

**INTO**  
THE  
**FOLD**  
*LA VIE DANS LES PLIS*

**EXHIBITION**

**Paris**

8-21 January 2020

**Londres**

30 January-14 February 2020

**CHRISTIE'S**

SIMON HANTAÏ  
*Étude*, 1969

***La vie dans les plis***, a title taken from a poem by Henri Michaux, sounds like a programme for exploring the question of the fold, which has been – and continues to be – a driving force in many different forms of artistic creation. Sculptural mastery of the fold, of the drape, has been applauded and admired as an amazing feat since antiquity. It would later be showcased via painting, especially in the Renaissance when fabric and its representation became the mark of the artist's genius and skill. But what interests us here is how this fascination with the fold has been dealt with in modern and contemporary art. Simon Hantaï was fond of emphasising that 'It is possible that the history of painting is no more than a question of the fold.' It is therefore worthwhile pausing for a moment to consider the approach taken to the fold, its contemporary treatment and its multiple applications, all of which provide avenues for reflection about its appropriation by the artists of yesterday and today.



## THE FOLD, QUESTIONING TRADITIONAL FORMS OF THE MEDIUM

The question of the fold – and by extension of the act of folding – is first and foremost one of challenging traditional media, whether these be canvas, paper, photographs or any of the other supports usually used by artists. To fold a surface is to attack its integrity. This gesture disrupts our traditional notions of art-making by desanctifying a support which has until then remained immutable. Hantaï is most probably the most striking example of this investigation into the versatility of the canvas. He is, however, not the only one to have questioned the medium's seemingly fixed properties in order to better explore it. Post-War Italian artists in particular, such as Piero Manzoni, Alberto Burri and Salvatore Scarpitta, who distort, pleat and crease their canvases, desecrate the traditional painter's support all while creating a fold, an interstice which questions the artist's relationship with the medium and redefines the viewer's relationship with the work. The fold can also introduce a new dimension, a certain tension, as seen in the canvassed knots formed by the Peruvian artist Jorge Eielson. With Olga de Amaral's work, the fold – through a process of weaving – creates a rhythmic pattern, blurring the lines between painting and sculpture. The fold is used as a *détournement*, to emphasise the limits of the medium itself.

STEVEN PARRINO  
*Entropic derelict*, 1995



PIERO **MANZONI**

*Achrome*, 1958-1959

## DECONSTRUCTING WITH THE FOLD, CREATING A NEW IMAGE

If the symbolic gesture of a fold is an affront against the support itself, it is also the fruit of a creative outburst, where the artist has chosen to deconstruct in order to create. Bending certain materials or objects stems from the artist's wish to change the way in which we view our reality. In evoking this act of deconstruction, we think of César and his 'compressions', an iconic example of the wish to appropriate found objects, to which he gives a new existence, and highlighting the absurdities of consumer society. The fold deforms to create. This principle is also applied to the famous 'wrapping' of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Intervening on public monuments such as the Reichstag in Berlin or the Pont-Neuf in Paris, they've brought this question to a new dimension. The drape that wraps the building brings its disappearance whilst revealing its edges, giving it a new character. The fold acts here as a disruption. This is also the case with Steven Parrino, who, influenced by the Neo-Geo movement, appropriated monochrome and minimalist American painting to question its motives. Indeed, he repositions his paintings on the stretcher in order to create folds and accidents, challenging our understanding of the painting and the codes established by minimalism in order to criticise them. With Rudolf Stingel, the fold

becomes a plastic technique he reveals to the public. With *Instructions*, his first series, he voluntarily exposes his process in order to dissolve the mystery behind his works and to question the artist's role in the object-making. Nonetheless, and paradoxically, even with his technique revealed, his works keep their power, the folds alluding to a certain mystery despite it all. More than a formal exploration, the act of folding reveals an artistic approach which aims to give the work and material a new quality.

SAM GILLIAM  
*Bowling Cool Red 4, 1974*

## THE FOLD AS CREATIVE ACT

Folding, beyond the technical gesture done by the artist, introduces the notion of chance into artistic creation. Simon Hantai is one of the artists who went the furthest in the conceptualisation of the fold. His first 'Mariales' and 'Etudes' of the 1960s and 1970s introduced folds in his paintings, which for him bear two meanings. On one hand, he uses a distinctive technique based on chance: he folds and creases the canvas, even binds it, then paints different areas. It is only when the canvas is unfolded and stretched that the final composition is revealed. His second intention is to remove the artist from the act of creation. Here, the artist's hand on the canvas disappears, no longer visible on the surface. This radical approach is found with other artists such as Sam Gilliam, stated 'I [was] trying to free myself from the masking tape, the brush; to deal with the canvas as material by folding it, crushing it, using it as a means to a tactile way of making a painting.' In his works Gilliam folds and unfolds to create his stretched canvases, and also, in works where the fabric is draped and hanging from the wall, creates cavernous, sculptural folds that conceal part of the canvas. The fold therefore becomes something mysterious, enticing the viewer. As Gilles Deleuze wrote: 'Sometimes light vibrates colour in the pleats and crannies of matter, sometimes light vibrates in the folds of an immaterial surface'.



# GILLIAM

SAM

“ The folding created structure, movement through the work. I still do the same thing that Velázquez or Rubens or Rembrandt would have done. I think the end point is the same, but I just moved the needle. The old is refreshed by the new, the new refreshed by the old. ”





**SAM GILLIAM** (B. 1933)

*Blowing Cool Red 4*

signed and dated 'Sam Gilliam '74' (lower right);  
titled 'Blowing Cool red 4' (lower left)  
acrylic, metallic paint and collage of papers and  
canvases sewn by the artist  
75½ x 31¾ in. (75 x 81 cm.)  
Executed in 1974.



**SAM GILLIAM** (B. 1933)

*Glisten*

titled 'Glisten' (lower left); signed and  
dated 'Sam Gilliam '74' (lower right)  
oil and collage on handmade paper  
19¾ x 26in. (50.5 x 66cm.)  
Executed in 1974.



**SAM GILLIAM**  
(B. 1933)

*Coal*

signed, titled, inscribed and dated 'Coal 1978 6" x 12" Sam Gilliam' (on the reverse)  
oil and watercolour on folded handmade paper mounted on canvas laid down on panel into a Plexiglas box  
9 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 5in.  
(23.1 x 39.5 x 12.7cm.)  
Executed in 1978.



**SAM GILLIAM** (B. 1933)

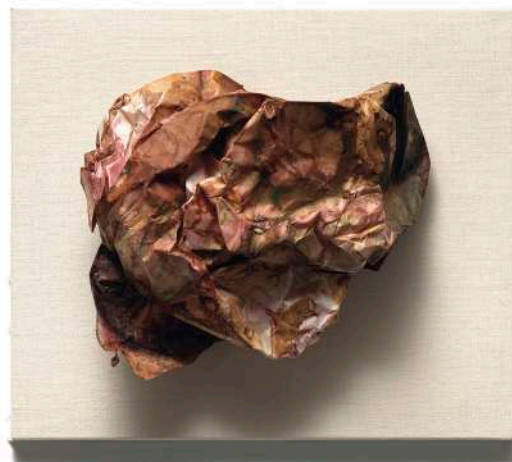
*Sweep*

signed, titled and dated 'Sweep 1978 Sam Gilliam' (on the reverse)  
oil and watercolour on folded handmade paper mounted on canvas laid down on panel into a Plexiglas box  
12 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 5in. (32 x 39.5 x 12.7cm.)  
Executed in 1978.

**SAM GILLIAM** (B. 1933)

*Early*

signed, titled and dated 'Early 1978 Sam Gilliam' (on the reverse)  
oil and watercolour on folded handmade paper mounted on canvas laid down on panel into a Plexiglas box  
12 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 5in.  
(32 x 37 x 12.7cm.)  
Executed in 1978.





# HANTAI

SIMON

“ It is possible that the history of painting is only a matter of fold. ”





**SIMON HANTAÏ** (1922-2008)

*Étude*

signed and dated twice 'Hantai 69' (on the reverse  
and on the stretcher)

oil on canvas

57¼ x 48⅞ in. (145.5 x 124 cm.)

Painted in 1969.

**SIMON HANTAÏ** (1922-2008)

*Manteau de la Vierge*

oil on canvas

22⅞ x 18½ in. (58 x 47 cm.)

Painted in 1963.



**SIMON HANTAĪ** (1922-2008)

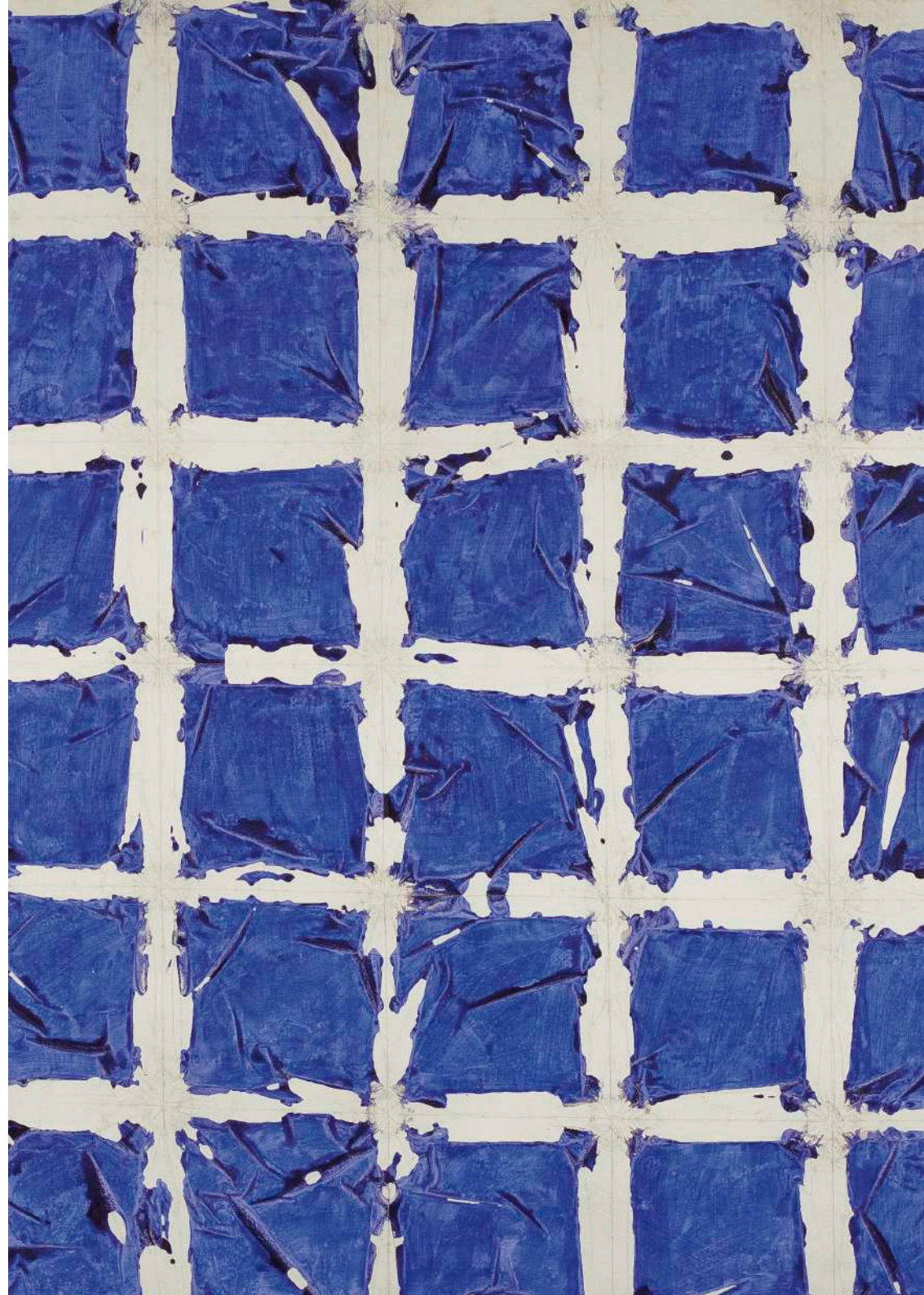
*Tabula*

signed with the artist's initials and dated 'SH. 76' (lower right)

oil on canvas

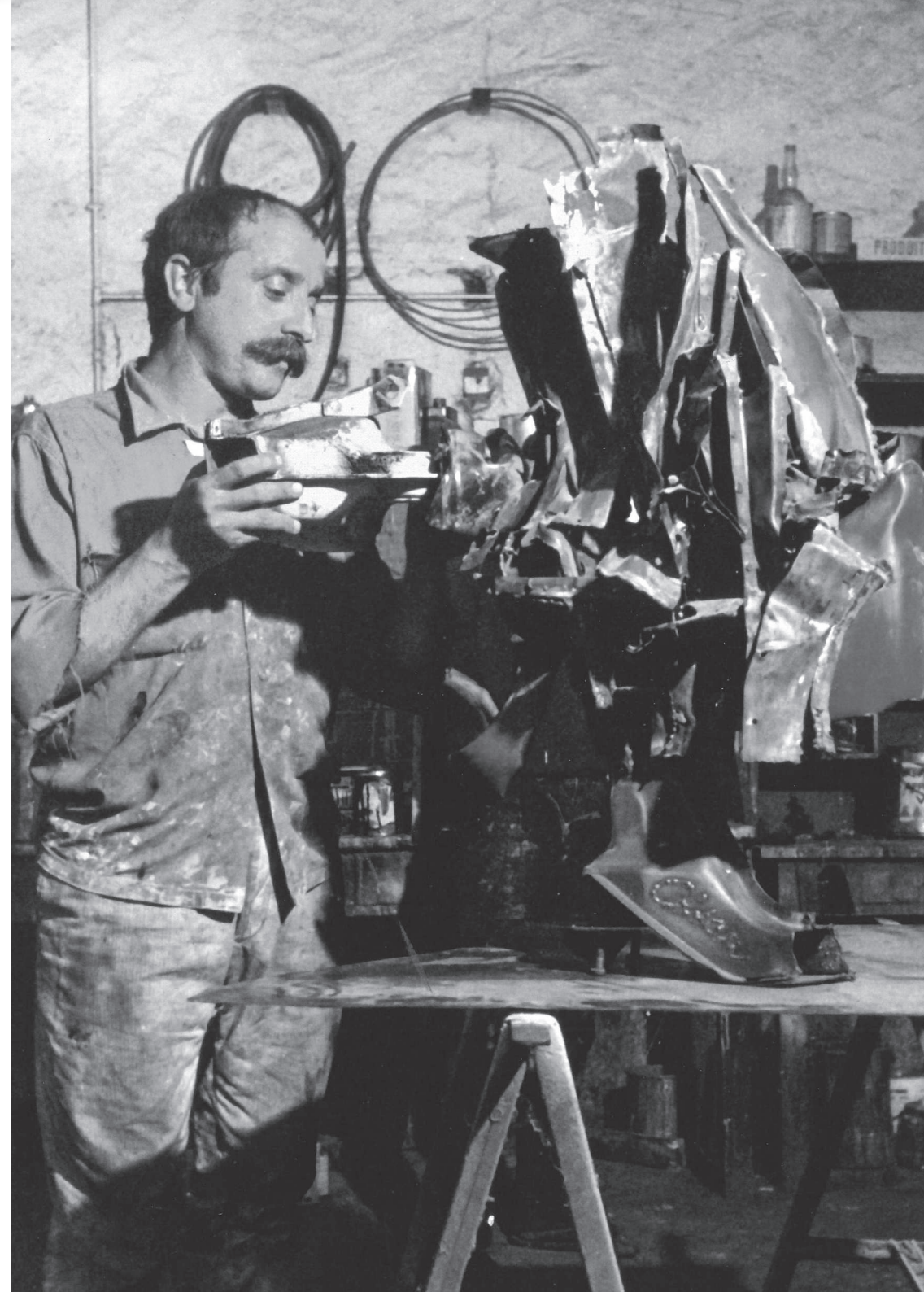
45 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 45 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (114.5 x 114.5cm.)

Painted in 1976.



# CÉSAR

“ If I found a beauty in [the compression], it's something I can't explain, it's up to me, it's a necessity, I feel it, I felt it belonged to me, I felt that after all that I had done, all the life that I have, to me it was a need, a necessity, I thought, I did not even think at the time, I acted , and only after that I thought. ”





**CÉSAR** (1921-1998)

*Compression*

signed 'César' (on the tank)  
compressed moped  
37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 32<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
(95 x 83 x 45 cm.)  
Executed *circa* 1970.



# CHRISTO

“ A wrapping is a second skin. The envelope transforms the structure into a dynamic object, which is no longer solid. ”



**CHRISTO** (NÉ EN 1935)

*Wrapped chair*

signed and dated 'Christo 1963' (on the underside)

wooden chair, plastic and ropes

39½ x 17¾ x 17¾in. (99.5 x 45 x 45cm.)

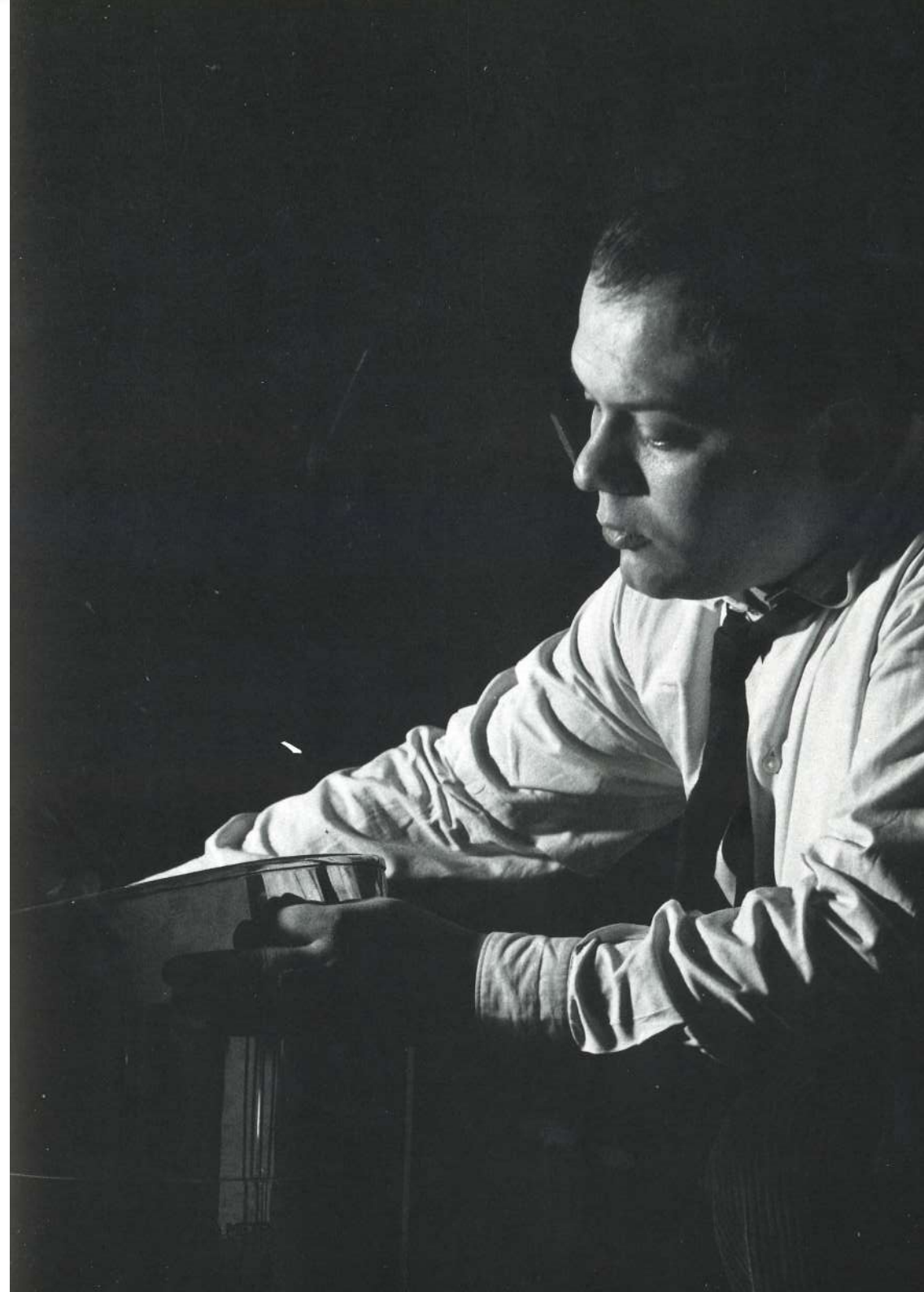
Executed in 1963.



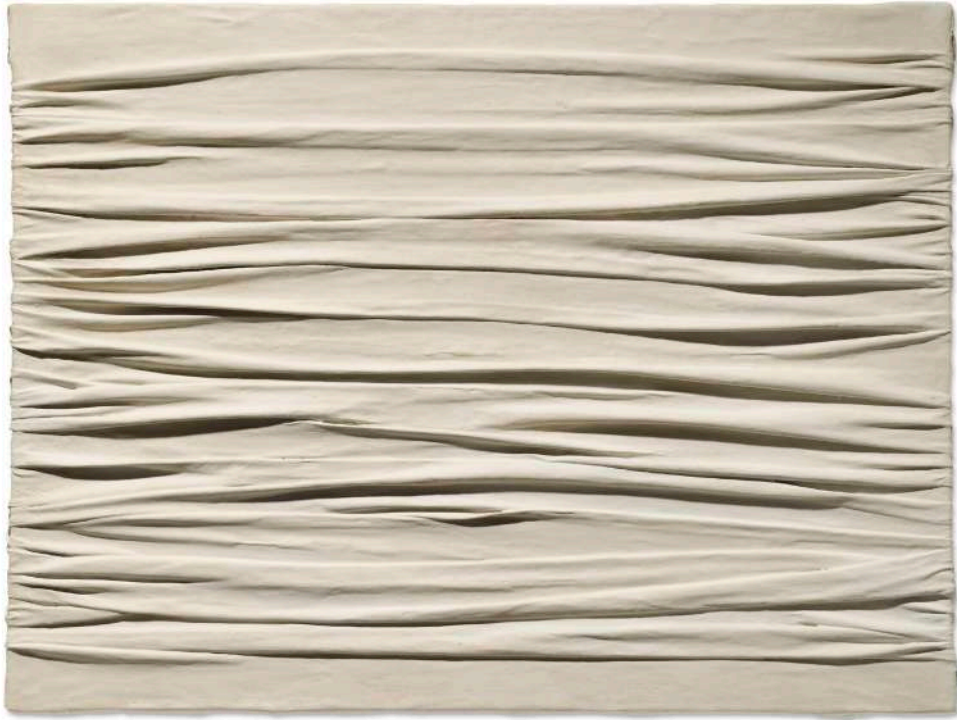
# MANZONI

PIERO

“ The question, as far as I’m concerned, is that of rendering a surface that is completely white (actually, colorless and neutral) far beyond the pictorial phenomenon, beyond any intervention extraneous to the value of the surface. ”







**PIERO MANZONI** (1933-1963)

*Achrome*

kaolin on canvas  
10 x 14in. (25.5 x 35.5cm.)  
Executed in 1958-1959.

**PIERO MANZONI** (1933-1963)

*Achrome*

kaolin on canvas  
27½ x 35½in. (70 x 90 cm.)  
Executed in 1958.



# PARRINO

STEVEN

“ So I came with a total sort of control issue that had to do with a high classical form that was as pure as I could do it, which I saw as the monochrome painting, which was the ultimate painting. And then, the thing I did was basically to bring total chaos to total control, so I destroyed... I painted a pure painting and then I destroyed it. ”

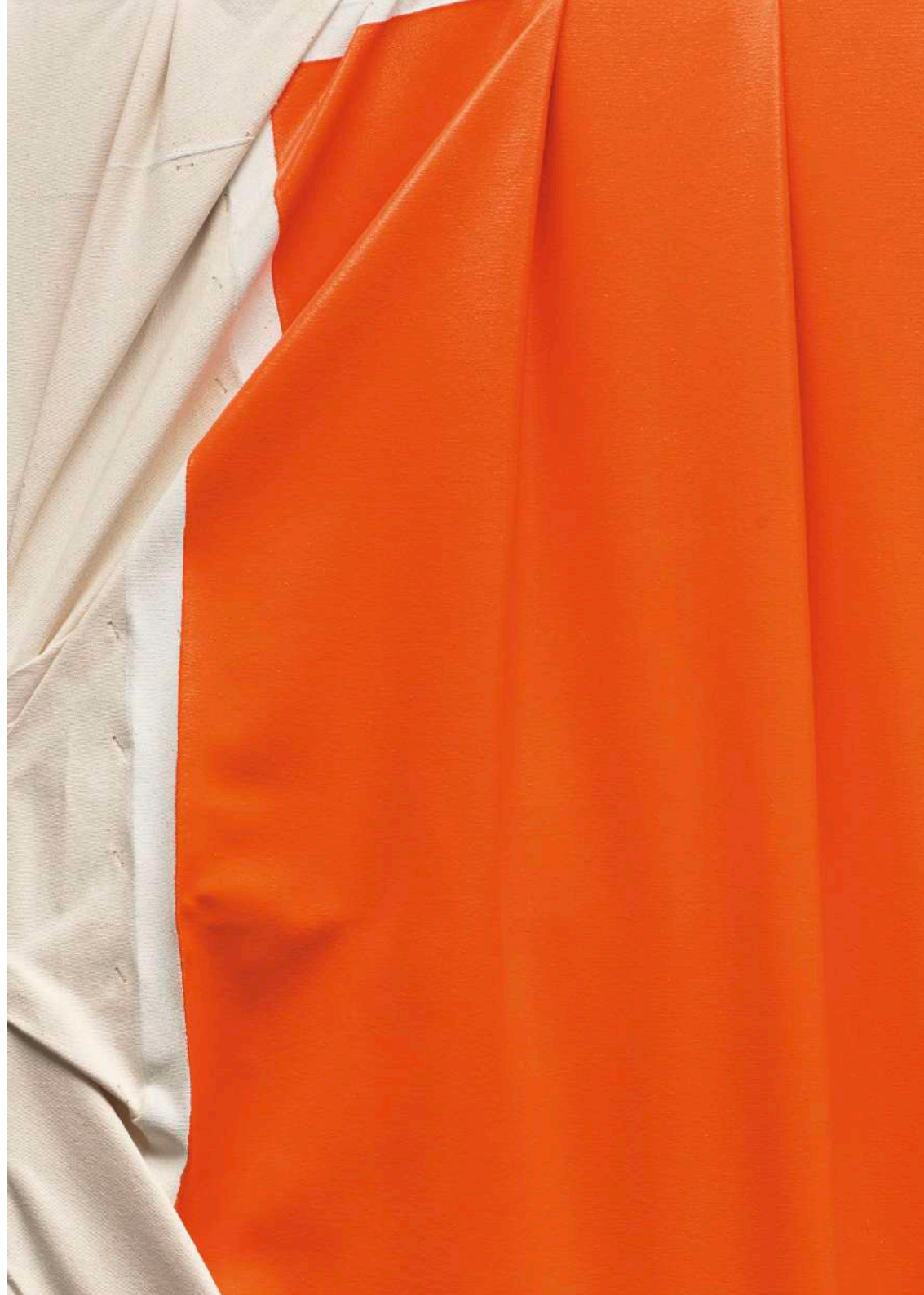




**STEVEN PARRINO** (1958-2005)

*Untitled*

signed and dated 'Steven Parrino 1991' (on the stretcher)  
enamel on canvas  
72 x 48 in. (183 x 122 cm.)  
Executed in 1991.





**STEVEN PARRINO (1958-2005)**

*Entropic derelict*

signed and dated 'St Parrino '95' (on the reverse) ;

titled 'Entropic derelict' (on the edge)

enamel on canvas

18 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (46 x 46 cm.)

Executed in 1995.



**STEVEN PARRINO (1958-2005)**

*N.Y.C.H.C.F.T.W. (New York City Hardcore  
Fuck the World)*

titled 'N.Y.C.H.C.F.T.W.' (upper left) ; signed,  
dated and inscribed 'Steven Parrino 95  
CREEPING EYE' (on the reverse)

enamel on canvas

22 x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (56 x 76.5 cm.)

Executed in 1995.

# SCARPITTA

SALVATORE

“ To staunch the flow of losing paint,  
I started to wrap them, treating  
them as if they were objects that  
had been wounded in some way or  
another, or that required healing in  
some way or another. ”





**SALVATORE SCARPITTA** (1919-2007)

*Black Sphinx*

signed, titled, inscribed and dated 'SCARPITTA  
'BLACK SPHINX' TO LOLA FOR HER BIRTHDAY  
6/13/75' (on the reverse)  
bandages and mixed media  
15½ x 17½in. (38.5 x 43.5cm.)  
Executed in 1962.

DE **AMARAL**  
OLGA

“ By penetrating the essence of the fabric, it is inevitable to look at the landscape and to be surprised by the paradox posed by the gaze: the landscape, on the other hand, begins by being perceived as an abstraction of the fabric. The idea that, in the end, the landscape is nothing more than an extension of the fabric, a veil that covers the earth, is not new today. ”





**OLGA DE AMARAL (B. 1932)**

*Resonancia II (Resonance II)*

signed twice, titled, inscribed and dated '1148 "RES-ONANCIA" II 165 x 100cm Olga OLGA DE AMARAL 2009' (on label affixed to reverse)  
acrylic, gold leaf, thread and gesso on linen  
65 x 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in. (165 x 100cm.)  
Executed in 2009.



**OLGA DE AMARAL (B. 1932)**

*Cesta Lunar 81 (Moon Basket 81)*

signed, titled, inscribed and dated twice '1318 "CESTA LUNAR 81" 195 x 135cm 2012 OLGA DE AMARAL 2012' (on label affixed to reverse)  
acrylic, gold leaf, thread and gesso on linen  
76<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 53<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>in. (195 x 135cm.)  
Executed in 2012.



# STINGEL

RUDOLF

“ I wouldn't know where to say  
intervention stops  
and destruction begins. ”





**RUDOLF STINGEL** (B. 1956)

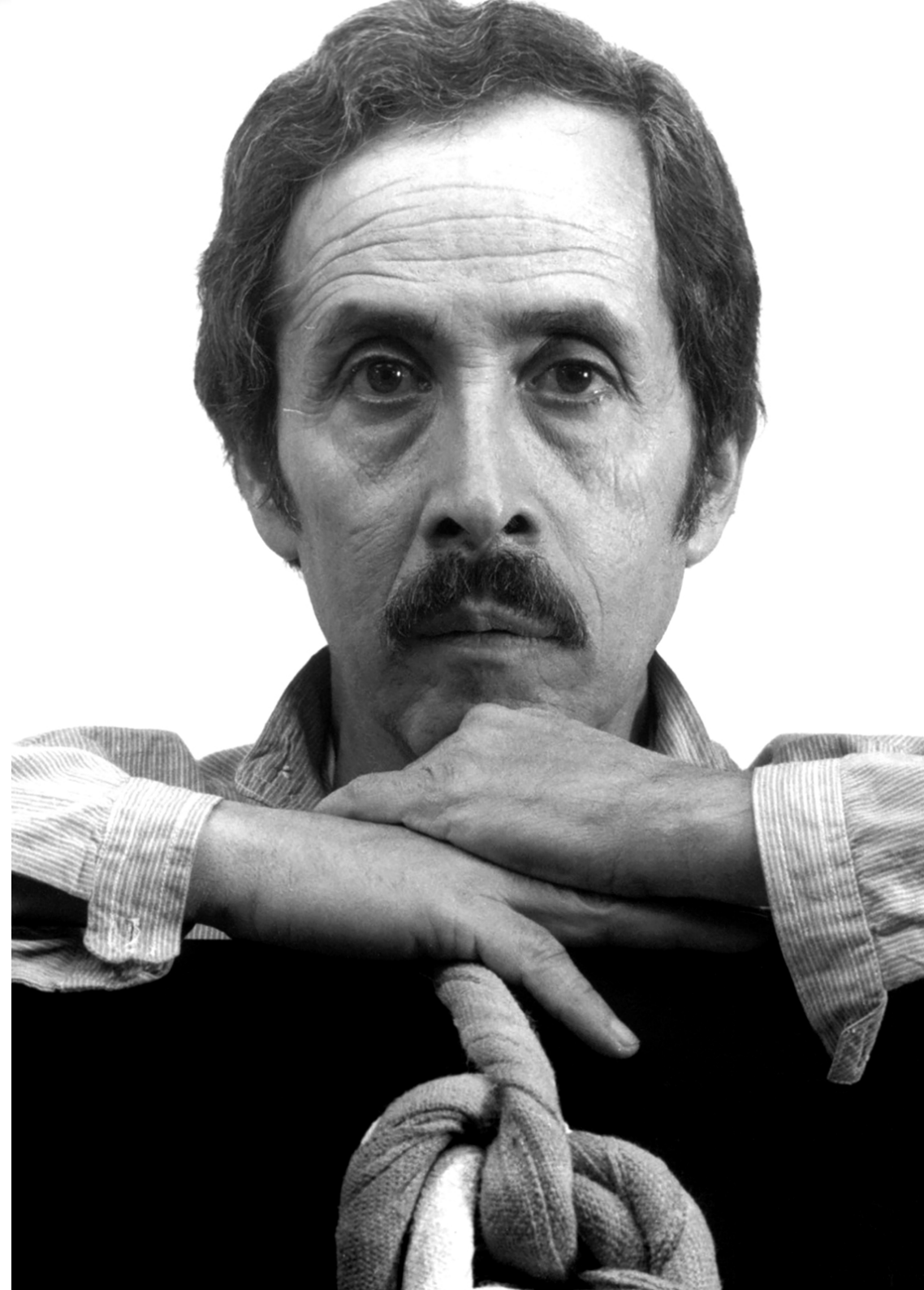
*Untitled*

signed and dated 'Stingel 2009' (on the reverse)  
oil and enamel on canvas  
95 x 76in. (241.3 x 193cm.)  
Executed in 2009.

# EIELSON

JORGE

“ Poetry is that which emerges from the encounter of the mind, the hand, the heart, and the artist’s materials. It is like a spark enclosed in all matter, even the most wretched and trivial. You only have to know how to get it out. ”





**JORGE EIELSON** (1924-2006)

*Quipus 33 T-1*

acrylic on knotted burlap mounted on board  
63 x 37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in. (160 x 96cm.)  
Executed in 1966-71.

**JORGE EIELSON** (1924-2006)

*Quipus 14 G-1*

signed 'J. Eielson' (on label affixed to reverse)  
acrylic on knotted burlap mounted on board  
43<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>in. (110 x 95 x 20cm.)  
Executed in 1966-1971.



# FLOMEN

MICHAEL

“ Traditionally, the photograph was made in pristine environments [...]. Any imperfection, even one ding in the paper, resulted in “failure.” After many decades printing in that environment, I decided I wanted to get “dirty.” [Some series] are made in part through the creative destruction of my negatives and photographic papers, all of which allow materiality to come to the forefront of the picture. ”





**MICHAEL FLOMEN** (NÉ EN 1952)

*Waterworld, No.1., 2009*

signed, stamped with the artist's monogram  
and dated (on the reverse)

gelatin silver print mounted on board

image: 52 x 41 in. (132 x 104 cm.)

framed: 56 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 45 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 3 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (144 x 115 x 8 cm.)

Executed in 2009.

# YAMAGUCHI

KATSUHIRO

“ Another thing that I’m researching now are the points when humans began using three-dimensional and two-dimensional forms of expression. [...] Even in the Lascaux caves the animal paintings there are essentially sculptural or three-dimensional representations. So I’m very interested in that and starting to research art history from this new angle. ”



**KATSUHIRO YAMAGUCHI (1928-2018)**

*Sans titre*

printed fabric and burlaps on metallic structure  
57 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 44 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (145 x 112cm.)  
Executed in 1963.





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**OLGA DE AMARAL**  
*Resonancia II (Resonance II), 2009*

No matter the technique or purpose, the fold activates the artwork, giving it life, a different and alluring presence, which bring us back to Henri Michaux:

### Emplie de

Emplie de moi  
Empli de toi.  
Emplie des voiles sans fin de vouloirs obscurs.  
Emplie de plis.  
Emplie de nuit.  
Emplis des plis indéfinis, des plis de ma vigie.

||

*La Vie dans les plis,*  
**Henri Michaux**

RUDOLF **STINGEL**  
*Untitled, 2009*





CHRISTIE'S

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