

# VALLOIS

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# TEFAF NEW YORK 2022

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**MAY 6 - MAY 10**

**BOOTH 358**

**PARK AVENUE ARMORY  
643 PARK AVENUE  
NEW YORK, NY 10065**



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Grand Mural*, 1969

*Grand Mural* (1969) is exemplary of the French-American woman artist **Niki de Saint Phalle's** practice, incorporating emblematic elements of her visual vocabulary in a new and unexpected fashion. A prominent member of Nouveau Réalisme, Niki de Saint Phalle imbued the movement with her pioneering feminism; *Grand Mural* is no exception. The work operated a turn within the artist's mastery of materials, announcing a soon to be widespread smooth, controlled use of fiberglass and painted resin. This particular work is one of the few to have been painted by Niki de Saint Phalle herself, before her lifelong partnership with the Haligon family. Contrasting with the rough and gritty aspect of her previous assemblages, the fiberglass technique allowed for a different and renewed type of narrative quality. Storytelling as a psychoanalytical and therapeutic method echoes Saint Phalle's fascination for comic books and fairytales, and allows for the repeated occurrence of symbolic elements for which *Grand Mural* acts as a lexicon. Here, the fable's conventional knight is replaced by a female hero, a feminine counterpoint to Ucello's *Saint George Slaying the Dragon*. The monsters in this image are a snake, a spider, a lizard; alongside them are the ambiguous and allegorical unicorn and bird. The menacing snake, creeping ominously close to the woman's figure, simultaneously evokes the traditional Christian symbolism of evil and threatening phallic imagery. The different creatures' alarming nature is balanced by Niki de Saint Phalle's voluntary regression into childish representations: the blue field dotted with naïve flowers, the absence of perspective, color-blocking, improbable proportions, and caricatural images are a testament to the stylistic shift happening in the artist's practice between the late 1960s and the 1970s.

**Established in the heart of Paris since 1990, Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois has championed the work of major artists from Nouveau Réalisme, Hyperrealism, and contemporary art for the past 30 years. For TEFAF New York's 2022 edition, the gallery will showcase a selection of seminal and emblematic works by Niki de Saint Phalle, Jacques Villeglé, Jean Tinguely, Robert Cottingham, and William Wegman.**

The Nouveau Réalisme movement was established on October 27, 1960, with the publication of a manifesto which was in fact the effective formalization of a *modus operandi* enacted and theorized by **Jacques Villeglé** as early as the late 1940s: the stated ambition to lay the foundations of a new expressiveness reflecting the anthropological reality of the times was present in Villeglé's practice from its inception. As he harvested lacerated posters from public spaces, he was acutely aware of the deep artistic and sociological importance of his method, prompting him very early on to build a Catalogue Raisonné, divided into twelve thematic families. The work displayed at TEFAF New York, **Boulevard du Montparnasse**, is the very first iteration of the 'Lettre Lacérée' series, the rarest and most notable of these families, where words and letters, ripped and superimposed, lose meaning and become blurred symbols. A prophetic piece, the literal Alpha to a yet undisclosed Omega, this work is the foundation stone for decades of iconoclastic constructions, the frontispiece of Nouveau Réalisme. Villeglé's sampling transformed the single, partially ripped letter into a form of genesis.

Villeglé's work paved the way for the use of leftovers and waste from consumer culture; **Jean Tinguely** offered these scraps a second life through movement.

**Vive La Liberté I** is a striking example of his mechanized scrap metal sculptures from the 'junk period', the 'madmen's era'. Succeeding the *Meta-reliefs*, which explored a more serene kind of kinetic art, this cycle ushered an era of anarchy, of chaotic frenzy, enabled by the bareness of raw materials reclaimed from junkyards. Here, Tinguely stripped the object of any narrative attempt: the sculpture creates a motion whose sole purpose is to dangle a solitary piece

**AT THE GALLERY**  
**01.04 - 28.05**

**Virginie Yassef**

*Dogs Dream*

36

**Julien Bismuth**

*Harlequinades*

33

**UPCOMING**  
**10.06 - 23.07**

**Enrico Baj**  
**Martin Kersels**

*Home Sweet Home*

36

**Blutch**

*Dessins Mish-Mash*

33

of wire. The screeching rawness of *Vive La Liberté I* (*Long Live Freedom*) echoes Tinguely's anarchist proclivities, and coincides with a pivotal time in his artistic practice. The piece was created for the 'Bewogen Beweging' ('Moving movement') exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in 1961; curated by Pontus Hultén and Willem Sandberg, the show brought together artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Takis, Calder, or Pol Bury around Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*.

For the past 60 years, Hyperrealist artist **Robert Cottingham** has been photographing shop signs and storefronts from the roads, and painting them into colorful glimpses of Americana, characteristically angled from the onlooker's street-level view. In *Empire IV*, he depicted the façade of the Empire Theater, a cinema in Montgomery, Alabama. The movie theater was the background for Rosa Parks' historic act of resistance and her arrest in 1955, and is mentioned in the police report as the place of occurrence of the civil rights icon's 'offense'. Cottingham photographed the theater's facades in the 1990s, just weeks before it was torn down; twelve years later, commissioned to create an image for New York's 2008 film festival, Cottingham went back to these pictures and began a four-year endeavor exploring various perspectives of the theater's marquee. This version is the largest from a series of oil, watercolor, gouache and graphite works, in a particularly wide format evoking movie aspect ratios. In addition to documenting the vernacular imagery of the Southern US, *Empire IV*

is a lasting record of a turning point in American history and of the fight against segregation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its monumental photorealism allows for an enduring and subtle homage to Rosa Parks, while illustrating Cottingham's lifelong painterly accretion of symbols of American modernity.

**William Wegman**, painter, videographer, and photographer, incorporates postcards in his canvases. These snapshots of artificially embellished places, insulated from the reality they refer to, are accumulated into a vast nervous system of touristic domesticity and illusion. In *Expect to Stay Here a Couple of Days*, Wegman's staging emphasizes the unnatural essence of the postcards by connecting them into improbable architectures of various motels and motor inns, bathed in technicolor hues. The postcards are transformed, incorporated into a kaleidoscope of vaguely architectural geometries and their contradicting perspectives shatter the landscape's plausibility. Their outdated subject matters are derided and ridiculed by their accumulation into an impossible and antiquated picture, a kitsch return to a nostalgic middle-class American road trip. The large scale of the painting requires a constant back-and-forth in order to embrace either the piece's totality or its details, and calls for a deliberate deciphering where meaning is found in minute fractions of the whole. The prolonging of the motel images into the canvas blurs their definition, erasing their edges and melding their borders, like an attempt at extending the clichés they encapsulate.



Robert Cottingham, *Empire IV*, 2012