



Sans titre (detail), 1985. Acrylic on paper mounted on cardboard mounted on stretcher. 31 7/8 x 39 3/8 inch. ©Schneider / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the Estate of Gérard Schneider and Perrotin.

GÉRARD SCHNEIDER

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

October 27 - December 22, 2023

Perrotin is pleased to present *Rhapsody in Blue*, the first exhibition of work by Gérard Schneider in the United States in over a half-century. Pioneer of Lyrical Abstraction, Schneider's aesthetic is raw and vibrant, physical and unrestrained, reflecting his intention to translate pure emotion into painting. The works on view will span Schneider's almost seven decades long career, focusing specifically on the artist's relationship with the color blue.

Rhapsody in Blue

In 1924, George Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue*, using a highly innovative approach to music composition.¹ Rooted in its time, it incorporated elements of jazz and popular music, effectively conveying the challenges of musical creation and the necessity of staying in touch with the truth and reality of the world.

In a similar manner, Gérard Schneider revolutionized European post-war abstraction two decades later. In 1946, two exhibitions in Paris heralded

major upheavals in abstract painting: *1ère exposition de Domela Hartung Schneider* at the Salle du centre des recherches de la rue Cujas and *Peintures abstraites: Dewasne, Deyrolle, Marie Raymond, Hartung, Schneider* at gallery Denise René. These exhibitions propelled a group of young abstract painters to the forefront of the art scene, who quickly made a name for themselves by offering a radically new take on the notion of abstraction.

Schneider was soon regarded as the leader of this so-called "lyrical" abstraction. His first solo exhibition was held at the Lydia Conti gallery in Paris from April 25 to May 17, 1947. Art critics and the art world in general were quick to recognize his work's international appeal, leading to his first solo museum exhibition in Germany in 1952.²

New York

Gérard Schneider's work was first exhibited in New York at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1949.³ This seminal exhibition marked the beginning

¹ *Rhapsody in Blue* premiered on February 12, 1924, at Aeolian Hall in New York. It was presented under the title *An Experiment in Modern Music*, with George Gershwin himself at the piano.

² *Gérard Schneider, Paris*, [July 1952], Studio für Zeitgenössische Kunst – Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany.

³ *Painted in 1949, European and American Painters*, October 10 – 29, 1949, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, NY, USA.



Sans titre, 1972. Acrylic on canvas. 86^{5/8} × 59^{1/16} inch. ©Schneider / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of The Estate of Gérard Schneider and Perrotin.



Opus 85 i, 1969. Acrylic on canvas. 39^{3/8} × 31^{7/8} inch. Photographer: Tanguy Beurdeley. ©Schneider / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the Estate of Gérard Schneider and Perrotin.

of a long and fruitful relationship between the Swiss-born French painter and New York City. Starting in the late 1940s, Schneider exhibited regularly in the United States, especially in New York. He was featured in the traveling exhibition *Advancing French Art* in 1951-1952,⁴ which obtained an exceptional reception in New York and marked an important moment in the encounter between American and European abstraction. In 1955, New York gallery owner Samuel Kootz exhibited Schneider for the first time.⁵ His first solo exhibition at Kootz Gallery in 1956 was a public and critical success, introducing the American public to a powerful, gestural painting style that impressed with its strength and presence.⁶

“Gérard Schneider... accelerates at a rapid rate his broad, bold brush strokes. Or else, he slows them down to being almost motionless. In any case, his foot is always on the accelerator... Schneider manipulates his speed with great mastery. Forms plunge and color, rich, sumptuous, switches on and off like the lamp of a lighthouse.”
— Stuart Preston, *The New York Times*, April 15, 1956

Working closely with Samuel Kootz, Schneider had five solo exhibitions in New York.⁷ Kootz was one of the great promoters of European abstraction in the United States, and it was through him that some of Schneider’s major works found their way into the collections of major North American museums.

“I think you and Pierre [Soulages] are the two men I am most confident in today.” Samuel Kootz in a letter to Gérard Schneider, March 25, 1957.

4 Organized by New York gallery Louis Carré, the exhibition featured five major works by Gérard Schneider, alongside works by Jean Bazaine, Maurice Estève, Hans Hartung, André Lansky, Charles Lapicque, Pierre Soulages, and Nicolas de Staël. The exhibition was shown at the following venues: Philips Gallery, Washington; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville; University of Indiana, Bloomington; Baltimore Museum of Art; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City.

Blue Abstraction

“It is necessary to reach transcendence, to go beyond oneself, to go beyond nature, to go beyond the object to create a work that is original and autonomous, whose subject comes from interiority and not from representation, which is without figurative allusion.” – Gérard Schneider.

From 1945 onwards, Schneider abandoned any reference to the real, advocating an autonomous abstraction wholly detached from any “figurative allusion.” He nonetheless drew on his deep knowledge of the old masters and the history of twentieth-century artistic trends to enrich his pictorial language and vocabulary: form, gesture, and color.

Schneider was an exceptional colorist, confident in his ability to work with assemblages of color, create contrasts, and make spaces come alive with color. Blue, a color that carries immense symbolic and emotional weight, occupies a special place in his work. For Schneider, blue must always resonate with a warm color, as it is a space in its own right. It is much more than the obvious symbolism of air or water; it is the opening – the royal road – to the metaphysical dimension of color, the path to abstraction.

— Christian Demare

More information about the artist >>>

5 *Recent French Acquisitions: Soulages, Mathieu, Schneider, Dubuffet, Fauves*, October 1955, Gallery Kootz, New York, NY, USA.

6 *Gérard Schneider, New Paintings* (April 9 – May 5, 1956), Galerie Kootz, New York, NY, USA.

7 *Gérard Schneider, New Paintings* (April 9 – May 5, 1956), *New Paintings by Gérard Schneider* (March 4 – 23, 1957), *Schneider* (March 11 – 29, 1958), *Gérard Schneider* (September 29 – October 17, 1959), *Gérard Schneider* (January 24 – February 11, 1961).