather than bring into focus what is already present, Viallat aimed to disperse the gaze, and to provide the viewer with a means of questioning the social space in which it is seen. Critic Marie-José Baudinet described Viallat's work as superficial in its concern for the surface or the skin of the painting. He believed that this as the "most profound aspect of the work." It is the site of contact, of encounter, between the process and material.⁶⁵

As Viallat's work evolved, domestic material surfaces (and canvas) gave way to industrial burlap, military tents, and parasols (Fig. 56). These "soft" supports interact directly with the space where they are suspended. He hung them directly in space from a ceiling or across open streets to enhance their visual fluidity and enable movement that is contingent upon the site's conditions. The space itself was not stable but subject to changed perspectives. Once installed in a space, Viallat's free hanging paintings became part of the visual experience, with the rhythm and color dispersing on the surface and beyond into the surrounding space, street, interior or landscape. Wind, rain, sun, clouds, etc. further conditioned the work. This contingency affected the work and even altered it. It drew attention to unseen elements in the environment and acted as a record of the experience. As Stephen Melville has observed,

His works are self-reflexive and anti-object. They inscribe themselves into a real space and reveal the totality of their materials and processes without mystification. They are real, abstract, and the product of the body's work/action in space. And, they elicit a visual play between presence and absence, the void and fullness.⁶⁶

This interplay of void/fullness differs from that of Klein and Arman. Rather, it is an intervention of color and pattern devised to disrupt the focal balance. Viallat de-stabilizes space, ordinarily pre-structured by society or nature. An unexamined sense of equilibrium is disrupted, thus prompting an analysis of the situation, one that includes the painting but extends beyond it. Viallat called into question the unquestioned conditioning of one's interaction in the social space.

His “flight of the signifier”⁶⁷ across the surface disperses one’s focus onto another real visual field.

Viallat also experimented with dying techniques, such as batik, a process that uses a resist such as wax applied freehand or with pre-made stamps. This technique, associated with traditional decorative practices, is a surface treatment with color and generally repetitive patterns associated with specific locales. Viallat eroded his identifiable form by soaking and bleaching the sponges and foam rubber. The neutral and non-symbolic shape that resulted opened up the possibility of considering the subject in direct relation to the work not the resultant image.⁶⁸ The form is a sign – but without significance and subject to Viallat’s process. It was repeated, but the results vary because they are contingent on other variables such as the nature of the support, the color, the force of the imprint, and so forth.⁶⁹ Viallat remained with a single form in order to resist any sense of priority of one form over another and to arrest any sense of progress in his work: “It is a sign like an ‘a’ but ‘b’ would have done just as well.”⁷⁰

The shape is a soft rhomboid (an oblique angled parallelogram with only the opposite sides equal). Viallat unifies the single form into a matrix-derived schematic. This crisscross effect, a quadrillage, is also a term used by de Certeau to convey the sense that modern society is completely controlled, allowing no room for individual creativity.⁷¹ Viallat demonstrates that within the tight parameters of the quadrillage system he restricts himself to, he was able to

correlate variables (surface, color, pattern, etc.) in a way that creates a varied body of work that is individual and open-ended. Viallat confirmed that within tightly controlled strictures, it is possible to escape imposed limitation in a direct material way. By interrogating the given materials, he was able to work through and beyond the mechanical nature of his process. In fact, he exploited the process as a means of establishing reciprocal relationships and then testing those relationships.

Exhibition photographs show his work hanging on a towel rack so the pattern falls in front and behind even exposing the verso side. Some works are nailed onto the wall by a corner of the support allowing the work to fold over; an arrangement that altered the strict patterned surface (Fig. 57). Viallat described the works in the show as “paintings of soft forms determined by the limits of the canvas.”⁷² He utilized supports with tiger print patterns and works where automatic procedures are evident, such as Thirteen forms applied by chance (Fig. 58). But his desire to connect his work with the fabric of daily life was an overriding aim that can be seen most directly in his stamping of skirts, shirts, and wallpaper (Fig. 59).

Melville posits that this non-referential shape, similar to a bean, has “no sense apart from the relations it entertains first of all with other signifiers (including its own repetition) and, through them, with what will then appear as its signified.”⁷³ Internally, he rendered the shape “in positive and negative, or as a

system of forms and counter-forms."⁷⁴ Externally, the formal relationships enter into a reciprocal encounter with the ground under the support as well as the elements (sun and rain, for example) that further the process, a method used earlier by Klein in the Cosmogony series. The work establishes a relationship or exchange with the space in which it is installed or re-installed.

Pollock was also an important precedent for Viallat, because his "all over" technique diffused any focal point in the image. The painting inserts itself into a space, displaces the space already there, and demands that a new spatial orientation occur. Timo Vuorikoski pointed out that Viallat, like Pollock, works physically inside the painting.⁷⁵ As he described it: "It swallowed him up and discharges paintings, which are neither individual works of art nor 'final works,' but which are full of vitality, creative ecstasy, and inspiration."⁷⁶ Paul Rogers pointed out that the French resurrected American abstract painting, in part, because it represented an irrational cultural production emerging from a society that glorified rationality.⁷⁷

By relinquishing the assumptions about painting, Viallat formulated an approach to abstraction that made it a viable means of visual communication in an era dominated by the image and object. Viallat resurrected the fabrication impulse (as opposed to the direct appropriation of readymades). This process, though systematic stamping, is indebted to automatism but not in the sense of seeking and reading unconscious impulses that render forms. The unconscious marking of

applied colors on a surface unleashes color with verve produced by techniques such as soaking, tinting, dying, and folding. It is inflected with a raw hedonism.⁷⁸ Often his materials are coverings – awnings, tents, parasols, and clothing – that are opened up and “impregnated” with color. What Viallat has accomplished is a holistic integration of work and desire, the domestic and public, the individual mark and the contingency of other marks or places. One could call his work “total art” -- but not in the sense of appropriation of life itself but rather in the recognition that art as a form of social work had been removed from life.

Viallat was filling the void left when art is no longer a component of life – of its very materials, movements, instincts, and social necessities. Viallat did not privilege leisure as the ultimate goal of pleasurable existence (the utopia of capitalism) but rather a reintegration of work and pleasure. His work takes on the rhythm of the time and place of its making. And in doing so, it allows for an apprehension of that moment in relation to other moments. It is a form of knowledge derived from its very system, which attempts to take into account under what conditions we perceive it.

The recuperation of postwar American painting on Viallat’s part was confrontation with a history of postwar art that defeated the French cultural lead. American abstraction emerged at an important historical axis from a culture considered provincial by European standards. Pollock epitomizes that moment. He linked indigenous cultures and regionalism with modernist innovations and

processes. This synthesis emerges from his ritualistic projection of conscious and unconscious impulses onto a surface.

Viallat's work is also indebted to the precedents established by French and American abstract artists that he saw in Paris in 1963-64. The artist Simon Hantaï, originally affiliated with Breton and the Surrealism in the 1950s, provided a precedent for Viallat's work. His version of automatism prioritized materials (colors and canvas) and processes (folding and staining), enabling him to relinquish subjectivity in favor of a position of neutrality.⁷⁹ Hantaï created an all-over effect without a given center. Viallat described his recollection of Hantaï's work particularly his use of color. As Viallat stated: "Maybe the work of Hantaï led me to make these works. I don't know..."⁸⁰ Hantaï's admiration of Pollock contributed to the direction of his own processes, and it led to his alienation from Breton and the Surrealists.⁸¹

Pleynet pointed out that for French artists such as Viallat, it was American painters in France that made the biggest impact on the direction of French abstraction.⁸² He was referring to artists such as Sam Francis (Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Paris, 1968), James Bishop, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski (Galerie Lawrence 1964), who exhibited in museums and galleries Paris. In the south of France, the 1967 Sonnabend exhibition at the Galerie Maeght in St. Paul de Vence. "Dix Ans de l'Art Vivant" featured works by Gorky, Kline, Newman, Pollock and Rothko.⁸³ Foremost for Viallat, it was Hantaï, Pollock, and

Olitski (sponge application of pigments). Whether in Nice or Paris, French painters had a great exposure to American abstraction of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Yves Michaud, an academic and editor of the *Musée National d'Art Moderne* publications, believed that primitivism was the key to Viallat's work.³⁴ He suggested that Viallat was repeating the very act of painting itself. Viallat was not seeking out places or specific populations as inspiration but rather implementing the traits of primitive art – anonymity, repetitiveness, and use of models furnished by tradition (in this case, pre-history, Matisse, American abstraction).

Pleyne posited that artistic production in general was the result of individuals living their lives in certain patterns in a given society. With the dissolution of religion as a mediating link between the state and the individual, art oscillated between the progressive/analytic and scientific and the fascistic (splitting and fragmentation).³⁵ In the visual arts, Pleyne discerned this as a pattern of centering and ex centering – a splitting apart of the subject and a reintegration that is linked to historical and geographic contingencies.³⁶ He mapped this process from Impressionism to Abstract Expressionism, a continuum ex-centered (splitting apart) by Cézanne, Matisse, and Surrealism. This splitting precipitated a foliation in the arts (non-linear and unequal balance between state and subject), wherein repressed aspects of visual discourse were drawn forth for

analysis in a form of historical questioning. It was a retroactive process that began with the actuality of the moment.⁸⁷

Pleynet considered the formalist approach to Cézanne and Matisse misguided. He pointed out that these two artists challenged the notion of linear progress. They created works that had little to do with formalist goals but instead created a “dazzling phenomenon of intelligible and unintelligible signs.”⁸⁸ Both Cézanne and Matisse were identified with repetition (process or motif) and patterns (spatial or decorative) that were based on color.

For Viallat, the history of painting was a space – and a surface.⁸⁹ His repetition became a form of visual activism. Viallat considered his approach a “contradiction with existing values.” His “radicalized formalism” manifests a desire to displace the heroic work of the New York School.⁹⁰ This benchmark American painting, which re-presented postwar modernism to France, in particular, is both a cipher of Americanization and the avatar of a process-based painting.

Viallat’s goal of de-structuring the basis of painting was a form of fieldwork, premised on the need for new practices and theories that resisted institutional control and models of cultural regulation. His resistance can be linked to the regional position that Paris dominated cultural discourse. It can also be tied to the sense that non-productive impulses and had been systematically directed towards consumerism, which was linked to Americanization. Because

Viallat's work is a product of a place and time, it was motivated in part by the demands for new social and cultural paradigms that is the hallmark of May '68. In his own words, "Déconstruction, requires, initially, a complete inventory of the various data be made, a direct interrogate of that data, to envision it differently, and to try it out differently."⁹¹ Viallat did so not only by dismantling the materials and questioning the goals of painting, but he also extended the way he saw painting from that of object to an integral part of the social space. Philip Armstrong recently pointed out that painters such as Viallat raised issues about originality, authorship, the relationship between act and object, and the very boundaries of what constitutes the work.⁹²

Lepage described Viallat's works are images of the work that created it.⁹³ Viallat explained, "The subject is the work. The result, the image of the work."⁹⁴ Viallat initiated a basic level of communication in very fabrication of the painting. This was extended into real space. As Viallat put it, "The object creates the space and the space creates the object."⁹⁵ This interchange draws attention to the public space that is both reinforced and called into question. Viallat's paintings obstruct in order to open up a series of relationships and contingencies that provide a viable means of coming to terms with a practice that is more often than not, filtered by institutional policies and language. Rather, Viallat and others exhibited their works in locations that did not support a particular ideological goal

– that is, as neutral as possible. In these spaces, the ensemble installations require a skilled knowledge of materials and impact suggested visual urgency.

Viallat refused to allow the regional experience to fall under the weight of national culture. But if all art is regional, there are moments when the cultural models of a specific time and place participate in a broader discourse. This is true of Viallat's work in the era of 1968. His work has affinities with Post-Minimalism, in its attempt to strip apart the aggressive industrial structures of Minimalism. Viallat's work reinvigorates the domestic, the feminine, and popular aesthetics, as did the works of artists associated with Pattern painting and decorative practices in the early 1970s; his use of supports, at times, embraces kitsch and craft sensibility.

The landscapes or townscapes of the south of France provided the setting for Viallat's installations. They were part of a social ensemble, the way his blouses and skirts become part of the pattern of clothed bodies that interact, clash, and so forth, on a daily basis. His work enlivened surfaces with a vitality that did not have connections to his personal biography or subjective expressions.

Viallat's work "carries itself in its own shell."⁹⁶ His single form is imbedded in the visual symbols of the Mediterranean culture and the protective coverings associated with it. It is a nomadic production, "painting in a valise."⁹⁷ It carries with it the marks and creases of movement. It is not a traditional painting but a new vocabulary that has absorbed within it the elements of

decoration, stone work, fishing, and festivals that define the daily life of the Midi region. Viallat's basic materials are the coverings, awning, boat tarps, parasols, necessary for daily life in the South. Lepage described Viallat's work in relation to the need for protective covering: the light. "is a white light which burns, which kills, it is a light of destruction that has little in common with that of the Ile de Paris or the banks of the Loire River."⁸

Viallat's rapport with artists of the Ecole de Nice is evident in his concern for the real, his critical position in relation to the mechanics of cultural production, and his commitment to art as an encounter related to the space of the Midi. What appeared an eclectic group of artists associated with three distinct tendencies in the visual arts in the 1960s is more appropriately considered a pluralist approach with overlapping conceptual interests. In fact, the indifference so often remarked on by cultural institutions in this region (that is outside museums devoted to the work of a specific artist) allowed artists and critics rather than museum administrators the freedom to recognize conceptual affinities if not always visual affinities in their works.

¹ Claude Viallat. "Fragments." *Viallat*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, June 24-September 20, 1982), 37.

² Sosno, as quoted in Pincus-Witten. "Ecole de Nice: A Missing Book." *Arts* no. 60 (January 1986), 89.

³ Claude Viallat as quoted in Valdman (1991), 194.

⁴ Pierre Gaudibert, exhibition organizer. "Supports Surfaces." (Paris: ARC, Musée Municipal d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, September 23-October 15,

1970). The exhibition featured the works of Vincent Bioulès, Marc Devade, Daniel Dezeuze, Patrick Saytour, André Valensi, and Claude Viallat. Artists André-Pierre Arnal, Louis Cane, Noël Dolla, and Jean-Pierre Pincemin were invited after the exhibition had been advertised.

⁵ "Supports/Surfaces." Théâtre de la Cité Internationale, Cité Universitaire, Paris, Mai, 1971. The artists published a statement titled "Positions du Group Supports/Surfaces." "le fait d'une recherche théorique et d'un travail collectif." Reprinted in Marie-Hélène Grinfeder, Les Années Supports Surfaces (Paris: Herscher, 1991), 56.

⁶ Ibid. "Il constitue par là-même une prise de position contre une conception individualiste de l'Art, la fétichisation de l'oeuvre d'un créateur omnipotent dont les 'créations' ne sont en fait que des marchandises."

⁷ Ibid. "...la peinture est ici moyen et objet de connaissance; inscrite dans un processus de production d'écriture-lecture en perpétuel transformation."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Supports/Surfaces." Théâtre Municipale de Nice, June 15-20, 1971. Arnal, Bioulès, Saytour, Valensi and Viallat exhibited in the lobby of the theater. Dolla, Grand, Saytour, Valensi, and Viallat also exhibited in the seating area and on the stage. See: Jacques Beauffet, "Supports/Surfaces: chronologie 1966-1974," Supports/Surfaces: 1966-1974 (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art Moderne, 1991), 55.

¹² Viallat, Dolla, Saytour, Valensi, Toni Grand, "Lettre de Scission," June 14, 1971. Reprinted in Marie-Hélène Grinfeder, Les Années Supports Surfaces (Paris: Herscher, 1991), 59.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jacques Lepage, "Peinture/Peinture?" Chroniques de l'Art Vivant no. 49 (May 1974), 15.

¹⁵ Viallat, quoted in Valdman (1991), 194.

¹⁶ "Materialism Consequence et Inconsequence d'une Scission." signed by Arnal, Bioulès, Cane, Davade, Dezeuze dated June 15, 1971. Reprinted in Grinfeder (Paris, 1991), 59.

¹⁷ Raphael Monticelli, "Viallat." Expositions au Sud (Marseille: Atelier du Municipaux d'Artistes, Galerie Althenor, Chateau de Servières, 1992), 42.

¹⁸ Timo Vuorikoski, "Course Libre." Viallat, exh. cat. (Tampere Suomi, Finland: Sara Hilden Art Museum, February 22 – April 26, 1987), 65.

¹⁹ Brian Rigby, Popular Culture in Modern France (London: Routledge, 1991), 157.

²⁰ "Intervention A," manifesto signed by Claude Viallat (October 1968). Reprinted in "Noel Dolla," exh. cat. (Nice: Galerie Sapone, 1980), 53.

²¹ Viallat, as quoted in Vuorikoski (1987), 65.

²² Claude Viallat, as quoted in Jean-Louis Froment, "Claude Viallat: Légendes." Claude Viallat, exh. cat., (Bordeaux: Centre d'Arts Plastiques Contemporains de Bordeaux, 1980), unpaginated.

²³ Bernard Ceysson and Yves Aupetitallot, "Propos à développer, à propos de Supports/Surfaces, l'exposition accrochée..." Supports/Surfaces 1966-1974, exh. cat. (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne, 1991), 11.

²⁴ Claude Viallat, "L'immersion dans la quantité à propos d'Arman," interview by Catherine Millet, Art Press (France), No. 103 (May 1986), 17.

²⁵ Arman, quoted in "Le Peintre Niçois Arman reçoit le Prix Marzotto," announcement, no source. Published in "Chronologies II – 1963-1972." Chronique Niçois: Genèse d'un Musée – tome I, 1945-1972 (Nice: Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, 1991), 330.

²⁶ Viallat, Art Press (France), No. 103 (May 1986), 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Jean Clair as cited by Grinfeder, (Paris, 1991), 26. Originally published in Jean Clair, Art en France: Une Nouvelle Génération (Paris: Sté Nouvelle des Éditions du Chêne, 1972).

³⁰ "Chronology II – 1963 – 1972." Chroniques Nicois (Nice, 1991), 362

³¹ "Impact." catalogue cover reprinted in Impact III (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, été 1978).

³² Jean Clair, Chroniques de l'Art Vivant no. 18 (March 1971). Reprinted in "Chronology II." Chroniques Nicois (1991), 330.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Claude Viallat, (Bordeaux, 1973), n.p.

³⁵ "Actions de Ben à l'occasion de Impact, Musée de Céret. July 15, 1966. Photographs by Jacques Strauch published in "Chronology II," Chroniques Nicois (1991), 332-333.

³⁶ Ben Vautier, exhibition organizer. "Le litre de Var coûte 1.60F." (Nice: Galerie A, October 1966). The exhibition included: Marcel Alocco, George Brecht, Chubac, Eric Dietman, Jacques Fahri, Yves Klein, Olivier Mosset, Serge III, Claude Viallat. The opening included Fluxus events by Ben, Nice critic Jacques Merino, George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, and Alison Knowles. See: "Chronology II," Chroniques Nicois (1991), 334.

³⁷ Marcel Alocco, editor, Identités, no. 13-14 (winter 1965-spring 1966). The theme of the issue was "La Musique de la Vie: l'événement happening." It featured a conversation with John Cage by Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner reprinted from the Tulane Drama Review (New Orleans), translated into French by Ben Vautier and Marcel Alocco. It also featured statements by artists associated with Fluxus in France, New York and Eastern Europe.

³⁸ John Cage. "John Cage Conversation." interview by Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner, trans. Ben Vautier, Identités, no. 13-14 (winter 1965-spring 1966), 2.

³⁹ Claude Viallat. "Fragments." Claude Viallat (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, December 1974). Reprinted in Jacques Lepage. "Supports-Surfaces. Opus International, nos. 61-62 (January-February 1977), 27.

⁴⁰ John Cage, as cited in Blom (London: 1998), 80. Originally published in John Cage, ed. Richard Kostelanetz, (NY: Praeger Books, 1970), 222.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Viallat, quoted in Christian Skimao, Claude Viallat (Nice: Agnès de Maistre, 1995), 8. "...ni figurative, ni abstraite, ni représentative, ni géométrique, ni symbolique...elle n'est pas signifiante."

⁴³ Jacques Lepage. "Claude Viallat." Musée d'Art et d'Industrie. Claude Viallat, exh. cat., (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, December 1974), 5.

⁴⁴ Bernard Ceysson. "Propos à développer, à propos de Supports/Surfaces, l'exposition accrochée (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art Moderne Saint-Étienne, 1991), 23.

⁴⁵ Claude Viallat, quoted in Xavier Girard, "Entretien avec Claude Viallat," Viallat (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1992), 113.

⁴⁶ "Intervention A," manifeste, October 1968, signed by Marcel Alocço, amanda, Carmelo Arden Quin, Philippe Chartron, Noël Dolla, Henri Giordan, Raphaël Monticelli, Patrick Saytour, Claude Vaillat. Reprinted in "Noël Dolla," exh. cat. (Nice, Galerie Sapone, January 1980), 53.

⁴⁷ Rigby (1991), 135.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 149.

⁴⁹ Genviève Poujol and Raymond Labourie, eds., Les Cultures Populaires: permanences et émergences des cultures minoritaires, locales, ethniques, sociales et religieuses (Toulouse: Privat, 1979), as cited in Rigby (1991), 153.

⁵⁰ Rigby (London, 1991), 13.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵² Ibid., 14.

⁵³ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁴ M. de Certeau, L'Invention du quotidien, vol. 1 (Paris: 10/18, 1980) as cited in Rigby (London, 1991), 21.

⁵⁵ "La Peinture en questions: Cane, Dezeuze, Saytour, Viallat." Musée du Havre, June 7 – July 7, 1969. Reprinted in Grinfeder (1991), 14. "L'Objet de la peinture c'est la peinture elle-même et les tableaux exposés ne se rapportent qu'à eux-même. Ils ne font point appel à un "ailleurs" (la personnalité de l'artiste, sa biographie, l'Histoire de l'Art, par exemple). Ils n'offrent point d'échappatoire, car la surface, par des ruptures de formes et de couleurs qui y sont opérées, interdites projections mentales ou les divagations oniriques du spectateur. Le peinture est un fait en soi et c'est sur son terrain que l'on doit poser les problèmes. Il ne s'agit ni d'un retour aux "sources," ni de la recherche d'une pureté originelle, mais de la simple mise à nu des éléments picturaux qui constituent le fait pictural. D'où la neutralité des oeuvres présentées, leur absence de lyrisme et de profondeur expressive."

⁵⁶ Jacques Lepage, "Supports-Surfaces." Opus International nos. 61-62 (January-February 1977), 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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- ⁵⁸ Ecole Supérieure Architecture, "Alocco, Dezeuze, Dolla, Pagès, Pincemin, Saytour, Viallat." (Paris: E.S.A., 1969), unpaginated. "La peinture doit se déterminer elle-même, par ce qu'elle donne à voir; Montrée[sic], elle n'a plus besoin d'être dite."
- ⁵⁹ Marcelin Pleynet. "Disparition du Tableau." Art International, Vol. XII/8, October 20, 1969, 48. and see Pleynet, *Painting and System* (1984), 98.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ Skimao (1995), 4.
- ⁶² Stephen Melville and Philip Armstrong. "Counting/As/Painting," in As Painting: Division and Displacement (Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), 17.
- ⁶³ Viallat, quoted in Skimao (Nice, 1995), 4.
- ⁶⁴ Claude Viallat, quoted in "Biography of Claude Viallat." (Finland, 1987), 67.
- ⁶⁵ Marie-José Baudinet. "Viallat: La Vérité de La Surface." Claude Viallat (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), 139.
- ⁶⁶ Melville. "Painting As/If." As Painting: Division and Displacement (Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), 168.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ Alfred Pacquement. "Un Oeuvre Multiple." Viallat exh. cat., (Paris: Musée d'Art National d'Art Moderne, 1982), 33.
- ⁶⁹ Marien Verstraeten. "Viallat," + - 0 Révue d'Art Contemporain no. 6 (Brussels) (November 1974), 19.
- ⁷⁰ Viallat, as quoted in Marien Verstraeten (Brussels 1974), 19.
- ⁷¹ Michel de Certeau, as cited in Rigby (1991), 36. Rigby writes: "one of de Certeau's favorite words to describe a key aspect of mass society is 'quadrillage'... This word has the meaning of a tight military or surveillance of an area... The word 'quadrillage' conveys, therefore, the notion that modern society is completely controlled and organized, and there is no room in such a society for individual creativity and action."
- ⁷² Viallat, as quoted in Skimao (Nice, 1995), 7.
- ⁷³ Stephen Melville. "Painting As/If." As Painting: Division and Displacement (Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), 167.

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- ⁷⁴ Claude Viallat, as quoted in Valdman (1991), 196.
- ⁷⁵ Vuorikoski. "Course Libre." Claude Viallat (Tampere Suomi, Finland: Sara Hilden Art Museum, 1987), 65.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Paul Rogers, "Toward a Theory/Practice of Painting in France." Artforum no. 8 (April 1979), 54.
- ⁷⁸ Yves Michaux. "Claude Viallat: Various and Manifold." Claude Viallat (Finland: Sara Tilden Museum, 1987), 67.
- ⁷⁹ Jean Clair, Art en France: Une Nouvelle Génération (Paris: Sté Nouvelle des Éditions du Chêne. 1972). 93.
- ⁸⁰ Claude Viallat. "Entretiens avec Claude Viallat." interview by Jacques Lepage, Claude Viallat (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Cecember 1974), 12.
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- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.
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⁹¹ Claude Viallat. "Fragments." Viallat, exhibition catalogue, 24 June – 20 September 1982 (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), 37. "Deconstruction, cela demande, dans un premier temps, de faire un inventaire complet des diverses données, de les mettre en cause directement, de les envisager différentes, et de les expérimenter différentes."

⁹² Philip Armstrong, (Wexner Center for the Arts, 2001), 14.

⁹³ Jacques Lepage. Claude Viallat, exh. cat., (Saint-Étienne: Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, December 1974), 4.

⁹⁴ Claude Viallat, as cited in Lepage (1974), 5.

⁹⁵ Claude Viallat, as cited in Alfred Pacquement. "Un Oeuvre Multiple." Viallat (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1982), 37.

⁹⁶ Michaud (Finland, 1987), 64.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁹⁸ Jacques Lepage, quoted in Galerie Althenor (1992), 42.

Conclusion

The five key artists of the Ecole de Nice addressed the social implications of a postwar world leaning towards, if not fully embracing, the values of American consumerism. Thomas Crow pointed out that Restany and the Nouveaux Réalistes, which included artists initially considered an Ecole de Nice, set aside ideology and faced American materialism.¹ These artists took an extroverted approach to the changed environment, but rather than produce a single perspective on their contemporary social reality, they perceived, identified, and collected its evidence, and presented it using theatrical devices such as installation and public events. Their working methods often reflected the new social trend towards productivity. All the artists used mechanical procedures and repetition to distinguish themselves from the subjective tendencies they associated with meaningless and marginal abstract painting and conventional approaches to realism.

When artists Klein and Arman first drew attention in Paris, the Left dominated artistic discourse. Art Informel turned to abstraction to express individual subjectivity under the mantle of humanist Marxism. Works produced by artists sympathetic to Communism took many forms. Social Realists (Fougeron, Gruber, e.g.) stylistically expressed their allegiance with Communism; CoBrA (Jorn, Constant, and Appel) rejected social realism in favor of primitive forms; and the Situationist International promoted urban cultural revolution aimed to subvert consumerism and mass culture by using it as a weapon. The Italian Nuclear artists

supported Klein and Arman, and they felt a strong alliance with the Situationists. Lettrisms' Dada inspired poetry and film revived an anarchistic spirit, and in the early 1950s counted Klein as part of the circle.

What distinguishes the Ecole de Nice is the artist's refusal to support political ideology as a basis for their work. Instead, they responded to modernity (and tourism was one of its primary embodiments) by exposing its paradoxes and reproducing them or their effects in their multi-dimensional works. In Nice especially, tourism exaggerated the collision of cultural sensibilities, and these artists wanted to communicate directly a sense of social unease, but also the fascination with new consumer products. Despite the range of their artistic references, the strategy of appropriation and use of readymade objects and situations link the five artists conceptually, and their allegiance to place (physically or metaphorically) engaged them with the ideals of modernism and the spectacle of consumerism and tourism. They all attempted to break down the distance between the spectator and the work, and they used the vernacular as a language that could communicate on a banal and transcendent level. In doing so, the Ecole de Nice challenged notions of artistic value, norms of taste, originality, and stylistic progress.

Crow pointed that the selective use of mass culture has been an effective avant-garde strategy that provides freedom for the artist, and serves its public by searching out areas of social practice that retains some vivid life in an increasingly controlled and rationalized society.² He observed that modernism's most powerful moments emerge from a "productive confusion within the normal

hierarchy of cultural prestige.”³ The historical Ecole de Nice is an example of such a moment.

Klein wanted to restore a sense of physical and spiritual health to France, and he believed that the metaphor of Nice offered the antidote. He wanted to eradicate an indifference to life by drawing attention to experiences not to consumer objects then engrossing the French. But he also recognized that in a consumer society, value and the level of exchange are often equated. He used commercial tactics to underscore the emptiness of materialism, highlighting emptiness as a spiritual void but also a space offering the possibility of freedom. For Klein, leisure, not work, was the source of imagination and creativity, and he approached it with an entrepreneurial spirit that is sometimes mistaken for complicity with consumer culture.

Arman's work mirrors Klein's while bearing no visual resemblance to it. He used consumer object(s) to reflect on the anxieties associated with rapid social change and loss of a sense of history and tradition. Arman chose objects that elicit memory and he presented them as a spectacle of adulteration, violence, and decay. His concept of fullness is the counterpart of Klein's void, and like Klein he engaged his audience to reflect on the temporality of life attached to objects whose demise mirrors our own.

By contrast, Raysse epitomized the view that Americanization of France provided an exhilarating shift away from a pre-war traditional society towards a modern consumer society. He embraced mass culture, and in particular, the stereotypes associated with the Côte d'Azur. Raysse addressed issues of truth and

beauty in relation to fabricated illusion and shifting standards of taste. He embraced bad taste as a means of assaulting narrow artistic criteria, which failed to recognize the impact of new forms such as plastics, soaps, and neon ever present and ready to define of modern mythology. Raysse's work inventories the codes used to sell dreams and myths, especially through the image of woman. He exposed them as perfect vehicles of reproducible desire; a system of signs linked to anonymity and social escapism.

Ben's graffiti, event scores and installations addressed social issues differently using aggressive intervention linked to marginal sub-groups generally excluded from the advantages that consumption economy affords. Ben interfered with the status quo of leisure existence by circumscribing the repetitiveness and banality of even desirable living. His methods underscored the anxiety of creation in a world where the proliferation of ideas and ubiquity of objects have left little opportunity for a new concepts or forms to emerge.

Viallat believed the role of the painter was to enable the viewer to see their environment by exposing the very structure and materials of painting and their effects in social and natural spaces. For Viallat, art was a social practice that could transform society. He was sympathetic to the positions that erupted on the national level in May 1968, but he prioritized the practice of painting and its theoretical possibilities, and refused to allow politics alone to dictate his aims. His work attests to the reintegration of work and pleasure and his view that art was not a product among others in economic terms. Rather it could be a means to gain knowledge about history, culture, economics, and human interaction.

The Ecole de Nice shared affinities with Neo-Dada, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Fluxus, and Post-Minimalism, to name a few examples. Their shared directions point to generation links and international trends rather than ones tied to nationalist allegiances. Crow used the term Capitalist Realism to distinguish artists such as Rauschenberg, George Segal, and Arman whose work signaled an awareness of consumer impact and a critique of it.⁴ He emphasized Warhol's social critique by citing his choice of controversial subjects. By contrast, he signaled out Klein as warranting particular derision (like Buchloh) considering his work exploitative. I have argued in this study that Klein, along with all artists of the Ecole de Nice, attempted to define realism in terms of the implications of an Americanized France. By taking this position, Klein and the Ecole de Nice have suffered historically. From the French perspective, they appeared too sympathetic to consumerism (especially Klein and Raysse), a trend linked to the larger demise of their cultural hegemony. And their attempt to de-throne Paris appeared complicit with postwar American tactics. From the American perspective, they represented a culture (Parisian) linked with prewar dominance, and their presence in New York, in particular, was not well received.

In retrospect, however, their ideas have become even more resonant. In a post-ideological global economy firmly based on world consumption, the Ecole de Nice artists of the 1960s era have left us with a body of work that effectively communicated the complex paradoxes of modernity at its early stage in France. The Ecole de Nice presented evidence of the transition from a traditional culture with a vital avant-garde to a consumer society. They accomplished this without

relinquishing their links to classicism and modernism, with an independence of spirit, and with recognition of the vital popular culture of the region, all still evident in this celebrated tourist space.

¹ Thomas Crow, The Rise of the Sixties (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 96.

² Thomas Crow, Modern Art in the Common Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 35.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ Crow, The Rise of the Sixties, 83-87.

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Figures 1-59

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