



# INTERNATIONAL ART GALLERIES

POST-WAR TO POST-MILLENNIUM



**DUMONT**

# Air de Paris

YEAR OF FOUNDATION

**1990**

FOUNDERS

**Florence Bonnefous and Edouard Merino**

ADDRESS

**1990-94 18 Rue Barillerie, Nice**

**SINCE 1994 32 Rue Louise Weiss, Paris**

ARTISTS REPRESENTED

**Annee, Olaf Breuning, François Curlet, Stéphane Dafflon, Plamen Dejanoff**

**Brice Dellsperger, Trisha Donnelly, Liam Gillick, Joseph Grigely**

**Swetlana Heger, Carsten Höller, Pierre Joseph, Paul McCarthy**

**Sarah Morris, Petra Mrzyk & Jean-François Moriceau, Philippe Parreno**

**Rob Pruitt, Navin Rawanchaikul, Torbjørn Rødland**

**Bruno Serralongue, Shimabuku, Lily van der Stokker**

**Inez van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin**

**Jean-Luc Verna, Annika von Hausswolff**

'1972', group exhibition with works by Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, Carsten Höller and Pierre Joseph, 1972

International galleries, 2005

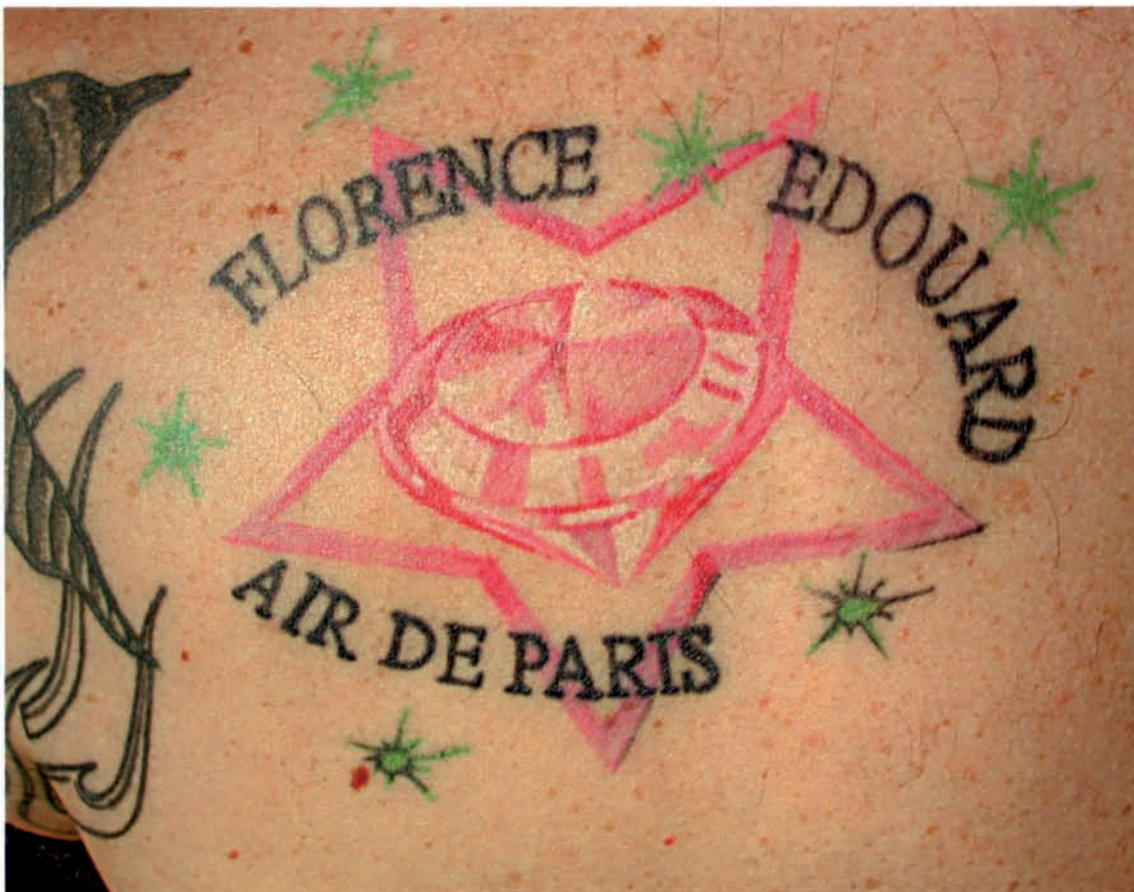
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**The paradisiacal studios.** In 2000 Olivier Zahm came to the conclusion in the style supplement of *Libération* that the gallery of Edouard Merino and Florence Bonnefous was 'one of the few that couldn't care less about success, and that doesn't barricade itself in a "White Cube" behind the typical behaviour of dealers'. Furthermore, as Florence Bonnefous confesses, 'I didn't actually decide consciously to be a gallerist, it just turned out that way.'

Air de Paris, which opened in June 1990 in a tiny main street in the old part of Nice, shortly after the crisis on the art market had begun, has every appearance of success today. It owes the whole adventure to the bold plan of two students from the art school Le Magasin in Grenoble, who met five art students from the *École des Beaux-Arts*: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Bernard Joisten, Pierre Joseph, Philippe Parreno and Philippe Perrin. Edouard, the son of Monegasque collectors, loved strong sensory impressions and was always hunting for poetry: naturally in art, but also, for example, in the mysteries of the universe (he collects meteorites). Florence Bonnefous, on the other hand, was an artist who had studied applied art and psychology in Strasbourg, where she had already organized small exhibitions in her studio's display window, which faced the street.

The two major directions in the gallery's programme can be explained by these two strong and starkly contrasting personalities. Their great strength lies in never having conformed to one another.



Tattoo on the back of Jean-Luc Verna



Edouard organized 'Projects for UFO', an event in which work by Guglielmo Achille Cavellini and Carsten Höller was shown on the roof of a building in Monaco. Since the gallery's opening in Paris in Rue Louise Weiss, 'Silver Space' has also been on show, a true curiosity cabinet of modern times, which has included such things as a Philippine stick from the 18th century, a device for the artificial insemination of turkeys, and a portrait of Rimbaud at seventeen. Other exhibitions have also been shown there, such as the utterly fantastic robots of Yves Amu Klein – the son of Yves Klein – and a 'rehabilitation' of works by the eccentric Italian artist Guglielmo Achille Cavellini.

The 'Tattoo Show', on the other hand, which was organized together with Gilles Dusein from the photo gallery Urbi et Orbi, was Florence's idea. Originally – in 1992 in Paris – it contained about thirty tattoo designs by artists; the project was subsequently enlarged with several dozen suggestions, which were later shown by Daniel Buchholz in Cologne and Andrea Rosen in New York. Of course it was Florence who travelled to Chiapas with Bruno Serralongue for a meeting with Subcommander Marcos, and Florence also planned the Paris exhibition of 'trash painting' in Monica Majoli's uro style.

The preference shared by Edouard Merino and Florence Bonnefous for fiction or, to be more precise, for film scripts induced them to establish a link to cinematic films right at the beginning of their cooperation. The curator and critic Eric Troncy, who, like Nicolas Bourriaud, has assiduously accompanied the gallery right from the time of its establishment, has spoken about this: 'The Air de Paris gallery began life with a brilliant idea. The artists Philippe Parreno, Pierre Joseph and Philippe Perrin conceived *Les Ateliers du Paradise* (Paradisiacal Studio), which consisted of them living in the gallery for one month, and furnishing their living

Above, left: Florence Bonnefous and Edouard Merino in the installation *David (He doesn't turn to see her)* by Liam Gillick, 2000

Above, right: Couscous dinner at the vernissage of Shimabuku's, 'Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere', 1999



space with works of contemporary art. The atmosphere was playful, and the thought of integrating artwork into daily life and no longer admiring it as something sacred and untouchable was truly new. For me *Les Ateliers du Paradise* has real historical value.'

The opening exhibition of *Les Ateliers du Paradise*, set up as a 'film in real time', set the tone for the entire run: slaloming between a bodybuilding bench and a video game console, visitors could reach a *Big Nude* by Helmut Newton and an armchair by Ron Arad, while the artists went about their pursuits accompanied by film music from *The Big Blue*, or songs by the Sex Pistols.

This aloof relationship to cinema can also be seen in the films later produced by the gallery: *La Nuit des Héros* by Philippe Parreno and *Pinocchio Pipenose* *Householddilemma* by Paul McCarthy, or the surprising remakes by Brice Dellsperger. It can also be seen in their definite preference for 'set decor' by Sarah Morris and Lily van der Stokker.

Just as intensively as they participate in the creative processes of the artists with whom they cooperate, Edouard and Florence have also put Robert Filliou's motto into practice for themselves: 'Art is that which makes life more interesting than art.'

Eva & Adele in front of *Fernando, love graffiti* by André (for the birthday of Fernando Mesta, apprentice at Air de Paris)

In accordance with this motto, a group of artists (Olaf Breuning, Liam Gillick, Inez Van Lamsweerde and Jean-Luc Verna must be added to those already mentioned) have laid out the landscape of a very unusual gallery.

While Edouard and Florence have not (yet) realized their dream of a nomadic gallery, they do simultaneously run an Internet site that is a particularly attractive virtual space. With Eric Troncy's comical columns 'The ambassador's chocolates (our friends don't like e-sweets)', and the 'enological' tastings by their former assistant and now wine specialist Linda Grabe, it is far more than a mere gallery website. The two friends don't find this at all astonishing, but insist that they are 'permanently trying everything to fill the little enterprise with joy'.

STEPHANE CORRÉARD (WITH LILI LAXENAIRE)



View of an installation included in the group exhibition 'La Table', 1999