

# The Wall

Works from  
the collection  
of Antoine  
de Galbert



## The Wall Works from the collection of Antoine de Galbert

Curator:  $G = E(g(X)) = \int g(x)f_X(x) dx$

In June 2004 Antoine de Galbert declared open la maison rouge, with an exhibition that was also a statement of intent as to the Foundation's future programme: *L'Intime (behind closed doors: the private life of collections)* catapulted collectors' private sphere into the public arena in a most unexpected way. "Extracts" from the collections of some fifteen collectors were shown in their natural habitat, i.e. identical reconstructions of rooms in their respective homes. Antoine de Galbert showed the hallway of his home, with works already hung floor to ceiling, frame against frame.

Since 2004, Antoine de Galbert's personality and taste as a collector have underpinned the programme at La maison rouge. Parts of his collection have been shown here on a further two occasions. In 2007 *Mutatis, Mutandis* presented contemporary artworks that echoed the exhibition by Tetsumi Kudo; in 2010 *Journey in my head* focused on his collection of extra-European headdresses.

For this tenth anniversary of La maison rouge, visitors are invited to step not just into Antoine de Galbert's hallway but, more brazenly, to penetrate "the sinuous disorder of [his] head." The collector has chosen a radical means to lay himself bare: to show (almost) all the wall-hung works in his collection. In doing so he imparts a diachronic portrait over thirty years, revealing the scope of his tastes without ever disowning any of

his choices, past or present. Paintings, photographs, drawings, neons and three-dimensional works combine into a continuous flow. Even so, they represent just part of Antoine de Galbert's collection as installations, sculptures, videos, indigenous art and older works are excluded.

To exhibit all the works in a collection is in contradiction with the way most exhibitions (at la maison rouge and elsewhere) are designed, when the first rule for curators is to make the right choices: the theme of the exhibition, the artists taking part, the works on display, which ones to highlight and, most importantly, how to combine them into a narrative that will run through the gallery space. In the case of private collections, this selection paints a portrait of the collector and constructs their personal myth (the first work they bought, artists they discovered early on, movements they support, etc.).

There is no such filter here. Taking this logic of neutrality to its furthest limit, Antoine de Galbert has entrusted the hanging of his collection to a machine, or rather software programmed only with the size of the frames, using what is known as the Monte Carlo method. Wikipedia describes these methods as “a broad class of computational algorithms that rely on repeated random sampling to obtain numerical results [...] in order to obtain the distribution of an unknown probabilistic entity. The name comes from the resemblance of the technique to the act of playing and recording results in a real gambling casino.”

This “curator” is therefore blind to any aspect of the work other than the height and width of its frame. Its role is to calculate the optimal distribution of the “elements” so that they all fit into the available hanging space.

Such a hanging makes it impossible to include descriptive labels next to each work, for the simple reason that there is no room, and because many would be out of eyeshot anyway. This absence of printed labels is consistent with how collectors display works in their home. Without labels, visitors are invited to view each object for itself, without preconception. Then, should they wish, they can consult the digital labels for information. These are accessed on touch screens in each gallery or on visitors' own tablet or mobile phone (instructions on page 14).

Two works form an exception to this random distribution, singled out by Antoine de Galbert and shown separately, at the entrance to the exhibition. *The Gathering* by Norbert H. Kox and William Thomas Thompson reprises a classical iconography of the last judgement. As the opening piece in such a plethoric exhibition, it could be perceived as a statement on the art world: some of the many will be saved, others will be damned... On the adjacent wall, Hans-Peter Feldmann's *Painting of Light* makes a humorous proposal of art reduced to the bare minimum: two nails and a beam of light. It is, perhaps, the ghostly image of the next painting the collector will buy; one he has yet to discover but which is out there somewhere, waiting. It is also the “perfect” work: a mental projection whose immateriality encompasses all others, past and still to come.

The protocol behind this hanging, which covers 278 linear metres of wall, builds on rarely encountered notions in exhibition design: saturation, chance, game, relativity, taste, etc.

### **Accumulation**

For Antoine de Galbert, collecting is an obsessive-compulsive practice. “Sometimes I see my collection as some kind

of unmentionable addiction [...]. I chain collect like I chain smoke. I envy those who can content themselves with two cigarettes a day. Like smoking, it's about being hooked." The "maximalist" method chosen for the hanging visually conveys the hold the collection has on its owner, and the ever-expanding space it takes up in his life. Since finalising the list of works in *The Wall*, how many more have been added to the collection?

## Chance

The idea for this random hanging came to Antoine de Galbert while browsing the books in his library. He noticed how their alphabetical order produced some unlikely bedfellows: Denise Aubertin next to Pilar Albarracín, Thierry De Cordier side by side with Hervé Di Rosa.

This is not the first time the curator has delegated his or her powers, instead allowing chance to make its selection. Exhibitions have been hung in alphabetical order (*Peintures/ Malerei* by Laurent Lebon at Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, 2006) or by acquisition date. At the Kunsthalle in Berne in 1984, Bertrand Lavier proposed, as an artistic gesture, a retrospective of "paintings by artists with the surname Martin from 1603 to 1984". The common denominator of all these experiments is to question the role of the all-powerful curator imposing their vision. Most of all they reveal a longing to see without the blinkers of automatism and academicism; to elicit new meanings through confrontations "we" would never have imagined because "we" are conditioned by what "we" have already seen.

It is precisely this desire to be surprised that has stimulated Antoine de Galbert as a collector; this urge to remove boundaries, to combine and relate differently in order to constantly challenge certitudes. And in this, chance is the undisputed

master. So much so in fact that certain juxtapositions in *The Wall* are so exact they appear to be the result not of serendipity but careful consideration.

## The game: Claude Rutault

Antoine de Galbert has deliberately thrown a spanner into the workings of a game he himself initiated by eliciting Claude Rutault's contribution. The collector has introduced an element of choice, but the (conceptual) artist he has chosen is a million miles from his personal tastes. Since 1973, Rutault has developed a radical practice: he paints monochrome canvases in the same colour as the wall on which they are hung. They are conceived from a written text, a procedure known as *dé-finition/méthode* which the owner of the work must apply.

Several works by Rutault are included in *The Wall* but just one, *dé-finition/méthode "diptyque Leroy/Rutault"*, is part of Antoine de Galbert's collection. Only collectors who own a work by Eugène Leroy can buy this particular *dé-finition/méthode*. It consists in transforming a Leroy painting into a Rutault diptych by adding to the former a second, identically-sized canvas. Because this diptych was hung on a yellow wall in the collector's home, the corresponding wall inside the Foundation has been painted yellow. Rutault has produced a further three diptychs from works chosen by Antoine de Galbert, by Dado, Jean Dubuffet and Franz West. This authoritarian annexing is, to a more radical degree, identical to the path a work takes when it leaves the studio: the artist can no longer choose his or her neighbours. In both private and public collections, as in exhibitions, the artist has no control over how his or her work is hung, nor in whose company it is seen.

Rutault has also "punctuated" *The Wall* with paintings in various shapes and sizes which are randomly scattered throughout

the exhibition. One is pink because it is hung on the same wall as Erwin Wurm's *Home*, which must be shown against a pink background.

### Relativity

By opting to “reveal all”, Antoine de Galbert chooses not to stand in for art history which, over time, will take up the task of applying labels, categories and comments, of showering some with praise while forgetting others. *The Wall* ignores all the usual classification criteria concerning the artist (nationality, gender, age, living or dead), the work (subject, media) and most of all the “life” of the work (the artist's reputation, ranking on the art market, commercial value, etc.).

This short-circuiting of the classifications dictated by art history, and the art market, places everyone on an equal footing. Indeed, Antoine de Galbert insists on the fact that “artists are all sailing the same river.” *The Wall* creates a level playing field which incites us to consider the functioning and excesses of the art market. Without labels, without knowing who the artist is, who can say what has value and what hasn't? Artists' rankings go up and down. And as Antoine de Galbert reminds us, it's impossible to go wrong when buying something you like. Only speculators stand to lose.

### Taste

As the exhibition unfolds, so the collector's taste for “incarnate”, sensual, magical, unsettling works becomes apparent; works which address themes that are bound up with our existence (the body, time, animality, sex, love, disgust, violence, solitude, death...). Even though some works may seem stark or brutal, the overall impression is anything but dark for the collection also reflects a love of life and a voracious appetite for all it has

to offer. Nor are humour and derision ever far away. Antoine de Galbert's “taste” has largely developed independently of fashions and trends. Certain works in his collection don't conform to what we might consider to be “good taste”, that is works which could enhance an elegant interior. The collector even owns up to a certain degree of “bad taste”. *The Wall* also paints a reverse portrait of Antoine de Galbert, through the trends and styles which do not, or rarely, feature in his collection, such as conceptual and minimal art.

### Challenging the white cube

The convention of what a gallery space should be—the “white cube” ideology that imposed itself over the course of the twentieth century and which Brian O'Doherty describes in a series of essays published as *Inside the White Cube*—is turned temporarily upside down. From one exhibition to the next, we are accustomed to seeing works hung at eye-level on white walls, sufficiently spaced so as not to “interfere with” each other. Yet this has not always been the rule. Italian painting galleries, Renaissance cabinets of curiosity, nineteenth-century Salons abhorred empty space. The white cube is a relatively recent model, and will doubtless disappear one day.

Compared with the exhibition designs we usually encounter, we might consider this form of presentation to be a “barbarism”, to borrow Antoine de Galbert's word, or simply impractical. Certain works are hung too high or too low to be seen, something the collector apologises for in the catalogue, asking artists and visitors alike for their indulgence. The digital labels, which zoom in on the works, are intended to overcome this inconvenience but the fact remains that not everything is “visible” to the naked eye.

As Sophie Delpoux observes in the catalogue to the exhibition, “submitting works to the arbitrary conclusions of an algorithm transforms them into items” and chips away at the aura usually conferred on them by the elegant, uncluttered setting of the white cube which invites quasi-religious contemplation.

### The place of the visitor

The visitor, in the midst of this “visual cacophony”, should feel more akin to an explorer than a devotee. Because it is clearly impossible to take everything in, and because there is no logic or order to the hanging, he or she feels entitled to scan the walls, to approach the exhibition with a certain nonchalance, to come and go between works.

As there is no pre-selection by the collector or a curator, it is ultimately the visitor himself who has the power to make choices, to invent his own circuit and imagine his own correspondences based on his way of seeing, curiosity, taste and obsessions. *The Wall* leaves each visitor free to imagine himself as a collector or curator, and glean from this profusion of works his own mental collection.

### Le vestibule

from June 14 to August 25

#### Le(s) vestibule(s)

On the occasion of la maison rouge’s 10th anniversary, each staff member invites an artist of his or her choice, to be exhibited in the vestibule:

Leïto de Courson de la Villeneuve

André Fortino

Ann Grim

Pierre Kurz

Romain Laveille

Hernan Soriano

Natalia Taravkova

Pauline Toyer

Céline Vaché-Olivieri

from September 4 to September 21

#### Ma Mère et les autres

an exhibition by Pippo Delbono

conceived by Pippo Delbono

et Richard Laillier

### Public programs

Wednesday June 18, at 7:30pm

musical evening with

#### Soundinitiative

The soundinitiative musical ensemble proposes a program in *The Wall* exhibition galleries, with pieces by Peter Ablinger,

John Cage, Santiago Diez-Fischer and Helmut Lachenmann.

Thursday June 19, at 7pm

#### Inédits #1,

a cycle proposed by Aurélie Djian “Devant le mur”, performance inédite en VF, technicolor et relief. by Yves Chaudouët, Anaïs Müller and Antoine Romana

Thursday June 26, at 7pm

chantalpetit, “entre-vues”,

1987-2014, an evening around the work of chantalpetit with François Barré, and Juliette Laffon

Thursday July 3, at 7pm

Dance/Collection by Alberto Sorbelli, a guided tour/performance in the exhibition *The Wall*

Thursday September 11, at 7pm

#### Inédits #2

« Je suis un homme d’intérieur » by Thomas Clerc

Thursday September 18, at 7pm

Conversation with Antoine de Galbert around the exhibition *The Wall*

Informations, prices and reservations: 01 40 01 08 81 reservation@lamaisonrouge.org

## la maison rouge

president: Antoine de Galbert

director: Paula Aisemberg

collection manager: Arthur Toqué,

assisted by Camille Malherbe

head of exhibitions: Noëlig Le Roux,

assisted by Daniela Perez Montelongo

technical manager: Laurent Guy

assisted by Pierre Kurz and Steve

Almarines

exhibition installation team: Frédéric

Daugu, Stéphane Emptaz, Jérôme

Gallo, Charles Heranval, Nicolas

Juillard, Emmanuelle Lagarde, Yann

Ledoux, Arnaud Martin, Nicolas

Magdelaine, Arnaud Piroud, Ludovic

Poulet, Estelle Savoye, Mykos Zavadskis

head of public programs and “petit

journal”: Stéphanie Molinard, assisted

by Cloé Caisman et Margot Delalande

head of communication : Claire

Schillinger, assisted by Chloé Demaille

assistant: Stéphanie Dias

reception desk: Natura Ruiz,

Guillaume Ettlinger

## press

Claudine Colin communication,

Laure Jardy

## les amis de la maison rouge

président: Ariane de Courcel,

assisted by Aude Quinchon

## algorithm software conception

Normand Bouffard

## Opening days and times

- Wednesday to Sunday from 11am to 7pm; Late nights Thursday until 9 pm

- free guided tour (with admission ticket) Saturday and Sunday at 4pm

- The galleries are accessible to the disabled and mobility impaired visitors

## admission

- Full price: €9

- Concessions: €6, (13-18, students, full-time artists, over 65s)

- Free for under 13s, job-seekers, companions to disabled visitors, members of ICOM and Amis de la maison rouge

- Tickets on sale at FNAC  
tel. 0892 684 694 (0,34 € ttc/min)  
www.fnac.com

- Annual pass: full price €24

- Annual pass: concessions €16,50  
Free and unlimited access to the exhibitions; Free access or reduced rates to related events

## Rose Bakery Culture

*Jardin secret*, Furniture design


by be-attitude

## exhibition partners

- when it has to be right  


## media partners

la maison rouge is a member  
of the Tram réseau 

## To access the digital labels

For practical reasons of space and legibility, information on the works displayed is proposed in digital format. Digital labels are accessible on touch screens, placed in the exhibition galleries.

You can also consult them on your smartphones and tablets.

1. – Go to «Settings», select the Wi-Fi network «The Wall» and connect to it
- 2.– Access the digital labels  
→ by scanning this QR code:




To download a QR code reader, please visit the «App Store» for iPhone and iPad or «Play Store» for android.

→ or by going to: <http://192.168.0.14/lemur>

For an optimal experience, we recommend that you use Chrome browser (on android system) or Safari browser (iPhone) and use the horizontal mode.

On your personal phones and tablets, it will be possible to access audio or video comments by some of the artists exhibited. If you want to listen to them, use your headphones (also on sale at the front desk).



exhibition  
June 14th to  
September 21st 2014

**la maison rouge**  
fondation antoine de galbert  
10 boulevard de la bastille  
75012 paris france  
tél. +33 (0) 1 40 01 08 81  
fax +33 (0) 1 40 01 08 83  
info@lamaisonrouge.org  
www.lamaisonrouge.org