



## Press kit

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in partnership with the Festival d'Automne à Paris

## Jean-Jacques Lebel

### *Insurrections*



curator : Jean de Loisy

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## contents

### la maison rouge

- p.3 presentation  
la maison rouge, Antoine de Galbert, building,  
the bookstore, the restaurant, les amis de la maison rouge
- p.4 activities at la maison rouge  
the vestibule, the suite, for children, guided tours

### *Jean-Jacques Lebel*

#### *Soulèvements*

- p.6 press release
- p.7 the exhibition
- p.8 artists
- p.9 biography of Jean-Jacques Lebel
- p.13 Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Art as Upheaval !*  
interview conducted by Jean de Loisy
- p.16 the catalogue
- p.17 around the exhibition : Polyphonix at CENTQUATRE
- p.18 pictures
- p.23 the vestibule
- p.24 Hospitalities 2009
  
- p.25 practical information  
supports

cover :

Jean-Jacques Lebel, Monument à Félix Guattari, vue de l'exposition *Hors Limites, L'art et la vie 1952-1994*,  
Centre G. Pompidou, MNAM, Paris, 1994 © DR

## presentation

la maison rouge, a private, non-profit foundation, opened in June 2004 in Paris. Its purpose is to promote contemporary creation through a programme of three solo or thematic temporary exhibitions a year, certain of which are staged by independent curators.

La maison rouge was created on the initiative of Antoine de Galbert, an art collector and active figure on the French art scene. While Antoine de Galbert's own collection is not shown, the entire project is fashioned by his personality and outlook as a collector. Beginning with L'intime [Behind Closed Doors: the private life of collections], la maison rouge stages exhibitions on the theme of private collections and the issues and questions surrounding them.

**Antoine de Galbert**, born in 1955 and a graduate in political science, Antoine de Galbert worked in corporate management before opening a contemporary art gallery in Grenoble for some ten years. Concurrently, he purchased the first works in a collection that was to take on growing importance in his life. In 2000 he chose to create a foundation as a means of both anchoring his commitment to contemporary creation and opening his collection to the public.

**le bâtiment** La maison rouge is installed in a renovated factory in the Bastille district of Paris, overlooking the Arsenal marina. The 2,500 square meters site, including 1,300 square meters of exhibition space, is centred around "la maison rouge" or red house.

By naming the venue after this house, la maison rouge makes clear its vocation as a welcoming, convivial space where visitors can see exhibitions, attend lectures, enjoy a drink or explore the bookstore.

The artist Jean-Michel Alberola (born in Paris in 1953) was commissioned for the interior design of the reception areas.

**la librairie** la maison rouge has chosen Bookstorming, a specialist in contemporary art publications, for its bookstore at 10 bis, boulevard de la Bastille. Its selection of titles is regularly updated to reflect the current exhibitions at la maison rouge. It also stocks art DVDs and videos, publications on the latest developments in the contemporary art world, and proposes an important catalogue of out-of-print books and books by artists.

**le restaurant** The restaurant's new chef, Pascal Owczarek, proposes creative cuisine that is a fusion of classic dishes and world food. Open Tuesday from noon to 3pm and Wednesday to Sunday at the foundation's usual times. Brunch on Sunday. The menu changes with each exhibition.

**les amis de la maison rouge** A non-profit organisation, les amis de la maison rouge is closely involved with and supports Antoine de Galbert's project. It contributes to reflection and debates on the theme of the private collection, organises activities to coincide with the exhibitions, and promotes la maison rouge among French and international audiences.

Membership from €70

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# activities at la maison rouge

## the vestibule

Always attentive and open to creations by young artists, Antoine de Galbert created this open-access space in 2006, showing new exhibitions every four to six weeks.

## the suite

la maison rouge develops other activities alongside its exhibitions, and in collaboration with Gérard Wacjman has opened a hotel room, the Suite, inside its walls. It welcomes guests from all fields of thought and contemporary creation to provoke unexpected encounters with the public. Following on from *la suite, le son et l'écrit*, for which literary critic Aurélie Djian proposed listening sessions built around reading and the written word, Sophie Delpoux\* invites us to *les racontars de performance*.

One Thursday a month, within the intimate setting of La Suite, two guests will tell the same story, each colouring it with their own experiences and concerns.

Artists, choreographers, writers, historians and philosophers will take turns to create a live and living performance, restoring the power of the narrative to spark listeners' imagination.

\*Sophie Delpoux is an art historian and associate professor at the University of Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne. She has a particular interest in performance and its history. Sophie Delpoux has published articles on Valie Export, Otto Mühl, Dennis Oppenheim and Gina Pane, among others. She is currently writing an article on Chris Burden, and a monograph on Allan Kaprow.

## **for children**

### ***le mercredi, on goûte aux contes***

One Wednesday a month, a story-teller takes children aged from 4 to 11 on a journey into the land of imagination.

Story + snack: €7 for children and accompanying adults.

Lasts around 90 minutes

### **next storytimes :**

18th november at 3 pm

16th december at 3 pm

6th january at 3 pm

Information and reservations : [stephaniemolinard@lamaisonrouge.org](mailto:stephaniemolinard@lamaisonrouge.org)

## **guided tours**

### **for individuals**

Free guided tour in French of the exhibitions every Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm.

### **for groups**

guided tours in french : €75

Visits are assured by students in history of art, specialized in contemporary art.

informations et reservations: Stéphanie Molinard, 01.40.01.92.79 ou

[stephaniemolinard@lamaisonrouge.org](mailto:stephaniemolinard@lamaisonrouge.org)

**➤ The full programme and dates for activities are at [www.lamaisonrouge.org](http://www.lamaisonrouge.org)**

# Jean-Jacques Lebel

## *Insurrections*

curator: Jean de Loisy  
with Sandra Adam-Couralet

As a foundation set up by the contemporary art collector Antoine de Galbert, la maison rouge looks with interest at private collections and the questions they raise by once a year showing works from one individual's collection. This autumn, la maison rouge turns to Jean-Jacques Lebel, a multifarious, accumulating, assembling artist and, in his own way, collector.

Since 1955, Jean-Jacques Lebel has been exhibiting, writing, filming, publishing, coordinating and taking part in collective actions. First and foremost an artist, he is also an organiser of international events, exhibitions and festivals, a poet, theorist and political activist. None of the forms his life as an "inspired agitator" has taken can be dissociated from his work as an artist.

This exhibition presents works born from the imaginings of this artist, conveyor and preeminent figure of avant-gardism over the past fifty years.

Beyond its obvious meaning, *Insurrections* has other implications that span the political and the poetic, reality and its representations, reflection and the most diverse languages. In an attempt to sketch the existential portrait of this insurgent, this polysemic title encompasses Jean-Jacques Lebel's own work, that of his friends and companions, and the objects of art and combat he has gathered and which fuel his subjectivity.

The exhibition is divided into themes. Each corresponds to Jean-Jacques Lebel's obsession with the enigma which a work and the wider context of its emergence raise. Happenings, Insubordination, Poetry, Hallucination, Eros, Dada, War and Rhizome are some examples. Through these interconnecting ensembles, visitors can engage with some of Jean-Jacques Lebel's major installations, works of primitive art, works by anonymous artists and others by such important allies as Johan Heinrich Füssli, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Louise Michel, Fourier, Ravachol, Guillaume Apollinaire, Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Otto Dix, André Breton, Francis Picabia, Antonin Artaud, Bernard Heidsieck, Erró, Antonio Saura, Konrad Klapheck, Öyvind Fahlström, Peter Saul, Camilla Adami and Orlan: some three hundred works in all which continue to engross the artist in an earnest and endless dialogue.

*Insurrections* celebrates the radical subjectivity of an uncommon individual. It focuses on the intense and continuous exchanges that take place between art and life, research and mediation, self and tribe. Notions of discipline and classification cannot contain the work of Jean-Jacques Lebel. His is a mind in action, fuelled by the thoughts and creations of every era and civilisation, undeterred by boundaries and conventions.

## The exhibition

*"Insurrections is simultaneously a historical, mental, private and social process that implies an extended period of time and a spirit of permanent rebellion.*

*Our exhibition sets out to reconstruct a psychic mood made up of all sorts of activities - social, artistic, political, sexual, intellectual, collective and individual - presented in the form of a barricade (knowing it cannot be other than transient). It is an attempt to create a montage of something that is merely passing through.*

*We take the visitor on a journey that fully integrates the untamed side of our lives, what Lou Reed called "a walk on the wild side." This is pure thought, untrammelled by ideological presuppositions. This is what distinguishes a miscellany from a collection: you never know what you'll end up with. It's a kind of visual anthropology." Jean-Jacques Lebel, June 2009.*

The exhibition, which comprises installations by Jean-Jacques Lebel alongside works and artefacts that are a part of his own life, reveals the depth and breadth of his personal engagements. Each of the areas in *la maison rouge* has been given a theme that corresponds to a particular aspect of the artist's activities as an onlooker, thinker and organiser. The works thus assembled, whether created or collected, form the exhibition or *montage*: a term often used by Jean-Jacques Lebel and compiled from the French words for editing a film (*monter*) and showing (*montrer*). Presented together for the first time, the assembled works and objects take us inside the mind of an artist whose multifarious oeuvre is entirely devoted to exploring the poetic, political and philosophical issues addressed by art, something he has always seen as resulting from collective action and unconnected with concepts such as "author," "career" or "political correctness."

### entrance: the art of the barricade

For Jean-Jacques Lebel, there can be no art without rebellion. The exhibition recalls the Paris Commune, Louise Michel, Charles Fourier and Ravachol, all heralds of universal radicalism who are held up in example by Lebel. Alongside these guiding lights we find photographs of barricades - the Commune, the Liberation of Paris, May '68 - inventive, amazing, ephemeral barricades of all kinds. This remarkable collection, a kind of genealogy of subversion, is presented under a suspended installation, *Hommage à André Breton*. This shower of hammers and gaping women's bags tells us that *the entire exhibition is a barricade*. Hence the exhibition title, *Insurrections*.

### visual poetry

Inasmuch as it reveals how writing and experience are inextricably linked, the writing of poetry is central to Lebel's universe. His reinterpretation of visual and sculptural works by Victor Hugo, Antonin Artaud and Francis Picabia are fundamental to his approach. Himself a poet, a translator of Ginsberg and Burroughs, and founder of the Polyphonix festival, for many years Lebel has collected paintings by the poets he admires: Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, Apollinaire, Tzara, Michaux, Artaud, Kerouac, Gysin, Gherasim Lucas and Bernard Heidsieck. His interest in drawings and paintings by writers corresponds to what he calls "laboratory zones." Experimental by definition, these are areas where the individual throws him or herself headlong into an activity without first mastering the techniques involved. The whole exhibition is coloured by poetry and poets, by their determination to "give new meaning to the words of the tribe," as Mallarmé said. Even, as Lebel himself says, to "blow up language!"

Shown next to them are a group of remarkable "exquisite corpses." They introduce a more light-hearted note through a concept which Guattari described as "a collective assemblage of enunciation." Jean-Jacques Lebel is particularly drawn to the way the unpredictable "result" of these many-handed works opens up new fields of research. He himself has played the collaboration game, as shown in drawings and paintings produced with Ginsberg, Breton, Erró, Pommereule, Wilfredo Lam etc., and more recently a collective picture in four interchangeable parts created with his friends Erró, Camilla Adami and Peter Saul.

## metamorphoses

Faces behind masks, masks behind faces. What is it in the various "facialities" that "acts as a rhizome"? Shown side by side, Erró, Arcimboldo, Saura and an Ekoi crest mask overstep the boundaries between the mechanical and the living, man, animal, plant, past and present, the imaginable and the visible. Lebel's large video installation, *Les Avatars de Vénus*, is shown here on four transparent screens so that visitors can walk around inside it. The video focuses on the interminable metamorphosis of the goddess, whose successive, timeless incarnations reinvent the family tree of the icons of every culture, civilisation and era so as to reveal their unchanging essence.

**hallucinatory perception:** "the hallucinatory experience as a laboratory for the arts of the future."  
(Jean-Jacques Lebel in *Entretien avec Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux*).

Here, visitors see hallucinatory perception at work. Traces of Michaux, Martini, Artaud, Leonora Carrington and Picabia, together with drawings by Jean-Jacques Lebel while under the influence of psilocybine, recount travels outside the self.

## Enigma

Like the "unsmashable core of night" referred to by André Breton when describing his relationship with his art, enigma is the very heart of the exhibition. The difficulty in interpreting each work continues Freud's line of interrogation with respect to the human psyche. Füssli's two-way self-portrait, in the centre of this space, symbolises art's nocturnal side. The front depicts a female character, stripped bare and enucleated, a knife in her hand. The reverse shows an allegory of the artist being sculpted by his own imagination made flesh. The enigma questions our sense of privacy. Nearby, a Victor Brauner masterpiece recalls the alchemy of his unbirth, while a group of works, arranged by the artist, weave a riddle with neither beginning nor end, no way out other than to question reality, to wander aimlessly, to sink into doubt.

Bordering this enigma, an installation comprises hundreds of cartridge cases, sculpted or engraved by soldiers in the trenches during the First World War, and collected and arranged by Jean-Jacques Lebel. They depict a desperate attempt to find some kind of meaning in the midst of horror. They are anonymous voices raised in protest against death at the very heart of the carnage.

## Dada stirs up everything

"When it comes to revolt, we have no need of ancestors," said André Breton. No ancestors then. But we do need lights to show us the way through the darkness. The 1962 collage, *Mon Coeur ne bat que pour Picabia*, says it all. Duchamp, Baargeld, Schwitters, Tzara and, most of all, the spirit of Dadaism all make their powerful presence felt. The title itself refers back to one of the movement's most important manifestos: *DADA STIRS UP EVERYTHING!* The intent is clear.

## Rembrandt

Rembrandt's small etching (1631) of a woman urinating makes him a precursor of both Duchamp (*Fontaine* and *Étant donnés : 1) La chute d'eau, 2) le gaz d'éclairage*) and Picasso (*La Femme qui pisse sur la plage*). Scaled up to a life-size sculpture and made into a fountain, *Pisseuse de Rembrandt* by Jean-Jacques Lebel is presented in the patio.

## Happenings

In 1960 in Venice, Jean-Jacques Lebel staged Europe's first happening: *L'Enterrement de la Chose*. He went on to stage another twenty or so, stopping in 1968 as he felt that he had, partially at least, achieved his objective, which was to contribute to the Dadaisation of society. Through their insolence and penchant for what Levi-Strauss called "the savage mind" (*la pensée sauvage*), happenings such as *Pour conjurer l'esprit de catastrophe*, *Collage*, *Déchirex*, *120 minutes dédiées au divin marquis* and *Le Pseudo-Kini* left their mark on the era. They are presented through films, photographs and documents.

## Journals of a wanderer

All his life, Jean-Jacques Lebel has recorded his travels, interrogations, revolts, projects, love affairs, correspondences and restless wanderings in journals. Filled with drawings, paintings and writings, illustrated with images taken from current events or from the history of art and society, these raw journals, intrinsically immune to censorship, are shown for the first time ever in public at *la maison rouge*.

## Be rhizome

*Monument à Félix Guattari* was first installed in the Centre Pompidou's Forum as part of the *Hors Limites* exhibition in 1994. A new version is presented here. "The idea was to make the Guattari rhizome visible and audible, as incarnated by a hundred like-minded companions, colleagues and friends of this important thinker, militant, psychoanalyst and writer who, with Gilles Deleuze, revolutionised political and philosophical thinking with *Anti-Œdipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, along with many other works of theory and criticism. During the exhibition, a weekly meeting, open to all, did justice to Guattari's many and various activities." (Jean-Jacques Lebel). Again, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome concept is taken quite literally. "Artists and their works, all very different, all quite remarkable, gather in a confrontation that is beyond any constraints imposed by aesthetic or teleological considerations, in total disregard of market forces, respecting only the content and modus operandi of the individual works." (Jean-Jacques Lebel). "Visual anthropology disputes the validity of the dominant culture and the profit principle. Insurrectional art comes into its own when through it are assembled the many components, however disparate they might be, of inter-subjective thought." "The assembled works form a global movement that is without limits, without institutions, without conventions, without range and without boundaries." (Jean-Jacques Lebel).

Yoko Ono, Asger Jorn, Shiraga, Jonas Mekas, Carolee Schneeman, François Dufrêne, Bernard Heidsieck, John Giorno, Tetsumi Kudo, Alain Fleischer, Jean Tinguely, Nam June Paik, Erro, Peter Saul, Jacques Monory, Frédéric Pardo, Eric Dietman, George Brecht, Esther Ferrer, Rachel Laurent, Camilla Adami, Jackson McLow, Bruce Conner, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and many more, all friends and associates of Jean-Jacques Lebel, give life to this rhizome.

## Eros, first of all the gods devised

This verse from the pre-Socratic poet Parmenides set the tone for the vast *Jardin d'Eros* exhibition which Jean-Jacques Lebel devised and produced at Barcelona's Palau de la Virreina in 1999. Echoes of this garden are felt in this space, devoted to the eminently erotic nature of the gaze, defined as an unconscious "scopic" impulse and essential to the production, transmission and circulation of any work of art. Anything hidden or revealed by the visual arts, anything that is the object of inhibition or exhibition, sometimes both at once, needs the input of the *regardeur*, the *looker* who, according to Duchamp, "makes the painting" just as much as the painter. It is the often arduous task of looking that transforms the *looker* into someone who is *looking*, and opens up the too often censored fantastical worlds of Picasso, Grosz, Dix, Klinger, Magritte, Masson, Monory, Rachel Laurent, Esther Ferrer and Rowlandson. "Obscenity has not disappeared, far from it. Rather it has moved from the sexual to the political. Power is, by definition, obscene. Political obscenity permeates events around the world, 24 hours a day. So as to differentiate it from politics, sexual obscenity is labelled ignominious and placed in quarantine, in a specific place named...

## ***the unseeable: visitors will choose whether to venture there or not.***

Jean-Jacques Lebel's vast installation, *Reliquaire pour un culte de Vénus*, has been presented in more than twenty different versions over the past fifteen years, in multiple museums, arts centres and art galleries throughout Europe. Lebel started collecting the raw material for this work over 40 years ago: thousands of images, from the most noble to the most crude, from the history of art to modern kitsch, covering every era and cultural contexts. Other images have gradually been added, whether pictures donated by friends, personal photographs or news stories. The question addressed here is that of absolute beauty, the *véjusté* taken up by Klossowski in reference to the qualities of the goddess of love, as seen through the ages and by different civilisations. What is it that makes Beauty desirable or, on the contrary, undesirable? How do social criteria define its fluctuations and mutations?

## Artaud's *Nerve Meter*

A homage to Antonin Artaud was staged in 2000 in Düsseldorf, entitled *Man: a tree without organs*. It featured an installation by Jean-Jacques Lebel that shows the ward in the Rodez psychiatric hospital where, in 1943, Artaud underwent no fewer than 52 electric shock treatments. Their violence, akin to torture, was such that they broke a vertebra in Artaud's neck. This installation, comprising electric shock apparatus of that time, a belt, a restraint bed and recordings of Artaud himself reciting his famous text, *The Patients and the Doctors*, can now be seen again at *la maison rouge*.

## Artists

Jean-Jacques Lebel and Camilla Adami, René Alleau, Charles Amédée, Guillaume Apollinaire, Louis Aragon, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Antonin Artaud, Hugo Ball, Johannes Theodor Baargeld, Alexandre Baudet-Dulary, Julien Blaine, Charles Baudelaire, Hans Bellmer, Ben, François Boucher, Victor Brauner, George Brecht, André Breton, Mark Brusse, William S. Burroughs, Michel Butor, Carmen Calvo, Angelo Caroselli, Leonora Carrington, William Nelson Copley, Aloïse Corbaz, Gregory Corso, Dali, André Derain, Eric Dietman, Otto Dix, Jean Dubuffet, Marcel Duchamp, François Dufrêne, Erró, Robert Filliou, Alain Fleischer, Gala, Allen Ginsberg, John Giorno, Georges Grosz, Brion Gysin, Blalla W. Hallmann, Al Hansen, Raymond Hains, Bernard Heidsieck, Valentine Hugo, Victor Hugo, Asger Jorn, Allan Kaprow, Jack Kerouac, Max Klinger, Pierre Klossowski, Max Klinger, Alfred Kubin, Kudo Tetsumi, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux, Wilfredo Lam, Jacqueline Lamba, Mikhail Larionov, Marie Laurencin, Augustin Lesage, Jackson Mac Low, Ghérasim Luca, Boris Lurie, Baudet du Lury, Dora Maar, René Magritte, Pascal-Désir Maisoneuve, Man Ray, André Masson, Jonas Mekas, Henri Michaux, Pierre Molinier, Jacques Monory, Max Morise, Otto Muehl, Yoko Ono, Orlan, Nam June Paik, Laura Panno, Abel Pany, Frédéric Pardo, Jules Pascin, Claude Pélieu, Serge Pey, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Daniel Pommereule, Raymond Queneau, Man Ray, Auguste Rodin, Félicien Rops, Peter Saul, Antonio Saura, Egon Schiele, Friedrich Schroder Sonnenstern, Kazuo Shiraga, Kurt Schwitters, Jindrich Styrsky, Jeannette Tanguy, Yves Tanguy, Tristan Tzara, Roland Topor, Paul Valéry, Kees Van Dongen, Philippe Van Loo, Wolf Vostell, Isabelle Waldberg.

## Biography of Jean-Jacques Lebel

Born in Paris in 1936, Jean-Jacques Lebel is an artist, writer, film-maker and creator of collective manifestos of all types. While in New York during the war years, he met Marcel Duchamp, André Breton and Billie Holliday with whom he would forge a powerful, lifelong bond.

In 1955 he published *Front Unique*, his first journal of art and poetry whose contributors included Benjamin Peret, Roberto Matta, Francis Picabia, Wilfredo Lam, André Breton, Kostas Axelos and Joyce Mansour. This was also the year he began painting and showing his work, with exhibitions at galleries such as Arturo Schwarz in Milan, Iris Clert, Raymond Cordier and Simone Collinet in Paris, and at museums and galleries worldwide. His turbulent nature led to his exclusion from the Surrealist movement for insubordination in 1959.

In 1960 in Venice he staged *L'Enterrement de la Chose*, considered by art historians as the first European happening. He spoke out against the Algerian War and torture by co-organising the *Anti-Procès* demonstration in Paris, Venice, and in 1961 in Milan, where Enrico Baj, Gianni Dova, Roberto Crippa, Errò, Jean-Jacques Lebel and Antonio Recalcati showed their *Grand Tableau Antifasciste Collectif*. After being censored for 24 years, this painting would be presented in museums across Europe and become the subject of a collective manifesto and book.

In 1962 Jean-Jacques Lebel imagined and took part in numerous actions with Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow and later Tetsumi Kudo, Errò, Carolee Schneemann, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Robert Filliou, Earle Brown and Ben as part of the *Festival de la Libre Expression* which he launched in 1964.

In 1965 he translated and published the first French anthology of the work of his friends and poets of the Beat Generation, including William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso.

In 1966 he published the first illustrated critical essay in French on Happenings. From this time on he pursued his direct poetry actions alongside his work as an artist and political activist.

In 1967 he staged Pablo Picasso's play *Desire Caught by the Tail*, with Taylor Mead, Rita Renoir, Ultra Violet and the British rock group Soft Machine.

In 1968 he took part in activities staged by the *Mouvement du 22 Mars*, the anarchist *Noir et Rouge* group, and *Informations et Correspondances Ouvrières*. He also studied under Gilles Deleuze at Vincennes and Saint-Denis universities.

In 1970, with Daniel Guerin, he co-edited the *Changer la Vie* collection published by Pierre Belfond, a compilation of some of the most important texts from the international anarchist movement.

A feeling of internal exile caused Jean-Jacques Lebel to abandon the art world and devote himself to his underground activities.

In 1979, with François Dufrène and Christian Descamps, then with Jacqueline Cahen, he set up the Polyphonix International Festival, a nomadic event of poetry, film, music and performances of all types, and an autonomous laboratory of rhizomatic movements.

In **1988**, Jean-Jacques Lebel declared an end to his exile and reprised his public work as an artist.

During this time, he curated major exhibitions at European museums which showed the work of artists from a radically different perspective: *Victor Hugo, Painter* at the Venice Museum of Modern Art in **1993**; *Picabia/Dalmau* at the IVAM in Valence in **1995**; *One Hundred Exquisite Corpses, Juegos Surrealistas* at the Fundaciòn Colleccion Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid in **1996**; *Eros' Garden* in Barcelona in **1999**; *Erotic Picasso* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in **2001**; *Artaud's Labyrinth* in Düsseldorf and Milan in **2005**; *One for the other, drawings by writers* at the IMEC in Caen in **2007** and **2008**.

At the same time he continued his own work as an artist. His striking installations were shown in museums, including *Monument to Felix Guattari* in **1994** for *Off Limits Art and Life* at the Centre Georges Pompidou; *Shrine to Venus* in **2001** at 28 European museums, and *Venus Avatars*, a video installation shown in **2008** at the ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe. Jean-Jacques Lebel continues to work as an artist, creator of exhibitions and organiser of international festivals, combining his activities into a body of work that goes beyond genres, that breaks down walls between languages, techniques, periods and most of all between art and life. This state of permanent insurrection is typical of a life that embraces the collective, the transcultural and liberty.

## **Art as Upheaval !**

Interview conducted by Jean de Loisy [extracts]

### *Uprisings?*

Yes, “Uprisings.” The title for this event is written in the plural. It is a matter, indeed, of a process that is at once artistic, historical, mental, personal, and social--which implies a long process of maturation and multiple encounters, influences, exchanges, and permutations. It is in a present that does not stop projecting itself into the future. Permanent uprising flows from my practice of deserting the art world and the tenets of commercial society. As my friend Harald Falckenberg has remarked, I stand resolutely *on the outside*: outside the dominant ideology, outside the laws of the market, outside religious or political norms. I consider my artistic activities to be intrinsically political. Finally, to come back to this “s” which might puzzle some, I want to point out that for me all artistic action is congenitally collective. I cannot envision implementing anything at all without other subjectivities than my own also contributing to it, and this is so whether or not I might be able to identify them, whether they be anonymous persons or ones known to me, my contemporaries or not. This collective endeavor of listening to others and of combining my impulses with their own--alive or already dead for centuries but still active--is necessarily an insurrectional process, since it challenges the foundations of capitalism and of the culture industry that results therefrom. We participate in an insurrection that issues from times immemorial and that has no end. I’m convinced of that. That is why I put a final “s” in “Uprisings.”

### *Is this a tribal sort of activity?*

To the extent that that implies a thinking and desiring machine that transcends periods, places, and persons and that includes human beings one doesn’t know or who are situated at the other end of the world but that encompasses them in an ongoing movement, why not? It is, de facto, a rhizome, to borrow the botanical term that was transformed into an indispensable philosophical concept by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Édouard Glissant, for his part, introduced the concept of *creolization*, designating thereby the simultaneously historical, biological, and cultural process of the endless mix.

Creolization is what Thelonius Monk lets us hear when suddenly at the piano, in one of his compositions, he develops an atonality coming from Arnold Schönberg or Edgard Varèse whose sound quality has haunted him, perhaps without him knowing it. Among visual artists, creolization is active in Francis Picabia, in Victor Brauner (one of the great Surrealists who remains to be discovered), in Orlan (an artist I greatly appreciate), in Alain Fleischer, in Erró, in Jonas Mekas, and a great number of others. This is a process of absorption of all that has been thought, heard, and seen, a flux of percepts joined and churned together in the machine of the Unconscious that reemerges enriched in concepts and practices originating in other cultures and other ages.

### *Might one speak of mental contagion?*

Max Ernst coined this expression apropos of the “exquisite corpse” game, a ludic and artistic activity par excellence that brings a rhizomatic process into play. It is an *egregore* or, if you prefer, a group *eros* that is the “author” of the final drawing, not this or that participant. The Surrealists invented here a mode of artistic production that was, properly speaking, revolutionary. Indeed, this game has escaped the eye of historians and museum curators, and all the more so speculators, for this game breaks the ground rules of the art market: the fame of the signatory and the uniqueness of style. It really is a matter here of “producing something else otherwise,” the contrary of preformatted merchandise. Ernst was right: there is a mental contagion from one mind set to another. The morphogenesis proceeds not from an “author” but rather from an intersubjective dynamic that is collective by definition.

*Would this exhibition be itself the act of putting this process into play?*

Yes, this exhibition is in reality a *montrage* (or “Show/editing” process). We know that the perception of a work and of its signifieds changes according to the context in which the work is presented. This is the big difference between the mere hanging of works [*accrochage*] and the complexity of a *montrage*: the whole is arranged in terms of the connections or caroms among the works--among their contents, not among their commercial values--and this is done in such a way as to encourage movements of thought in all senses of the term. Visible things are to make invisible ones “appear.” That is what Deleuze and Guattari called a *collective arrangement of enunciation*, a basic operative concept of contemporary art which, moreover, corresponds exactly to the definition of happenings as we, my friends and I, practiced them. It is a matter, therefore, of combining works that come from extremely different, even contradictory, contexts while making sure at the same time that their logic and their unique “charges” remain operative. This is where what Claude Lévi-Strauss called *mythical thought* comes in, that is to say, a quality of thinking that has nothing to do with rationalistic reason or with commercial imperatives. Such thinking emanates from the content of the art object while restoring its valence and respecting its *modus operandi*. This “crazy ambition” comes to me from André Breton: one tries to compose a signifying whole from disparate art objects and life experiences. This is quite a job in itself, and it swims against the current of the dominant trends and ideologies. I do not hesitate to construct *montrages* for and with works that in principle (if one sticks to the logic of capitalism alone) have no business being together but which in fact, in my mind, share some common issues and modes of operation that serve to intensify one another! What is then offered to the viewer are real possibilities of intellection, and this viewer is treated not as some kind of consumeristic dummy but rather as a person who is capable of perceiving and of conceiving these wholes as an active subject. The viewer is included in the process, as Marcel Duchamp did with *Étant donnés* or Giorgione with the *Tempest* (which, in my opinion, is one of the first pictures to have indicated to the viewer his/her place in the setup). In my work, the viewer is strategically active in the process. S/he changes status: from *voyeur*, s/he becomes seer; from object, s/he becomes subject, that is to say, “co-operator.”

*There are, therefore, encounters with people and collections of objects that accompany this process of meditation?*

Under the direct and decisive influence of Breton, my approach is indeed that of an anthropological researcher. It involves an attitude that feeds upon friendship, exchanges, chance encounters, and the work of a lifetime.

This was decided for me very early on. I had the lucky privilege to hang out in my youth with Breton, Benjamin Péret, Duchamp, Man Ray, Henri Michaux, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Glissant, Paule Thévenin, Joyce Mansour, Deleuze, Guattari, Christian Lagant (*Noir et Rouge*), Kostas Axelos and Edgar Morin (*Arguments*), Cornelius Castoriadis (*Socialisme ou Barbarie*), Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jacqueline Cahen, and, of course, Erró, my brother by adoption. The meaning of human existence has been radically redefined by my encounters. Those people transmitted to me the libertarian virus, which consists in not considering as adequate, or even acceptable, the substance of the dominant Europeocentrist and commercial culture. I proceed, therefore, not as a speculator-collector but as an ethnologist who searches for and gathers things here and there while wandering around as I choose on my voyages into societies that are foreign to me (and ALL of them are foreign to me, the most foreign or strange and absurd being, in my view, capitalist society): Duchampian “sex objects [*objets dards*],” obscure fetish-worship objects, pious images of forgotten or future religions, “natural phenomena,” traces of revolt and resistance, signposts covered with vegetation or lost in the sands, therefore unreadable or nearly so, tokens of friendship, trades, love letters, and logbooks.

*Is that how you made your surges into Victor Hugo and Picabia territories?*

What distinguishes someone who gathers [*un collecteur*] from “a collector” [*un collectionneur*] is the act of relentlessly investigating the enigma of works. I didn’t just spot, at the Drouot auction house or in some museum more than thirty years ago, some blottings done by Victor Hugo, which were of no interest to anyone. I was bowled over by those blottings, completely thrown off my rocker as to my very understanding of what a “work” was supposed to be. What I realized was that Hugo, who was held in such contempt as a visual artist by art historians, had invented Action Painting. Not knowing how to paint (in the academic sense of the term), in order to “represent” a storm he had to “recreate” it on his paper; he dipped his sheet in water, worked it over with his fingers, with the barb of his pen, with bits of cardboard, with matches, re-dipped it, threw some more ink on it and thus fabricated the material conditions of a storm by “attacking” his drawing. And to top off the whole process, he did so without hesitating to throw some coffee on it! In 1855! Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning did not imitate Hugo; they rediscovered him without knowing what he had accomplished. That’s precisely what a rhizome is; it can skip generations and sometimes even centuries, but it doesn’t stop thinking and producing. The artist or the poet is thought by the continually active, overall rhizomatic movement that flows through, irrigates, and revitalizes her. Here, too, the notion of “author” tends to evaporate.

[...]

It seems to me that the job of an artist does not consist solely in producing his own pictures or his own texts. That would be too banal. It consists also in contributing his research to a rhizome that comes from way back.

[...]

*This montage of your work grabs the viewer’s eye as well as the artist’s. It creates a unique whole in which reading and political, poetic, and aesthetic thought participate in one and the same specially articulated creation, the components of which are so interlinked that they become inseparable. It is as if Jean-Jacques Lebel, so well versed in multiplicity, had reached a point of unity among the various practices that now make up his work. I believe that this position is unique, where an artist uses montage to bring together objects created by his eternal or contemporary allies, certain ones being produced by anonymous persons, others by himself or by figures who have been revisited in order to open back up the exploration of basic enigmas. This position is also crucial, for it allows a plunge into the psyche, a metanoia, an initiatory voyage, as well as the ongoing questioning of our lives as captives.*

It is indeed perhaps this: presentifying a turbulent and all-encompassing psychical ensemble that is made up of various social, artistic, political, sexual, intellectual, collective, and individual activities, and yet knowing all the while that this “barricade” can only be ephemeral. It would be an attempt at a *montage* of what just passes by in a sort of waking dream shared by “the missing people,” and it would be inscribed not only within the immediacy of a resistance to the dominant culture but also within what would come after the fall of capitalist society, a hereafter wherein the savage mind will make sense and artistic activities will be able to free themselves from the market and to gain their full and complete autonomy vis-à-vis institutions and ideologies.

## the catalogue

The collection *Privées*, coedited by la maison rouge and Fage editions, publishes its seventh catalogue on the occasion of the exhibition *Jean-Jacques Lebel, Insurrections*. This bilingual book (French and English) contains texts by Harald Falckenberg, Alain Fleischer, Felix Guattari, Bernard Heidsieck, Olivier Kaepelin, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux, Dominique Païni, Guy Scarpetta, Jean-Louis Schefer, Anne Tronche and an interview of Jean-Jacques Lebel conducted by Jean de Loisy.

(240 pages, 32x23cm, color, bilingual french english, price : 25 €)

## partner of the exhibition



## around the exhibition

# Polyphonix

6th and 7th november 2009 at CENTQUATRE

Since 1955, Jean-Jacques Lebel has been exhibiting, writing, editing, coordinating and taking a stand. First and foremost an artist, he is also an organiser of international events, exhibitions and festivals, a poet, theorist and political activist. None of the forms his life as an "inspired agitator" has taken can be dissociated from his work as an artist.

Polyphonix is a self-run artists' cooperative which since 1979 has been staging a nomadic and protean international festival of sound poetry, performance art, video and music, now in its sixtieth incarnation. So far over 1,800 people from some thirty countries have taken part in Polyphonix, at such diverse places as major museums, universities, psychiatric hospitals, underground stations, theatres and concert halls, together with marginal venues, in over forty cities worldwide. Polyphonix at Centquatre again brings together poets, musicians, performers and video artists.

A tribute will be paid to Jacqueline Cahen-Sergent, recently departed, who with Jean-Jacques Lebel coordinated the group's many and various activities.

### Meet at CENTQUATRE

11 bis, rue Curial 75019 Paris

**Metro:** Stalingrad, Crimée, Riquet

**RER B** or **D**

### Friday 6th and Saturday 7th November 6pm / Room 200

Video and films

### Friday November 6th 8.30pm / Room 200

Michèle Métail, Esther Ferrer, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jonas Mekas, Arnaud Labelle-Rojoux

### Saturday November 7th 8.30pm / Room 400

John Giorno, Benat Achiary, Jayne Cortez, Denardo Coleman

Entrance: €12 / €15, Subscribers €10

Bookings: 33 (0)1 53 35 50 00 or [www.104.fr](http://www.104.fr)

In partnership with the Paris Festival d'Automne and CENTQUATRE



➤ The full programme and dates for activities are at [www.lamaisonrouge.org](http://www.lamaisonrouge.org)

## pictures



*Reliquaire pour un culte de Vénus*, 1998-2004, technique mixte, dimensions variables © DR



Francis Picabia, *Sans titre (transparence)* © DR



Antonin Artaud, *Portrait de Mania Oifer*, 1946 © DR



André Breton/Valentine Hugo,  
*Sans titre (cadavre exquis)*, 1930-32 © DR



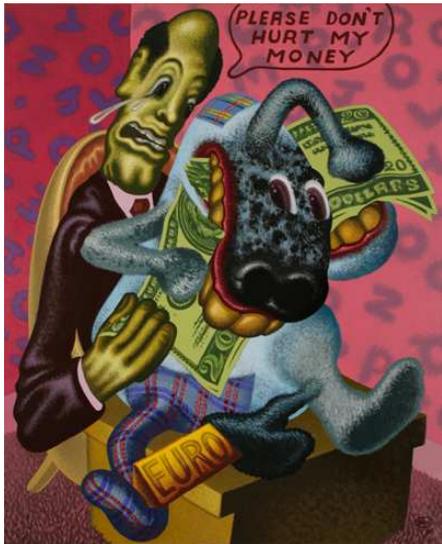
Jean-Jacques Lebel, 3<sup>e</sup> *Festival de la libre expression*,  
détail, happening, 1966 © DR



Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Flore*, 1591, huile sur bois 72.8 x 56.3 cm © DR



Nam June Paik, *Television*, s.d © DR



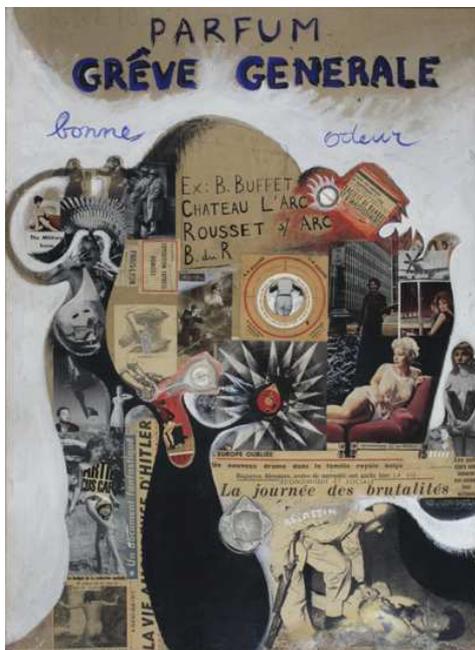
Peter Saul, *Please Don't Hurt My Money*, 2005 © DR



Victor Brauner, *Cérémonie*, 1947 (195 x 241cm) © DR



Victor Hugo, *Empreinte de dentelle*, 1855, fusain, trace d'encre brune, encre bleue et verte, tache de cire rouge sur papier vergé crème, 17.2 x 29 cm ©DR



Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Parfum grève générale, bonne odeur*, 1960 © DR



Johann Heinrich Füssli





Robert Doisneau, *Barricade parisienne*, 1944 © DR



douilles ornées, 1914-1918, laiton © DR

## **the vestibule**

### **Bertille Bak and Perrine Lievens**

winners of the price start 2008

from the 25th octobre to the 22nd november 2009

La maison rouge is associated to Hiscox and presents for the first time, the both winners of the price start, in the vestibule.

Every year, Price start rewards two graduated students of the Paris National Superior School of beaux-arts.

In 2008, the winners were Perrine Lievens and Bertille Bak.

#### **Perrine Lievens**

(1981, Aix-en-Provence)

Perrine Lievens works in Paris. Since 2003, she has participated to different collective exhibitions and has presented personal exhibitions in France : « Escapade », in the Super Window Gallery in Kyoto, « Deux dimensions et demie » in the Darling Fonderie in Montréal and in the Saint-Séverin Gallery in Paris.

#### **Bertille Bak**

(1983, Arras)

Bertille Bak lives and works between Paris and Tourcoing. She has recently exposed in Bangkok in Thailand *Over There* in the Art Gallery of Silpakorn University, Wang Tha Phra, and also in Paris (Le Plateau/ FRAC Ile de France, Xippas Gallery, la Maison Européenne de la photographie). For 4 years, she has been participating to numerous festivals and collective exhibitions.

In partnership with  **HISCOX**

## **hospitalities 2009**

**Saturday October 31st, 2009**

*La maison rouge* and *La maison des arts de Malakoff* present a "crossover" event on Saturday October 31st as part of *Hospitalities 2009*. Each venue is giving carte blanche to the artist exhibiting at the other venue. Jeanne Susplugas, whose exhibition *Home* runs from September 19th to November 22nd, 2009 at *La maison des arts de Malakoff*, has invited three actors to read a play by Marie Darrieussecq, focusing on the artist's work. This performance will take place on Saturday October 31st at *la maison rouge*. Jean-Jacques Lebel, whose own work and works from his collection are shown at *la maison rouge* in *Insurrections*, from October 25th 2009 to January 17th, 2010, has invited Marie Hendriks to present one of her videos at the Jeanne Susplugas exhibition.

### **Jeanne Susplugas**

In 2007, Jeanne Susplugas created the sound performance *Latrogène* for the *Centre d'Art Passages*. For this work, she asked writer Marie Darrieussecq to produce a text in connection with her work, emphasising medicines and daily rituals. *Latrogène* was read as a three-part dialogue by Marie Darrieussecq, Eric Pajot and Jeanne Susplugas.

Jeanne Susplugas presents the piece again at *la maison rouge* where she directs three professional actors who will perform this absurd and disturbing skit in a continuous loop in *la maison rouge's* bedroom.

### **Jean-Jacques Lebel**

Many of the works of Marie Hendriks (Netherlands, 1981) are set in sophisticated domestic environments, in elaborately decorated homes where bizarre events are played out. To "inhabit" one of Jeanne Susplugas' rooms, Jean-Jacques Lebel has chosen *Do you love me now?*, a video portraying the surreal story of a couple getting ready for a picnic. A young woman in a summer dress is transformed into something inhuman by her grotesque gait, as she moves about on all fours, her back arched like a cat. Her delicate yet repulsive actions portray woman as something frightening, more animal than human.

### **programme**

2.30pm: tour of *Insurrections* with Jean-Jacques Lebel

3pm: Jeanne Susplugas presents *Latrogène* at *la maison rouge*

4pm: shuttle from *la maison rouge* to Malakoff

4.30pm: Jean-Jacques Lebel presents Marie Hendriks' video *Do you love me now?* at *La maison des arts de Malakoff*

5pm: tour of *Home* with Jeanne Susplugas

5.30pm: shuttle back to *la maison rouge*

## practical informations



### getting there

**metro stations :** Quai de la Rapée (ligne 5) ou Bastille (lignes 1,5,8)

**RER station :** Gare de Lyon

**bus :** 20/29/91

### accessibility

the exhibition areas are accessible

### opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm

late-night Thursday until 9pm

closed December 25th, January 1st and May 1st

### admission

**full price:** €7

**concessions:** €5 (13-18 years, students, full-time artists, and over-60s).

**free:** under-13s, the unemployed, companions of disabled visitors, members of ICOM and les amis de la maison rouge.

#### annual pass

**full price:** €19

**concessions:** €14

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions.

free or reduced rate admission to related events.

## with the support of TRAM and Télérama