

**"ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS IN THE STUDIO" BETWEEN ARTIST
JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT & MARIE-MADELEINE VARET
PHILOSOPHER | 8 PARTS | BESANÇON STUDIO | Friday
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Bassard**

**1/8: STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF MY PAINTINGS (1/2) |
PAINTINGS IN FRANCE (1984-1991) - [Watch the video](#)**

Jean-Pierre Sargent: Hello everyone, today is Friday, November 3rd 2017, and we have the great honour to welcome our friend Marie-Madeleine Varet who came especially by TGV from Paris this morning. So we could discuss the history of my works. Handling sound today, we have Christine Chatelet, and Lionel Georges filming on camera. We're going to start this interview by talking about the:

**THE ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF MY
PAINTINGS**

JPS: I realised during the development of this crazy artistic adventure, I started to work on the square format about thirty years ago and it turns out that currently, I still work with the square. So, we'll look at some old pictures from the portfolios and add them during the editing of the video. So that people may see what it is all about. Marie-Madeleine, I'll introduce you to this! And then, of course, you join in whenever you want! In 1984, I worked on small formats like this rectangular, where I compared two colours, for example a cadmium yellow with a black. Or a vertical blue line, then at some point I started working on small square formats, which we see here in the portfolio and which of course we will show in more detail...! These were small formats that were twenty-two by twenty-two centimetres. It's pretty small, it's about the same size as my new silkscreen prints now! But I also worked on large formats that were 1.30 x 1.30 m at the time. And it so happens that I am currently working on formats that are 1.40 x 1.40 m, so it has changed very little over time... And so it's been more than 30 years!

Marie-Madeleine Varet: So this is work from New York?

JPS: No, these are works that I was doing on my farm in Charquemont (France).

MMV: Was it in France?

JPS: Yes, so I've been working on the square format for thirty years. After this square format, I worked on panel paintings (polyptych).

THE POLYPTYCHS PAINTINGS

JPS: I have never been satisfied with a simple (one) work, with a simple masterpiece and always wanted to gather different energies, for example, here we see: white, yellow and in the middle a red, it is a little phallic like that! It was always a confrontation between two spaces and a third space, it is a bit like the trinity.

MMV: In verticality?

JPS: In verticality, there you go, absolutely. So these are really my first abstract works. And then after that, I continued this abstraction and verticality by working on columns.

THE COLUMNS PAINTINGS

JPS: Here we see the columns which are made up of five modules. My inspiration was of course American painters like Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko and of course Pollock in gestures. In the ejaculation of the painting on the canvas. These are the last works that I did in France. I also started to reintegrate press clippings and painted on them.

THE PRESS CLIPPINGS

JPS: With letters, some symbols like that! We'll show this in more detail in the video. I want to talk now about the Montreal paintings: I moved to Montreal in 1991.

MMV: Ah there you go, progress....

THE COLUMNS ON PLEXIGLASS PAINTINGS (1991-1993)

MMV: We find the columns again!

JPS: So, I worked on the columns and the anecdote made the Toronto gallery owner who wanted to work with me and didn't accept that I worked with Masonite. Because I was working on Masonite at the time. So, I had to think long and hard to find a material that was as stable as Masonite (same thickness) and that was also acid-free. I thought about Plexiglas, so at first I really worked on Plexiglas.

MMV: Yes, yes, yes, yes...

JPS: And then the idea came to me to paint the back side and now I paint only behind the Plexiglas. So there we see these great columns which are 2.50 x 0.50 m. I also continued to work on abstract paintings on canvas.

MMV: Oh, there, there!

THE LARGE ABSTRACTS PAINTINGS

JPS: And in four parts there were numbers. It is a bit like a spiritual dimension, a spiritual awakening of consciousness. They were also spaces where one can enter with his body, because they are really large canvases (2.80 x 2.24 m). Now we see that too, it's also a great series!

THE GATES OF HEAVEN (1991-1993)

JPS: So I still have the red-blue, black-white confrontation. And after that, I started to reintegrate the press clippings This is the last abstract painting I made in Montreal, which is about: 2.76 x 2.76 m.

MMV: Always on the same support?

JPS: No, it's on canvas! I worked with the contrasts between the thick, rough, heavy, matter and the plane, smooth, painted surface with some matte wax. And I remained in front of this paintings for approximately fifteen days...! And I said to myself: I can work like that on variations ad infinitum, but that's not what I want to do! From this painting on, I reintegrated some images and figurative elements like press clips.

MMV: So that's what I'm so passionate about, this kind of movement that you've reversed a little bit from the more classic tradition. From line and

abstract to much more figurative forms.

JPS: But, while keeping the framework of abstraction.

MMV: You integrate more figurative elements into this structure which is very geometric. Which stays, which remains.

JPS: Yes, absolutely! It is square shaped already, you see that.

MMV: Can you say a few words about what led you to evolve in this way?

JPS: Well, while living in Montreal I was confronted with a totally different culture, of course far from my family, far from my friends. And then I was also missing the physical presence of others, I felt alone. Maybe the absence of the woman's body also. As a result, I was missing a reference point. Abstraction was a lonely way, very lonely.

MMV: Yes and more difficult!

JPS: Yes, more difficult.

MMV: Barebones a bit in any case!

JPS: Barebones, and then I knew the life of many abstract painters, and Rothko for example, at the end of his life his paintings are superb, but he still killed himself. So for me, abstraction is a non-issue, for me personally.

MMV: But it's related to a kind of despair, dereliction, isolation?

JPS: Yes, undoubtedly, yes.

MMV: And as a result this desire to reintegrate more organic, more human forms is the result of this personal experience.

JPS: Yes, quite so, yes, yes!

MMV: All right, I had no idea.

JPS: And, add also contemporaneusness and press clippings. I was gluing pieces of newspapers. We see one here!

QUESTION INEVITABLE QUESTION

JPS: So, I bought the New York Times on Sundays and cut out the articles I was interested in. Now we see a supermodel! And I put Scotch tape on it and I painted with acrylic on cardboard. We can already see the Velcro that I will use a lot afterward. So I did all this work there. And then we'll get to the series with figures and press articles. I was going downstairs to 40-60 St Laurent where my landlord had a press shop where they could make photocopies. I enlarged the photocopies to the format, sometimes I made them in color. And it's a great series with numbers. Here we also see Leo Castelli, he was a friend, a New York gallery owner. So that's it, and I worked on these large formats where the body took its dimension in the painting.

MMV: Yes, there is a reintegration of the organic and the human!

JPS: Yes, because in Montreal I discovered the immensity, the space.

MMV: Yes, wide open spaces!

JPS: It is rather strange that we no longer feel that at all in Europe. But, that you can feel in the United States. Then I really understood American painting when I arrived in Montreal. So there are the patterns that we have already seen together. Then let's talk about... It's also paintings in Montreal where I started to mix the aluminum and lead or copper strips on which I silk screened images. There we see top models again, mixed with prehistoric drawings of the Valley of the Wonders of Nice. So, that's it, and I worked on these large

formats where the body took its dimension in the painting. And so on these plates which were very smooth, and around that, I integrated thick paint with construction nets. It gave me objects, it is the beginning of the Sculpture-Objects.

THE SCULPTURES-OBJECTS

MMV: We go from the absolute plane to the matter that emerges there!

JPS: The matter emerges, yes! There we see images of horses, that is a band of lead and it is on unmounted canvases. This is the beginning of screen printing, as it is in Montreal where I started the screen printing process. These are also great canvases, which are probably two and a half meters high with copper bands and skulls. And these are the first assemblies of work on Plexiglas on the walls. Here is a plane. And after that I made the columns, from Plexiglas waste.

MMV: Plexiglas!

JPS: Of Plexiglas and that's when I started to screen print in a very playful way, press articles that I transferred by screen printing. So I hand these up on the wall with pins. And sometimes I put it all the way up on a wall. This is the beginning of the assemblies on the wall, these paintings on Plexiglas. And then here it is, so after that we see other series with cardboard and then we come to New York. There are also assemblies of Plexiglas with pictures of paintings, trees, and water.

2/8: STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF MY PAINTINGS (2/2) | PAINTINGS IN NEW YORK (1993-2003) - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: The Object-Paintings which you love so very much.

MMV: Yes, the use, coexistence of different materials with completely different densities and reflections.

MMV: And I think it's wonderful because there's the magic of the totem pole, in these very magical elements, magical objects.

JPS: I have one that I will go and fetch. For these are many things which I was gathering in the street. And we find this system of solar swastika that rotates, and the silkscreens that are integrated on the Plexiglas. And there I had a stapler, so I put the stapler in and bound it with a strip of lead, which holds the whole thing together. It is indeed a desire for cohesion, as we have spoken a little about before. I want to make a cohesive system where everything is part of the whole!

MMV: As we find elsewhere... Absolutely, there is a kind of permanence of this need in you.

JPS: Yes, to be cohesive. Of course my influence at that time... I really liked Jasper Johns' work, especially these Targets. I found that they had a very primitive presence. And, of course, all the objects I saw at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Natural History in New York, influenced me a lot to do this work. So there is this and we're going to arrive at my second workshop in New York. This was my studio in DUMBO, Brooklyn, where I even painted on fridge doors! They were mostly recovered items, most of the time.

We'll start to see how the Plexiglas got together. I began to assemble small panels like this on Plexiglas and assemble them into a shape, a square structure the assembly of the Plexiglas modules on the wall. So, there was also emptiness spaces that interpenetrated like that. And I decided one day to put these squares together, to put them together on the wall to form a greater whole. This was an exhibition I had made in Paris. It is the beginning of the work on Plexiglas. And from that time on, I only work with Plexiglas and silkscreen prints on paper.

MMV: And my question is: from that moment that you created the first module, perfect, the perfect square? The magnificent structure you are still developing today. This passage from unity to cohabitation, confrontation, the intimate proximity of these different modules next to each other. With very discordant, very dissonant, very screaming and very contrasting themes and motifs. That really amaze us all. Is it this discordance itself that calls and generates unity and harmony? Did you feel in your mind, originally, when you made these first modules and wanted to reproduce them, that you could afford this audacity? Extraordinary which is to make pages cohabit like in a big book, on the left I have a Proust page, on the right I have a pornographic manga? With this audacity you had to present this vision of your world to us?

JPS: Yes, I think my body intuitively looked for a system in which it could develop, because I am the one who makes the paintings. It is very adapted to my body, the modules are 1.05 by 1.05 m, I am 1.72 m, so it is really the golden number of my body (1.05 m at the navel). And I wanted absolutely a neutral system in which I could put anything.

MMV: That's it!

JPS: I can put all that I desire, all my desire in there, into the structure.

MMV: That's right, you're pouring out all your energy, it's something that flows like a stream that has no barrier and no dam.

JPS: Yes, indeed, exactly.

MMV: And the other question that concerned me a lot is that in the previous works, the Small Papers, there is a frame, a border, a limit, you were talking about it earlier. And in the expansion of your work on the large murals, indeed, we realize that it makes the frame and the limits explode, and therefore this work, we have the feeling that precisely it is absolutely not finished!

JPS: Absolutely, it is a work in progress!

MMV: It is totally expanding in space. And that's wonderful, but it's voluntary in you?

JPS: Of course, yes, because I do not like finished things, I do not like masterpieces, I want it to continue in time!

MMV: On the other hand, if you want to isolate one of the modules, you will present it with...

JPS: The sacred frame!

MMV: The sacred frame which is the perimeter actually very ancient, in the Indian tribes we find this sacred perimeter. Which you also symbolized by checkers.

JPS: Checkerboard yes, alternative colours: yellow-red, black-yellow...

MMV: That's it, so it happened in New York, this will to blow up everything?

JPS: Yes, it was in my DUMBO workshop that I developed it. Because I wanted to find a system that could be as strong as that of the "primitive" artists in quotation marks. Their works impress me the most. And I asked myself, Why? At that time, there were perhaps two hundred thousand artists in New York and yet no artist is capable of doing something so strong? So I had to find a formal structure, which could allow me to speak of sex, death, colors, ejaculations...

MMV: Totally, in a totally free way of expression! It's like your body, your human being, your mixed feelings, which are intertwined, which clash... Because there is a lot of violence in this cohabitation!

JPS: This is the violence of life!

MMV: That's it!

3/8 ABOUT THE SILK-SCREENING TECHNIQUE - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: We are now entering the third part of our discussion, and I would have liked to mention the process of screen printing that I use on a daily basis to print either on Plexiglas or on paper. So I wanted to talk about... and make a statement that I feel like a painter more than a silkscreen printer, because painting is spreading a color on a surface, and that's exactly what you do with the silkscreen printing process. And it's often a pejorative term, because one says: the guy is a screen printer, so he's not an artist really. Or I really do feel like a painter and claim this notion of being a painter, because I use painter's inks, acrylics. So I wanted to explain this process a little bit: screen printing is that: we have a fabric like that, a nylon fabric, very solid. Of course you have to be careful not to drill it, but it's very strong and these meshes are mounted on frames, frames like that where they are stretched. That's what I did at work in New York, I stretched frames! Once these meshes are stretched on the frame, they are coated with photosensitive emulsion. And then we use positive films that block the light. So there we see, for example, a large film for the large silkscreen screens. This is a different technique for the small formats, I print the films directly with my printer.

MMV: So it's two different approaches?

JPS: For films yes! But all images are initially designed on a computer. With two software programs called Photoshop and Illustrator. Of course, the images must be black or transparent, there is no grey to print.

MMV: Monochrome?

JPS: So these are all the silkscreen films and all the films I used this summer to print my new series, the *Shakti-Yoni*, *Ecstatic Cosmic Dances*. So then, once you have these images on a screen, well, I use the table over there, it's a table I brought back from New York that belonged to Andy Warhol, who printed his silkscreens on it. It goes like this: you put the paper underneath, or the Plexiglas, you put the card like that, of course you have to adjust and fix the position with the film. And then we take a color, put it there and pass it like that with a squeegee. It's really the stencil technique. I find this process a little magical in every step. The films must also be exposed in the light table. There is a magical side to developing images. There is also a sensual side, because

having to touch it is very sensual and in addition I use erotic images!

MMV: So you have like an image inventory? From which you regularly draw, according to your inspiration....

JPS: Yes, I collect these images as I discover them. Either it's pictures I've taken before, nature or things like that. Or drawings that I collect. I also work a lot on patterns, geometric patterns.

MMV: Repetitive?

JPS: I love to work in seriality.

MMV: I really liked the series of videos you were able to film with our dear Christine, from the Artist at work with all these gestures. There is a kind of ceremony, it is very beautiful to see, there is a ritual, it is almost liturgical. There is something very fascinating, and I think there have been a lot of them, you have made a lot of video series of the Artist at Work.

JPS: Yes, quite so.

MMV: And we see this face which is totally concentrating, the intensity of the gesture and the pleasure, and you were therefore talking about the sensuality that there is in this gesture. Which also corresponds well to what your work is, which is still an ode to sensoriality I would even say. Because all the senses are called upon in this work. There is smell, there is sight, there is breathing, contact, touch. So, that's why I was very interested in this series of the Artist at Work.

JPS: Thank you!

MMV: To show to what extent there is an implication of matter, inspiration, of the whole body, and it is true that sensuality shows through.

JPS: Yes !

MMV: And there are also some very nice pictures of you, thanks to Christine for giving back how much you have... this role, finally there is something very internal and very organic in these videos. I think it's a great way to show us what you've already given to us see.

JPS: Yes, but I think that the act of creating is a cosmic act, a demiurgic act! We will talk about it a little in the next parts. But I really feel connected, precisely with Nature, with the Universe.

MMV: And it shows! I think that's what these videos do very well, this kind of unity of the artist, the world, the flesh and the spirit.

JPS: Yes, absolutely!

MMV: There is a very, very beautiful symbiosis. I like it very much!

JPS: Thank you Marie-Madeleine! That's it!

4/8: THE FIRST SILKSCREEN PRINTS ON PAPER FROM NEW YORK (1994-1999) - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: So we're now going into this fourth part, where I wanted to introduce you to the first serigraphs I made in New York. Where I really integrate some rather sexual things and I wanted to start by quoting some excerpts from texts, for example this sentence by Henri Michaux who says :
"Ecstasy is cooperation with the divine creation of the world."

It's in *The Turbulent Infinite*. This book is very interesting. And my work is based mainly on ecstasy, whether sexual or spiritual ecstasies. And then I also wanted to talk about the book: *Eroticism and the sacred*, by Philippe Camby: "To enter the divine world, which is his true homeland, the soul must be drawn by love."

It is true that desire and love are really what leads us to another place and makes us live, both make us live! And I also wanted to end with this quote in *L'Érotisme* from Georges Bataille, it is a very interesting book to read, he says: "On the contrary, my intention is to consider in eroticism an aspect of the inner life, if you will, of man's religious life."

It happens that the West has completely dissociated sexuality from religious life, it considers it in complete opposition. And I don't really know why, in New York, I started to integrate these erotic images back into my work. So I'm going to present you with some serigraphs, and then we can discuss them.

MMV: And all your work connects these two parts which are arbitrarily dichotomous and which you bring together in a unity that is totally important.

JPS: Yes, so at first, I was working on the Art News Paper, for example. I printed two or three images like this and gave a little felt on it. To get the today news and then the image of the female model. These are serigraphs of photos I took in churches, here in France I think? with Japanese graffiti drawings. And then I thought it was beautiful: Adam and Eve like that with a big dick in the middle! I thought it was funny! This is on Japanese paper, it's also very erotic images, sometimes even pornographic. At that time, I also started working with erotic texts. On paper, it is printed backwards, but as it was printed on the back of the Plexiglas... With images of erotic Greek vases also, very ancient, old images. It's a drawing I made like that... The goddess Durga dressed with a bone lace that she wears on her belly like that. With a vulva and a penis. The same here in white. We'll talk later about the joy in the erotic act. And already at that time I was incorporating images from Indian civilizations. That's a time pattern. I put fingerprints and then nets. This is the beginning of the work on the patterns too. My willingness to integrate and always mix the spiritual with the body is felt.

MMV: Sinusoidal.

JPS: Likewise, it is a very erotic image with a labyrinth. These are really the first serigraphs, in 1995. There it's also a labyrinth with a pre-Incan drawing, a tapestry.

MMV: The symbolism of the mystical spiral.

JPS: Yes, it is true that it is very mystical. These are drawings of aborigines from Australia. And this is the beginning of my work on Plexiglas. Here it is! Where I started to integrate around the image, the coloured Plexiglas frame.

MMV: The frame, yes, yes, yes... That's fascinating then I find. In what year?

JPS: 1999

MMV: Superb!

JPS: It is with a text from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. I had made an exhibition at the Alliance Française of New York with this text!

MMV: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*! Of course! Of course!

JPS: So these are the first serigraphs, do you want to discuss them?

MMV: I simply end with Auguste Rodin who says: "In art, there is no immorality. Art is always sacred".

JPS: Yes, it is true!

MMV: So it was to honor what you just said about the cohabitation of these universes apparently and falsely distinct by our modern mind a little too much.

JPS: Westernized?

MMV: Moralizing!

JPS: Thank you, thank you for this new part.

5/8: THE SMALL PAPERS SERIES IN NEW YORK (1998-2003) - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: I worked on a format which are ten inches by ten inches, in centimeters that is: 25.4 centimeters by 25.4 centimeters. I bought sheets of paper Rives BFK 250g (76 x 56 cm) and cut them in six parts. Since then, I have continued to work with the same format !

MMV: For the Small Papers series?

JPS: Yes, For the Small Papers. There it is on Rives yellow paper. I will show you them like that on the table, so that people can see what's going on! acrylic silk-screened on Rives BFK paper, this series is entitled: *Dionysos* (1988), it is a series which I wanted to be highly erotic. Here are seven prints on display.

MMV: Can you please give us some information about the pieces, their contents and the title under which you gather them? You know how much I am in love with the titles of your works, and so here are the *Dionysos* and *Dragon Ladies* series?

JPS: Yes, that is called: *Dionysos, or the organs of life*, It was really sexuality in all its magnificence.

MMV: Very festive at the same time.

JPS: Orgiastic! Here yes, absolutely! Our contemporary societies have constrained more and more the individuals to earn money, to work more and more, and finally the orgiastic side, the joy, the will to regenerate the world, does not exist anymore, it's gone for ever. The rituals were used to know when we will have rain, to know how to make it rain! We had lost this cosmic magical side and I think it can remain nevertheless today in sexuality, to reintegrate...

MMV: Thus this kind of vital explosion through these works! It always strikes me, especially the saturation of colors, which is so deep, endlessly, someone can really feel the blood flowing!

JPS: Yes, yes!

MMV: I have the feeling to see circulating blood...! Vital!

JPS: Yes, yes, you are absolutely right!

MMV: Something of very, very carnal again. Very beautiful. Thus *Dionysos*?

JPS: Yes, *Dionysos* or the God Pan in Europe, all the demiurgic Gods!

MMV: Once again, and in an explosion at the same time of this vital dash, of joy and of all what today, seems to be lacking a little bit to everyone of us!

JPS: Yes, absolutely! Then I will pass to a second series. That was my first

series in 1998.

MMV: That is the series of the *Dragon Ladies* (2002). It is very important to know the titles because they gather the works in a more synthetic way.

JPS: Yes, *Dragon Ladies*, it is exactly that series! There again, there are seven serigraphs.

MMV: Very dense!

JPS: And these are works with a Maya drawing.

MMV: It's Maya?

JPS: It is Maya, yes! It is a drawing which I copied from a Mayan vase. And it turns out that... Certain people thought that the Maya vases depicted different sequences. It was a kind of *Book of the Dead*, somehow! All these potteries were buried with dead bodies to accompany them in the other life. Thus one can say that these beautiful women, accompanied the dead soul in the other life.

MMV: They were very lucky!

JPS: Yes, it is true that today, nobody accompanies us in the other world!

MMV: In another manner, but perhaps less efficiently?

JPS: And it is what fascinates me in all these old civilizations like Egypt, India or Mexico: it is the will to continue with the human being alive (not accepting death).

MMV: Yes, death is only a passage and thus it should be accompanied with dignity, rituals and this kind of profusion, magnificence and beauty surrounding it.

MMV: But the woman is not excluded at all!

JPS: I wanted to show you this small Maya vase which I bought in Guatemala with my friend Olga and you can see a solar symbol and hieroglyphs... This vase was undoubtedly buried with an important king. Specifically to feed him in his second life.

MMV: To be with him in spirit!

JPS: I would like that the art I am making, be a bit like that: to accompany, not in other worlds, but in this world here, to accompany people in their lives.

MMV: In their lives!

JPS: Yes!

MMV: There is no rupture anyhow between the two states. It's really interesting, there is no break of continuity.

JPS: And then afterwards I continued with this series named: *Ladies Of The Ants*, (2003).

MMV: Which I am fond of enormously!

JPS: It is a mixture of patterns with a Janus figure (mirrored image), and I worked on this image after having experienced shamanic trances. When the spirits came to rebuild my body. Thus it is an homage to the lights in which I was bathing during this trances, as there were four women: a black one, a blue one, a yellow one, and a red one. And as in each cosmic trip, one dies and one is rebuilt by the spirits. And thus, these four women regenerated my body after I had been like a dead skeleton. I just wanted to speak about it, and I also wanted to talk about this powerful light and the tremendous beauty of these

women who accompany us in infra-worlds.

MMV: And this death and this rebirth transform you, regenerates you forever?

JPS: Yes of course!

MMV: And that must have been one of the highest moments in your life as a man and artist?

JPS: Yes, shamanic trances have transformed me so deeply. So much with the energy, because it is an energy which one meets nowhere else. Perhaps during birth or death. But anyhow, death is something that we haven't experienced yet! We don't know!

MMV: But this passage, this breakthrough, is it irreversible?

JPS: Yes, no return!

MMV: You are somebody who carries in you this shamanic experience, which spurts out in all that you touch and in all that you create. I think that you may have this aura, this extraordinary dimension, which makes your work perhaps more difficult to perceive for regular people?

JPS: Yes, perhaps, but I am not a shaman, I was not raised in this tradition. The shamans always fit into a tradition, a culture.

MMV: I did not say that, but I think that the mark is deep. And it is an irreversible experience, that you can't forget, it does not belong to the regular space-time frame, it is well beyond!

JPS: Yes, it is true!

MMV: And I believe that you are a witness, and it is a responsibility at the same time!

JPS: Yes!

MMV: You testify!

JPS: I testify and I wanted to precisely give evidence of the purity. It is a word which shows up like that: the purity and the sanctity of the feelings, great love and compassion, which one can meet during those trances.

MMV: Yes, while also testifying of the diversity of the world through the erotic mangas, the bondage... A full set of topics which are a little uproarious!

JPS: Yes, but the mangas, finally the bondage, it is also a kind of ecstasy. It is another ecstasy!

MMV: Exactly!

JPS: One comes to the beginning of the *Bondage* series.

MMV: It really interests me! And you had your great art show in Besançon with the *Bondage & Freedom* piece, which means that the link is also a freedom!

JPS: Yes, completely!

MMV: That's why the Large Blue Nude is so beautiful! We should try to exhibit it again!

JPS: Why not, let's see what will happen!

MMV: We will do it!

JPS: Here, it is this series: *Bondage & Freedom*, which goes back to 2003. It is one of my last series I printed out in New York!

MMV: Splendid! Very suggestive!

JPS: Here, it's always bodies of women in bondage, tied up, and constrained. And here is a blue one! But we can feel here the ecstasy, the woman's

pleasure! And how the body is completely forgotten, missing, but still completely present at another level! It is rather ambiguous! The body climax within a complete disappearance of its ego. It means that we enter into another world, it is named ecstasy!

MMV: I do refuse this concept of constraint which you just used. Although obviously the presence of the link tends to suggest a constraint there! But the link it is also what can be untied, and thus which is freeing us, and I find that ecstasy, it is... precisely the body is always a finished object which does not belong to...

JPS: I am not sure we can call it an object!

MMV: It's a subject-object! And only the ecstasy and the pleasure which you do show there very well, make it possible to leave the body, it is what you just said right now?

JPS: Absolutely, yes!

MMV: Thus the link, is finally just very symbolic to say that: it is only one very light hamper, in order to go further! To go further, yes you are completely right!

JPS: We will end with that point and then I will show you more silkscreens!

6/8: THE SHAKTI-YONI SERIES | FRANCE 2017 - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: We are now reaching the sixth part, I wanted to present this work that I completed during the summer of 2017, on these small formats. Printed on two kinds of paper: Rives BFK 250g and yellow paper Wang 80g, which gives a kind of ephemeral effect, a little freer than on the BFK paper. I layered over many images while painting over with Indian ink before overprinting it. Thus, there is always an erotic themes as well as *yantras*, which are sometimes the *Bindu* point, the starting point of the Universe (Cosmic Big Bang), as well as the sex of the woman, of course! You see it there! Would you like to comment on some of the works?

MMV: I do not know, they are so strong! You had also spoken about the sacred dance, you perhaps have some representations, which illustrate the body in delirious movements? In that dance, it is marvelous, there is an extraordinary symbolic system.

JPS: In fact, the title of these artworks is: *Shakti-Yoni*, *Shakti* it is the female energy in India, and *Yoni* is the vagina, the female sex, and thereafter it's named: *Ecstatic Cosmic Dances*! It means that it is a cosmic dance!

MMV: That's why I return to the title to say that it is wholeness!

JPS: Yes, and on the net, one finds many Japanese women who do these striptease trance dances, half naked... And I found that it is something as powerful as the mystical whirling Dervishes, they also connect to the Universe, like that, simply sexually.

MMV: Around the *axis mundi*, turning around this sacred pivot. Yes, that impressed me, because one can think that it is a vulgar dance (trashy), but I do believe that the crazy musical beat gives access precisely to another sacred world. We find again the orgiastic dimension, Dionysus with the

bacchanals and all this tradition which expresses at the same time the life force, joy, sex and all what there is of...

JPS: The desire! The desire too!

MMV: The desire, and this life force which organizes the Cosmos. Yes, it is very, very beautiful!

JPS: That had fascinated me to see that, and besides many female images that I use in my work come from Asian women, I really don't know why?

MMV: A last question please: is it your particular will to saturate these colors so densely? Is it something that you wanted and which has a particular signification? Especially these mystic blues, very, very deep...

JPS: That is true, but... it appears that the color of the soul should be very close to a dark blue purple.

MMV: So, it was your intention to do so?

JPS: Yes, yes, because apparently, there is more or less spiritual degrees in color shades. But for that it would be necessary to speak about it with some Tibetans Monks who know the color much better than I do. But it feels as we are approaching the ultramarine blue or purple blue like that one, that it becomes more spiritual.

MMV: the *Large Nude In Bondage* in those shades of blue purple, I think that gives a spirituality even stronger, in its dimension and its color too!

JPS: In fact, it is a work that I had industrially printed on paper which is 3 meters by 1.5 meters!

MMV: Three meters! Yes it is absolutely... Well, I believe that it is our meeting starting point!

JPS: Exactly, you had a flash on this work!

MMV: Around this absolutely sublime woman, at the same time in a context which today can be a bit shocking and which carries an extraordinarily sacred power.

JPS: Sacred and ecstatic! Yes!

MMV Thank you Jean-Pierre!

JPS: You are very welcome! So, I will present other work on paper like that. Sometimes I also print on cardboard, because the paper sheets come between two cardboard sheets, like that! It is beautiful, this red with a black sex and phalluses, and also that, with flowers, Japanese chrysanthemums. And there, I mixed the same image with a diagram of time from India. There its something very, very porn-graffiti with a flower design. This erotic image with a Selknam Indian from Tierra Del Fuego. And that it is also a Mayan diagram of time. I attach a lot of importance to cosmic diagrams. One can think that they are the pathways of the sun and the moon. We can also feel in that one a kind of ecstasy.

MMV: It reminds me of Buren's work, which wanted with his *Buren's Columns* in Paris, to represent also the Mayan Calendar.

JPS: Really? I didn't know! And there are things a little more abstract. I was much impressed by a small Hindu gouache (18 century) titled: *The Meta-Cosmic Void, Pure Consciousness*. And for me the Void is as important as the Full, and I wanted to state it. MMV: With the sacred perimeter!

JPS: Yes, but that it is a perimeter from a Mexican drawing.

MMV: That represents so much.

JPS: And they are drawings from Prehistorical Caves, undoubtedly of Africa, Zimbabwe. They are hunting animals.

MMV: Is it always from the same series?

JPS: Yes, yes, it is still the *Shakti-Yoni*! But I printed out so much, more than 1,200. So, I am happy to have worked on this series! And that it is Pakal, he was a king-god Maya (*Large Sun - K'inich*- 603-683). It is the lid of its sarcophagus. And I found that he was so much into ecstasy in his death like that, in another world. He floats in the Universe, simply like that! While regenerating himself, and then... he is serene, as into a womb somehow. I liked to use this beautiful image. The revival to life!

MMV: The return to original water. It is so beautiful!

JPS: That it is a Bondage also, very sexual.

MMV: A Bondage, similar in blue-violet, very evocative. I am concluding with some reds, I found them beautiful these red! One sees less the images (only by transparency), but the intensity of the color is felt nevertheless. Would you like to add any comments?

MMV: No, I am a little overwhelmed by so much beauty, and it is true that it is a particularly strong series!

JPS: Yes!

MMV: And which I do believe it takes you to heart and which is of a very great richness of iconography and of symbolic system.

JPS: Yes, and of colors.

MMV: Of colors, one is stricken by them!

JPS: Well, thanks a lot!

MMV: Thank you to have shown them to us first... Nobody has seen them yet?

JPS: No, I did not even scan them!

MMV: You printed them during this Summer time? I do believe that you have been working a lot?

JPS: Yes, in Spring, Summer, and Autumn.

MMV: And you also made some photographs and videos of you at work?

JPS: Yes...

MMV: Thank you!

JPS: No, it is me who thanks you!

7/8: BEAUTY IS ENERGY (New York 2002) & SKY UMBILICUS (France 2006) - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: We are now at the seventh part, where I would like to talk about beauty. Because, nowadays it is a forgotten concept and people don't speak about it anymore. So, I wanted to present this new series... First of all, I will read you the the Night Navajos Song. Once, in a gallery in New York, I met with a friend, we had a nice discussion, and this friend had a kind of strong spiritual aura, and I asked where she comes from? She was half Amerindian from the West Coast of Canada. We had a good time together and two days later, I received

postcard from her with the beautiful *Night Navajos Song*. It was perhaps a sign telling me to be more curious about the beauty? So, I will read this prayer:

"With beauty may I walk.

With beauty before me, may I walk.

With beauty behind me, may I walk.

With beauty above me, may I walk.

With beauty below me, may I walk.

With beauty all around me, may I walk.

It is all finished in beauty.

It is all finished in beauty."

And to have received this *Navajos prayer*, that encouraged me to think about what beauty really is, where it is located? And also to think of the attitude which one adopts towards his life. As one can decide to live a life within beauty or not! Usually, I find beauty, in the cultures that I call preindustrial. Because these men and women had a sense towards beauty which seems, to me, a little lost, forbidden. Western art seems, to me, desperately vain and futile, except for some exceptions, it doesn't speak anymore about beauty, of this purity of beauty. Of this cosmic purity of the beauty!

MMV: A beauty which does not have codes and mocking all the boundaries. I like it when you said: in front of, behind, around, on the side. It is true that it is very evocative of your work which has also this universal dimension: which is in front of us, behind, on the side. Beauty it is a kind of environment!

JPS: Yes, yes, you are right!

MMV: It is something which surrounds us. And I find that the Indian song is completely revealing of this whole dimension, of this universal beauty in which we bathe and that we do not see very often anymore.

JPS: Exactly! Yes, completely! You are right! And there, I wanted to present to you a series which I began in New York after the attack of September 11th, 2001, (several months afterwards). This attack was so terrible that I could not work for a long time. And I restarted to integrate photographs: for example this Selknam Indian of Tierra Del Fuego. I also used one in this years' series. And, these men fascinate me, because they used to live without any goods in the extreme cold weather. They just had their willpower and presence, the willpower to be a human being standing up!

MMV: Really impressive indeed!

JPS: Thus it's a photograph which I copied from a book.

MMV: Really totemic!

JPS: Totemic, yes! And, I wanted to think about beauty, but also about violence, I will talk about it later on with the African women. That, it is a memory of a shamanic trance, about which I mentioned previously. Four women can be seen: a yellow, a blue, a black, and a red, which reconstructed my body during those trips. With different lights... And I wanted to speak about it, freely like that!

MMV: Is it the image from this trance?

JPS: Yes, because I felt these four presences of different aura of colors around me. And as I was a skeleton. When one dies, one becomes a skeleton, well it

sounds a bit unreal, but this is what occurs during the trances! And, there precisely, one sees the pure beauty, a presence: it is an Egyptian statue which is at the Louvre where I shot the picture. This statue has always fascinated me because it is rather mysterious, one doesn't really know what she is doing?

MMV: She is carrying water?

JPS: Perhaps water, but perhaps funeral urns?

MMV: Yes, maybe funeral urns!

JPS: One knows nothing of it, she is naked, I drew it naked anyhow. Finally she has a light dress, but she is very sensual. At that time, I was deeply in love with very beautiful African woman, therefore it is a little her body that I wanted to draw. As I was fascinated by the body beauty of my friend.

MMV: Very solar!

JPS: Yes, very solar!

MMV: With this bright yellow!

JPS: And I printed it in four different colors. So, there it is the yellow, here is the blue! It was a way to pay tribute to the spirits I had met during those shamanic trances.

MMV: Similar, very totemic!

JPS: Yes! And there, on the other side, I wanted to show the most human unbearable violence! This sculpture is at the Natural History Museum of New York. It is a small Terracotta which is not very high, approximately a meter twenty. It represents an Aztec priest who committed a human sacrifice and which is wearing out the skin of the sacrificed one.

MMV: Yes, it is what I was going to say, it's like a flayed.

JPS: Yes, it is exactly that: *The Flayed One*!

MMV: It is incredible! And each time I am in front of this statue, I feel an enormous energy! Because it is the life which one takes away and which is given back again...

MMV: Because we are in the cyclic!

JPS: The cyclic-cosmic.

MMV: We get back to the subject, they didn't have the linearity which we have today, dialectical.

JPS: And, so, the priest carried this skin for a month, until it decays, through rituals and dances.

MMV: One recognize animal spots, as on a skin of...

JPS: Therefore, this is the male energy, they make human ritual sacrifices. But I wanted to speak about it in opposition of the Egyptian goddess (it is not really a goddess), but it's the Egyptian woman.

MMV: It very important because one sees few masculine representations in your work?

JPS: You are right, yes it is a good remark. You are completely right, yes.

Perhaps man is too violent? Perhaps? I don't really know? And there, it is a fusion of two drawings of Japanese kimonos, with half-circles designs and a Mayan woman with a deer! And in addition, all the vases we spoke about previously, are depicting the soul of the death which was reincarnated into a deer body, then it returned in the body of a woman who strips herself to

welcome again the soul.

MMV: It is that which is marvellous: the way in which you manage to superimpose, to entangle all these data components to give... It is what we can really call a metamorphosis, in your work.

JPS: Yes metamorphosis.

MMV: Very magical.

JPS: And then there it is a bit more abstract, but there were images firstly printed, and one can see above images of Japanese cherry trees flowers.

MMV: There is always a symbolism in the number?

JPS: Yes, there is a symbolic system to the number! Yes, that's true! Here is the woman you like a lot: the red one. You have to see it that way!

MMV: I find it extraordinary.

JPS: With different kind of pinks, you see! This series is named: Sky Umbilicus.

MMV: Very, very, very beautiful!

JPS: It is the umbilicus of the limbo, it is the connection with the Cosmos...

MMV: You speak, and you spoke, and you always speak again about beauty, I would like that you mention the text that you wrote on this subject, which is on your artist's website and which is so amazing! On your approach, your vision and your interpretation. Beauty is always very personal, very subjective. And I would like that you read us a few lines, a few sentences.

JPS: I wrote this text, about two years ago, and it was a reflection on beauty in history, yes but it's difficult to speak about it now?

MMV: Yes, I understand very well, it is a little complicated!

JPS: It is a text with full of pictorial references... But I want to say that it is a reflection which is deep and which is related to your artistic expression and your writings too!

JPS: Yes, of course, yes!

MMV: Can you name it?

JPS: This text is called: *[De la beauté et cetera...](#)* (2014).

MMV: So everyone should go to read it, because it is a really beautiful text!

JPS: Thank you, but you see, I haven't published it yet because I am afraid I could get some hostile reactions.

MMV: Really?

JPS: Yes because I speak there about beauty in sexuality and eroticism.

MMV: Yes, but it is really the expression of what you incarnate, in your own way, therefore you are the witness of that dimension.

JPS: Yes.

MMV: Of your idea of beauty! And I think that it is important to establish the connection, the link between your artwork and your more theoretical writings.

JPS: Yes, of course!

MMV: That we can enjoy the two sides!

JPS: But I like this text a lot, because precisely, there are many historical references.

MMV: Yes, as you draw from the classical iconography of some very famous paintings. Your choice is splendid, it is for that that I think it's worth mentioning it to the viewer!

JPS: Yes!

MMV: Sometime!

JPS: Yes, yes! You see, it is also with flowers, a Peruvian drawing! This figure is so surprising! It's very phallic and he carries a child on his hat!

MMV: Which is phallic, yes, this kind of eight, infinite, yes.

JPS: And here is a last abstract serigraphy, it is just waves and small dots... I like Japanese iconographies, I find that they are excellent designers...

MMV: There is no symmetry?

JPS: They speak about infinity, if you like in this work there...

MMV: Starry sky on top of our heads!

JPS: Yes, thank you, thank you for...!

MMV: Thank you Jean-Pierre!

8/8: JOY AND WILLPOWER IN CREATION (Upanishads & Giono) - [Watch the video](#)

JPS: Then we are now at the eighth part where I would like to speak about joy in creation, the will to create, the connection between the female body and pleasure-desire. That's a lot to cover! But firstly, I want to quote a few texts: the first one is from the *Upanishads*:

"The infinite is bliss. There is no bliss in anything finite. Only the Infinite is bliss. One must desire to understand the Infinite." Chandogya Upanishad

And I wanted to read some extracts of Jean Giono in: *Que ma joie demeure*:

"There is, here on Earth, some really beautiful and quiet moments. [...]"

The joys of the world are our only nourishments. The last small bite still make us alive again."

And lastly in *Les vraies richesses*, from Giono again:

"It is more easy to acquire an interior joy while being deprived from his own body. I believe more honest to search for complete joy, by taking this body into account."

One should not forget the body as part of joy, unlike most people do! And then, I finish this with a short sentence from the *Râmâyana* where Sîtâ quotes:

"Even after a century, the joy catches up with the man who survives!"

It means that during our long life, the joy can always catch up with us at every moment. And after having read Giono, (I discovered his books rather recently), I found that it was so essential to integrate joy into my creative process.

Because joy is contagious, it is not something egoistic, like many of other human feelings.

MMV: And it's active!

JPS: Active, yes, it is an active process! And a positive attitude towards life.

Just like color, it is similar, the color is also active! That depends, of course, on the colors which one uses! But if one uses them, as I do, colors inspired by ethnical groups from warm Countries, that brings us human heat and sensuality. It is like spices (chilli pepper), and all that: the pleasure all together, here we are!

MMV: Thus there is a dynamic venturing into joy which favors the creation and the work of an artist?

JPS: Yes, not with everyone, there are many artists who are into and stay into tragedy. And, the Occidental art is deeply tragical, which precisely displeases me. I like to work undramatically! I really hope that my work is not tragic at all. Perhaps it is speaking about the ephemerality fleeting of life.

MMV: And, you think that there are paintings which are tragic?

JPS: Of course!

MMV: Written work, Yes!

JPS: But painting also: Picasso it is rather tragic!

MMV: There is also a joy which emanates!

JPS: There is a joy, yes, it is perhaps a bad example! But I find Western art rather tragic.

MMV: Thus the joy, as you mean it, is similar to the vital impulse Bergson is talking about?

JPS: Yes!

MMV: This kind of huge breath which lift us upwards! Which gives us an extension, who makes visible the links we are sharing with the artwork. There is this fact also: an artist who works in joy, acquires a kind of visibility even more intense, isn't it?

JPS: Oh no not really! But perhaps yes?

MMV: Joy exteriorize itself! We can see it! It is something very expansive!

JPS: It is true! Yes, yes!

MMV: And I find that all your work, especially the one on Plexiglas in particular, is breathing this joy, there is truly that dimension there.

JPS: Yes, and some other artists, for example the work of Egon Schiele, are nevertheless very...

MMV: He is in the distress, yes, the representation of the emaciated body, the physical decay.

JPS: That was done during times of mourning, of war. It should be said that us, we are lucky to live during peaceful times, so I can work with joy!

MMV: Thus it is nevertheless also related to a historical context and there are some periods...

JPS: Of course, there are artists... But Giono went throughout the First World War and despite his horrible experiences, he decided to fully dedicate himself to joy!

MMV: Yes, it seems to me that the joy is an insider mechanism, it is something which is stronger than adversity.

JPS: Yes!

MMV: Even during tragic circumstances one can live.

JPS: Yes, it is true!

MMV: It is an internal impulse, it comes from the guts. It is something which is self-created, and which precisely exceeds all that can be in opposition to it. Thus this preponderance... And, it is maybe connected to willpower? You spoke previously about willpower?

JPS: Ah yes it is true! I wanted to speak about it! Yes, yes, absolutely!

MMV: And what does the author say... also that there is a personal approach which should be nourished! And, there was a dimension of interior creation?

JPS: Yes, for beauty and joy one needs the willpower!

MMV: Will of perpetuation!

JPS: Perpetuation, exactly! And I have just read: *Vivekananda Life*, from Romain Rolland, who also wrote about the life of another Hindu wise man and I like this sentence:

"The will is stronger than the Word. Everything must give up when facing a strong will. Because it is of God. Pure and powerful will can do everything!" And as I am getting older and further into my artist life, I realize that a strong will is very, very important, especially here in France, because an artist life is not very easy here! So, it is necessary to decide to continue to create and exhibit his own work despite all the difficulties!

MMV: And to work nevertheless in a context of joy, surge and optimism!

JPS: From life altogether! And I wanted to quote Antonin Artaud: "*You exited out of Life!*" And the more I see my fellow citizens, the more I have the feeling that they had left Life completely. And this really makes me sick, as so many people have left life and given up!

MMV: Removed from Life because they do not breath anymore this oxygen which is related to (breathing), breathing Joy!

JPS: Yes, correct!

MMV: Probably that there is this dimension of strangling, surviving alone.

JPS: Yes, the lack of joy, pleasure, desire and exchange...

MMV: Of exchange?

JPS: Here people do not interconnect any more, it is a real disaster!

MMV: "Joy always announces that life succeeded, moved forward, won a victory: all great joy has a triumphant overtone." Said: Henri Bergson!

JPS: Yes, it is a very beautiful sentence for ending our interviews!

MMV: For the artist that you are!

JPS: Thank you Marie-Madeleine! Thank you all!