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Transatlantique ER Publishing

by David Rhodes, July 27, 2023

Created in 2020 by Elodie Rahard, ER Publishing first launches a book collection titled *Transatlantique* dedicated to artist's writings and their invaluable perspectives.

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Elodie Rahard founded ER Publishing in New York in 2020, launching a new and unique book series. *Transatlantique* began as an idea when Rahard was still living in New York, with ten years previous experience as Managing Director of the fabled Galerie Jean Fournier in Paris. Rahard wanted to create a publication that gave visibility to artists' writings. *Transatlantique* is first about the question of an artworks reception from the two sides of the Atlantic, North-America and Europe. It is Rahard's belief that artists have a crucial role in this question of reception, and this role has been underexposed.

In this still expanding series each book is dedicated to a single artist, either American or European based. Comprising a preface by way of an introduction by the guest editor together with texts written by, or short conversations with, contemporary artists based on the other side of the Atlantic to the featured artist—each book amounts to a critical discussion of the featured artist. At present there are books on Martin Barré, Simon Hantaï, James Bishop, Shirley Jaffe, Alice Neel, Louise Bourgeois, and Michel Parmentier. The format is pocket sized, a different color identifying each book, the elegant design and typography are constant making the series easily identifiable and a visual pleasure to have around. This isn't always the case with such erudite and ambitious publications.

The relationship between France and the US from the later 1940s through to today has been the subject of considerable misrepresentation. The narrative is by now a very familiar one: initially Paris ceded pre-eminence to New York as the fulcrum of advanced innovative painting in the late 1940s; subsequently, first minimalism and then conceptual art displaced painting as both a valid medium and as the subject of serious critical discourse. As Molly Warnock in her preface to the first book in the series, on Martin Barré puts it "From the 1960s forward, "French Painting" was doubly disqualified." Only in the last decade or so has this been sufficiently challenged, and changes are apparent, though effects continue, as evidenced by the relative lack of visibility of post-war and recent French painting in the US today. The *Transatlantique* series is a serious contribution to a deeper understanding of painting and its reception on both sides of the Atlantic from the mid 20th century forward.

The approach, inviting short essays by contemporary artists on each featured artist, represents an invaluable and insightful document that bypasses the often myopic and imposed art historical narratives. What are the contexts that ground influence and dialogue? In representing the experiences and recollections of artists a very complex and yet direct account emerges that is at the same time extremely informed and personal. I can't imagine a better way to become acquainted with the changing reception of the artists featured than with the many views and encounters that are so eloquently articulated here.

Warnock is also editor for the books on Hantaï, Bishop and Parmentier, like the other editors involved, she possesses specialized knowledge in each case, for example her highly regarded monograph, "Simon Hantaï and the Reserves of Painting" from 2020. After reintroducing the paintings of Barré for the first book, the second addresses the similarly under-appreciated painting of his generational peer, Hantaï. Both artists had come to prominence in Paris during the 1950s. Hantaï's reputation has never been adequately acknowledged in the United States despite his significance for a younger generation of French artists from Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier (also the subject of a book) to the painters of Supports/Surfaces. His pliage (folded) paintings, have been exhibited extensively in France since the late 1960s and are an early and consequential response to the paintings of Jackson Pollock. And yet he has only been represented by a handful of exhibitions in the United States, not that he went entirely unnoticed: artists noticed—despite the difficulties in gaining exposure to French painting remotely from New York until more recently—as attested to by those asked to respond in this particular book.

James Bishop and Shirley Jaffe, both Americans who decided to relocate across the Atlantic, and Louise Bourgeois, French born but moving the opposite direction, are included in the series and add to the complexity of connection and influence excavated. Bishop, despite being a touchstone for the writers and critics of “Tel Quel” the Paris based avant-garde journal, and a close friend of the poet-critic Marcelin Pleynet, remained by choice a somewhat distant figure in the French painting scene, to date he remains better known in Europe than in his native country. Frédéric Paul in his editorial preface outlines the reserved nature of Jaffe in conversation, often less than forthcoming, and usually more curious about her interlocutor. The memoirs and descriptions in this book are revealing of Jaffe’s painting methodology, experience of expatriate life, and the high esteem in which her colleagues in both Paris and New York held her.

Fabienne Dumont invited seven women artists to contribute texts to the understanding of Alice Neel’s influence and legacy. The contemporary perspectives, all specific to each contributor, offer insightful observations. Marie-Laure Bernadac, guest editor for the book on Bourgeois explicates the long history of an artist who only from the 1990s started to receive international recognition. The artists writing here, from both Europe and America, recall Bourgeois’ influence and acquaintance and were among the few that she took a great interest in.

The style, form and tone of each of the artist’s contributions vary as they all constitute in different ways so many individual responses and personal takes. For two examples, Shirley Kaneda refers to her interview with Jaffe for “Bomb Magazine” from 2004, and continues an examination of the connectedness between the formal elements and structures of Jaffe’s paintings, and a life between fixed identities in voluntary exile from the US. In Alan Ruiz’s account of the trajectory of Michel Parmentier’s career, we learn of the political and philosophic ramifications of Parmentier’s choices of action and inaction, the rejection in Paris of the late 60s, of bourgeois ideology and the pertinence for today, particularly in the US, to our moment of hyper-individualism. The multivalent views here allow a countervailing history to that of the simplistic view of a post 1940s US dominance of paintings development, to emerge from the ground up. The *Transatlantique* collection will spark new conversations and reshape perceptions as the art works themselves and the artists who encounter them articulate the experience both analytically and anecdotally. Another book, on Guy de Cointet—the editor Rachel Valinsky—is forthcoming.



