ALMINE RECH

Lacan, l'exposition

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The ideas of Jacques Lacan are, alongside the work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, essential for understanding our contemporary world. While homages and exhibitions have already examined most of these intellectual figures, the thought of Lacan has not been dealt with in museums to date, even though he was strongly attached to works of art. In a text devoted to the work of Marguerite Duras, Lacan declared that "in his materials, the artist always [...] precedes him [the analyst] and so he does not have to play the psychologist where the artist has paved the way for him" ("Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras du Ravissement de Lol V Stein" (1965), *Autres écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001).

Curated by Marie-Laure Bernadac and Bernard Marcadé, the exhibition at the Centre Pompidou-Metz will be the first dedicated to Jacques Lacan.
Over 40 years after the psychoanalyst's death, it seemed urgent to plan an exhibition highlighting the unique links between Jacques Lacan and art, by putting into perspective the works he himself referenced, the artists who paid tribute to him, as well as the modern and contemporary works that can provide an echo to the great conceptual orientations of his thought.

Lacan opened up an innovative space that is at the heart of our modernity and of our contemporary experience. Today we are debating issues of sex, love, identity, gender, power, belief or disbelief, all questions for which the psychoanalyst provided precious reference points.

The visit should be seen and experienced as a journey through specifical Lacanian notions, beginning with the mirror stage, which has fascinated so many artists and film-makers. Then, the exhibition evokes the concept of Lalangue, a word invented by Lacan to describe a form and function of language that is more closely linked to what the psychoanalyst called the Real, and which echoes the work of artists who have played with words, double meanings, babbling and even the language of birds, while not forgetting its links with poetry. The Name of the Father section will be a chance to rethink the notion of patriarchy. Next, is a section on object *a*, Lacan's invention to describe the object that is the cause of desire as a lack, remainder and fall. It will be deployed in a range of variations: fall, phallus, breast, body fragments, shit, voice, nothing, gaze and lastly hole.

The chapter devoted to Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* will be a crucial part of the visit. Lacan and his wife Sylvia bought the painting in 1955. They kept it hidden behind a panel designed by André Masson. It has given rise to many contemporary interpretations. Although Lacan never spoke about the Courbet he owned, he devoted four lessons in his Seminar XIII to analysing *Las Meninas* by Diego Velásquez, and also refers to the *Portrait of the Infanta Maria Marguerita* in the Louvre. This section is a celebration of the painting, an icon of the very act of painting, which Lacan analysed in detail, even pointing out the slit inserted into the Infante's dress

The Woman does not exist section is dedicated to Lacan's famous phrase, underlining the fact that there is no essence of woman, and shows the works of artists questioning misogynous representations. Femininity is often multifaceted, and the masquerade section will pay homage to Joan Riviere's concept, which was taken up by Lacan. The masquerade is featured in the work of many modern and contemporary artists making use of transvestism, confirming Lacan's position that anatomy is not destiny, meaning that gender does not necessarily correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

According to Lacan's famous phrase, There are no sexual relations. This is the name of a section organised around a replica of Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, where the bride's enjoyment of pleasure in the upper realm occurs without any physical contact with the bachelors in the lower realm.
For Lacan, love is "what replaces the absence of sexual relations" (*Encore*, Seminar, Book XX, text edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, Seuil, 1975), but is also what opens the way to jouissance or enjoyment – "Only love causes jouissance to stoop to desire" (*L'Angoisse*, Seminar Book X, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, Seuil, 2004). A section will explore "enjoyment", female pleasure, first of all, epitomised in the mystical transports expressed in Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* and its contemporary incarnations in the works of Anselm Kiefer, ORLAN, and even the performances of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

The last years of the psychoanalyst's teaching were largely devoted to topology, to Borromean knots, Möbius strips and Klein bottles.
The last section of the exhibition reflects both Lacan's interest in the knots and braiding produced by François Rouan, an artist he met at the Villa Médicis, and for whom he wrote a text, and the influence of Lacan's topological preoccupations on contemporary artists. The visit concludes with a cabinet of curiosities, entitled Curiosa, showing how the figure of Jacques Lacan is still an endless source of inspiration for the artists of our time.

As an introduction to the exhibition, a detailed biography recalls the main stages in the life and work of Jacques Lacan. Visitors come into contact with his person and voice from the entrance, via his only television appearance, filmed by the young Benoît Jacquot in 1974. This part of the exhibition will mention his training with the man he considered as "his only teacher in psychiatry" (*Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966), Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault; his relations with the avant-garde (Salvador Dalí, André Masson, Georges Bataille, Pablo Picasso, Dora Maar) and with the intellectual figures he was in contact with (Alexandre Kojève, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roman Jakobson, Henri Lévi-Strauss, Martin Heidegger, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault).
His love of calligraphy and Chinese thought is also mentioned.

Lacan had a close relationship with the art and artists of the 20th century and constantly delved into the art of all ages in his teaching. He discussed art in new and unusual ways, attracting, intriguing and provoking many contemporary artists. He saw art works not only as having the power to show us the world, but also as dazzling *viewpoint-objects* taking aim at viewers.
By devoting an exhibition to Jacques Lacan, we want to gather a wide range of viewpoints about this fascinating figure.

All this is far removed from a psychoanalytical interpretation of artists. The psychoanalyst is quite the opposite of a master: he or she is a student of art, docile to art's original truths, and aiming to decipher the previously unsuspected knowledge it contains. That is why this exhibition is not only a homage to psychoanalysis: it also celebrates what remains behind, after all elucidation, the mystery of art. Lacan, at the end of his life, saw things no differently.